

St George Island

The barrier islands in the Gulf of Mexico form an interesting coastline. One such island, St George Island, is situated in Franklin County in Florida. The island is very small and has retained its peacefulness and unspoilt scenery. A four mile bridge connects the island over the Apalachicola Bay to the mainland. It's a great place for relaxing on the white beaches, chartering a fishing boat or swimming in the clear waters.

Most people here are tourists or part time, summer residents. Accommodation is varied, from little cottages or small hotels to luxury beachfront homes. The area is known for its antiques stores and arts and crafts. There are restaurants of the highest standard, including those that specialize in locally caught seafood.

The eastern side of the island is largely taken up by the St George Island State Park, an area that is important for wildlife conservation and which has many leisure amenities. There are boardwalks, viewing areas, beaches and walking trails. Visitors can go kayaking, swimming, snorkeling, boating or canoeing. For longer stays, there are camping grounds, and there are large picnic areas that have tables, grills and restrooms. The terrain covers salt marshes, oak forests, coves and pine woods. It's a popular spot for bird watchers and fishing enthusiasts. Birds that can be spotted include Bald Eagles, ospreys, willet, tern and plover. Fishermen can hope to catch sea trout, whiting, flounder and Spanish Mackerel.

The nearby John Gorrie Museum State Park is named after the man who developed modern refrigeration. A replica of the ice-making machine that he invented is displayed in the museum along with other exhibits of relevance to local history. The towns of Carrabelle and Apalachicola lie close to St George Island. Carrabelle is in the record books for having the smallest police station in the world. It really is more of a police phone booth than a station. Apalachicola plays host to the annual Florida Seafood Festival, which takes place in November. It's a celebration of seafood with lots of stalls, an oyster-eating contest and an oyster shucking competition. There is also a road race, a parade and a country music concert.

Another barrier island, close by in the Gulf, is a favorite destination for birdwatchers. Cape St George Island has nesting sites for oystercatchers and snowy plovers. It's also possible to see the threatened peregrin falcon. Loggerhead Sea turtles nest here during summer and cottonmouths frequent the ponds and marshes.