



## **REAL.FUN.BEACH.WATER**

Divers and fishing aficionados looking to maximize their passions flock to the emerald waters of the Gulf of Mexico off the coast of Panama City Beach for two major reasons:

1. The area offers more dive sites than any other in the South and an incredible array of fishing opportunities.
2. The destination's location in the Northwest corner of Florida -- easily reachable by car and new international airport translates into a shorter lag time for anxious divers and anglers.

### **DIVING**

Known as the "Wreck Capital of the South," Panama City Beach provides the greatest variety of dive sites of any area. The warm waters of the Gulf of Mexico encourage rapid growth, making the area an excellent home and breeding ground for all types of exotic sea life. The crystal clarity of the Gulf also ensures high visibility to view sea turtles, giant Manta Rays, puffer fish, sand dollars, blue marlin and horseshoe crab, just a few of the species that inhabit the emerald waters.

Divers have their choice of natural, historical and artificial reefs in the waters off Panama City Beach. The area's historic wrecks include a 441-foot World War II liberty ship; a 220-foot tug, The Chippewa; a 160-foot coastal freighter, the S.S. Tarpon; the 100-foot tug, The Chickasaw; and the 110-foot tug, The Grey Ghost; as well as the Gulf of Mexico's most famous wreck, the 465-foot Empire Mica.

There are 50 artificial reefs off Panama City Beach, a project of the community-coordinated Panama City Marine Institute. These include Stage I, Stage II, fifteen 160-foot-long and 35-foot-high bridge spans, ten barges, the City of Atlantis, the LOSS Project and many more.

The natural reefs range in depth from 80 to 100 feet and are just a few miles offshore. These reefs range in height from three to eight feet and are teeming with sea life, including small corals and colorful sponges. Closer to shore, the jetties at St. Andrews State Park are popular snorkeling sites. The best time of the year for diving in the waters off Panama City Beach is between April and September. There are multiple full-service dive shops in the area that can accommodate the needs of water-curious visitors and provide everything from customized boat charters and training, to equipment repair and rentals.

## **FISHING**

Fishing in Panama City Beach is characterized by remarkably deep coastal waters along with inland, spring-fed creeks and bay flats that offer a rich bounty. Novice and experienced anglers alike are able to capitalize on the multitude of fresh and salt water options Panama City Beach fishing offers. Among the species found nearby in the area's waters include cobia, king mackerel, red snapper, Spanish mackerel, flounder, red fish and pompano, most in season year-round. Other seasonal fish include grouper, amberjack, speckled trout, whiting, black fin tuna, snapper and wahoo.

Visitors can head out on a charter, guide, or headboat on the Gulf of Mexico or cast a line off the pier in St. Andrews State Park, the 1,500-foot newly renovated Russell-Fields Pier (also referred to as City Pier) or its twin, M.B. Miller County Pier. Panama City Beach is home to one of the country's largest sport fishing fleets, and visitors can choose from 16-foot-skiffs to million-dollar yachts. Several sportfishing tournaments take place throughout the year, attracting avid anglers from around the world.

Panama City Beach Fishing licenses can be obtained from the following locations:

Tag office: 850-233-5035; Wal-Mart: 850-234-1989; Half-Hitch: 850-234-2621

### **About Panama City Beach:**

Panama City Beach is situated on 27 miles of sugar-white sand beaches bordering clear, emerald-green waters where the Gulf of Mexico and St. Andrew Bay converge. With more than 300 days of sunshine annually and attractions such as St. Andrews State Park and Pier Park, the region has long been favored by travelers seeking an affordable beach vacation with year-round offerings for families, couples, groups and adventure-seekers. These include championship golf courses, spas, sporting events, award-winning dining and diverse recreational activities. Panama City Beach recently opened the new Northwest Florida Beaches International Airport, offering non-stop flights on Delta Airlines and Southwest Airlines. For more information, call 850-233-5070 or visit the official Web site of the Panama City Beach Convention and Visitors Bureau, <http://www.visitpanamacitybeach.com>.

- end -

You can now follow us on Twitter @PCBeach to receive up the minute news and details on special offers and deals.

*Media can also visit [www.louhammond.com](http://www.louhammond.com) for latest press releases and images. Follow on Twitter @LouHammondPR or find us on Facebook.*

### **MEDIA CONTACTS:**

Lou Hammond & Associates – Florida Office

Gina Stouffer, 561-655-3836, [ginag@lhammond.com](mailto:ginag@lhammond.com)

Heidi Barfels, 561-655-3836, [heidib@lhammond.com](mailto:heidib@lhammond.com)

Lou Hammond & Associates – New York Office

Terry Gallagher, 212-308-8880, [terryg@lhammond.com](mailto:terryg@lhammond.com)

Panama City Beach Convention & Visitors Bureau

Susan Estler, 850-233-5070, [sestler@visitpanamacitybeach.com](mailto:sestler@visitpanamacitybeach.com)