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Shhh! We have been Florida's best kept secret and now we are slowly letting others in on it. You are about to "Discover Old Florida." Gulf County is the jewel nestled among the sea oats and sand dunes of the Forgotten Coast. As you review this media kit, it is our hope that you will imagine yourself being transported back to a place, a place on the beach perhaps with the sun glistening off the clear blue water or listening to the birds on the river banks of the Apalachicola River as you wait for the big one to bite. Gulf County has it all! You will come to find this to be true, as we reveal our little piece of heaven to you through the pages of this media kit. We invite you to contact our office if you need any additional information and look forward to your inevitable visit to our beautiful Gulf County. Come "Discover Old Florida."

Visit Gulf,

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Inside this packet you will find information on...

- Points of Interest
- Gulf County Beaches
- Cape San Blas Lighthouse
- Festivals & Events
- Tupelo Honey
- Fishing
- Bay Scallops

Gulf County is located in Florida's Northwestern Panhandle, approximately 35 miles southeast of Panama City and approximately 100 miles southwest of Tallahassee. Although the County is predominately rural, there is a surprising diversity of life-styles and activities in this quaint, picturesque area of Florida. When you are in Gulf County, you will discover "Old Florida", it is like stepping into a "Norman Rockwell" painting, with rustic towns and unpretentious gracious folks are what visitors find along with some of the most exciting outdoor excursions, our state has to offer!!!

Port St. Joe

Port St. Joe is the largest city of Gulf County and the county seat. This small coastal deep water port community is rich in both history and resources. Known as "The Constitution City", Port St. Joe lives in history books because it was here in 1838 that delegates from all counties in Territorial Florida assembled to draft Florida's first State Constitution. In fact this document was the basis of Florida government until the Civil War. Our present constitution (1885) embodies the basic plan and many of the provisions of the first Constitution that was drafted and signed in Port St. Joe.

The City of Port St. Joe is in a transitional stage from primarily industrial to a more tourist-friendly community focusing on its natural resources. In Port St. Joe you will hear the soft drawl of southern accents but don't let the regions slow charm fool you, the area features snow white beaches, sapphire blue waters, unique area parks, fishing (freshwater and salt), camping, hiking and hunting.

The Historic Downtown Business District: The downtown area has been transformed into a strolling, dining, and shopping area. The ongoing renovation of the downtown area including the exceptional brickwork and lighting make it a real must see for visitors. Quaint shopping and unique dining experiences provide a "nice" diversion from the sun and fun coastline has to offer.

Port St. Joe Marina: Completed in 1999, the Port St. Joe Marina is the city's crown jewel. Situated on six acres overlooking St. Joseph Bay, the Marina features 128 wet slips and 79 dry storage units, fuel pumps, pump out facilities, ship store, and Dockside Café. Next to the Marina are Jetty Park, Local Color, and Galati Yachts.

Constitution State Museum: The sites of Florida's State Constitution Convention as well as the vanished city of St. Joseph are featured at the Constitution Convention State Museum located in Port St. Joe. More than 150 years ago, St. Joseph was selected over Tallahassee (the territorial capital) as the site of the state's Constitution Convention. A Constitution monument was erected on the grounds in 1922 and the museum building was added to the 13.5 acre site and opened to the public in 1955. The center is open from 9 a.m. to 12 noon and 1:00 to 5:00 p.m. Thursday through Monday, except Thanksgiving, Christmas, and New Year's Day.

Constitution Monument and Park: The monument was erected in 1922 and bears the names of the convention delegates engraved in marble. The vast landscape boasts a promenade of palm trees that escort you from the monument to the water's edge. One of the most picturesque parks in Gulf County, this location has proven ideal for concerts, social gathering, weddings and festivals.

Shipyard Cove Park: Located at the end of Fourth Street in Port St. Joe. This park features the Maddox House, built in the early 1900's by the Maddox family and now serving as the headquarters of the Gulf County Chamber of Commerce. The park offers a beach area, natural wetlands, a walking trail, park benches, and picnic tables. It is a great place to watch the setting sun.

Gulf County Welcome Center: Gulf County Tourist Development Council has moved into its new waterfront location and is welcoming the public. The TDC office, launched in 2000 and led by Executive Director Paula Pickett, has continuously operated from the Gulf County Court House Annex. The New Facility will better serve the public and the area's growing tourism business as well as provide housing for additional organizations. Our goal is that visitors will make this their first stop to learn about everything our county has to offer from the world famous Dead Lakes of Wewahitchka to historic Port St. Joe and America's #1- ranked beaches of Cape San Blas.

Frank Pate Park: This bay front park features a lighted tennis court and walking track, playground with restrooms, a city maintained boat ramp and a gazebo at the end of a long pier. Picnic tables and grills make this spot ideal for an impromptu picnic as you watch the sun set in the pristine waters of St. Josephs Bay! Also, there is adequate public parking for all facilities.

Forrest Park: Located in the heart of Port St. Joe's residential area, Forrest Park boasts a public golf course, tennis court, playgrounds, and several lighted baseball and softball fields. Proposed renovations will feature fresh water fishing pier, picnic facilities and walking track with restrooms.

Golf: Just outside the city, the St. Joseph Bay Country Club offers an 18- hole, par 72 regulation course that is open to the public. There is a 9-hole course public course located in the Forrest Park complex that offers the weekend duffer an opportunity to work on those woods and irons!

Historical Cemetery: The St. Joseph Cemetery is a grim reminder of the yellow fever epidemic (1841) and the hurricane of 1844 that destroyed the town known as St. Joseph, currently Port St. Joe. Here you will find the many names of the community's founding fathers. Many of the streets in Port St. Joe are named after these prominent citizens.

Nathan Peters, Jr. Park: This recently upgraded park located in the northern part of the city features walking track with gazebo, baseball courts, baseball field, and playground for all ages, volleyball court, and soccer field.

Port St. Joe Library: This modern facility combines the rapid pace of the Internet with the timeless classics. You have use of Internet, computers, meeting facility, videos, magazines, newspapers and an astounding array of the printed word. Included is a children's reading program, a vast display of local artifacts, and genealogy department.

Wewahitchka

A sleepy little community, located in the northeast section of Gulf County, "Wewa" as the locals call it, is truly the "land of honey". It is the home of the world famous Dead Lakes and tupelo honey. Wewa is rich in natural resources, which include expanded farm lands, timber lands, and some of the most famous fishing lakes around. Wewa is probably best known for the nearby Dead Lakes, and 80 square mile area that provides some of the best freshwater fishing in the nation. The lake was formed years ago, when the waters of the Apalachicola and Chipola Rivers converged on a cypress swamp, flooding the low-lying area and forming a lake. Later, a flood of salt water temporarily replaced the fresh water, killing the cypress trees and leaving only stumps, thus the name Dead Lakes. Local restaurants offer down home cooking and the many campgrounds and fish camps are perfect of outdoor enthusiasts. A small motel offers accommodations in the city. The city is also bordered by land which provides some of the best hunting in the state. Everything that makes Florida special is right here, beautiful lakes, great freshwater fishing and scenic parks. Amateur or elite, Wewa will provide the "angler" with excellent fishing sites and challenges. "Discover Old Florida" and visit the quaint city of Wewahitchka.

Lake Alice Park: Home to the "Tupelo Festival" which pays homage to tupelo honey, Wewa's liquid gold. A serene area nestled under the moss covered trees that border Lake Alice in the heart of Wewa, this enchanted setting features an elaborate playground for children of all ages, picnic tables, walking trail, fishing, and restrooms.

T.L. James Park: A modern sports complex that offers unlimited recreational opportunity for the sports enthusiast. This park was home to the 1999 Dixie Youth Baseball State Tournament. Accommodations include a rodeo arena, several baseball / softball fields, batting cages, concession stand, basketball court, tennis court, restroom facilities and a playground for kids.

Lake Julia: This "sister" lake to Lake Alice is also located in the heart of Wewa and they were named after pioneer twins Alice and Julia Keyes.

Old Gulf County Courthouse: The Old Gulf County Courthouse was built in the early 1900's and is truly an architectural vision. Renovated in 1991 to its original grandeur, with its stately courtroom, one can almost hear the echoing of the gavel from days gone by. It is currently used as the county's extension agent's office, the branch office for the county tax collector, and Headstart.

Wewahitchka Library: Newly opened in 2002, this modern library offers internet, meeting room, copy, fax services, as well as children's programs.

Gaskin Boat Ramp: Located in Wewahitchka at the end of Lake Grove Road. This facility offers picnic pavilions, restrooms, and public boat ramp accessing the Apalachicola River.

Lands Landing: Located in Wewahitchka this public boat ramp offers adequate parking, playground for the kids, and picnic pavilions. You can access the Chipola River.

Overstreet Boat Ramp: Located on CR 386, on the Intracoastal Waterway, this area offers yet another opportunity for the eco-tourist to enjoy boating, fishing, and observing nature. Refresh your senses with the majesty of glorious sunsets, the reminiscent sight of fireflies or flickering in the night while you share campfire tales and the rustling of the water as you guide your canoe along creeks and rivers.

Willis Landing: Located on Willis Landing Road off CR 381, southeast of Wewahitchka, this public boat ramp offers adequate parking and allows access into the Brothers River that flows into the Apalachicola River.

Depot Creek: Located east of Port St. Joe off Highway 98, this boat ramp allows access to Depot Creek that flows into Lake Wimico that is a part of the Intracoastal Waterway.

Dead Lakes State Park: Located just north and east of the city of Wewahitchka in northern Gulf County, this beautifully unique body of water is a result of the Dead Lakes dam, located just east of Wewahitchka. Driving directions to the dam, while on U.S. Highway 71 in downtown Wewahitchka, turn east onto Lake Grove Road, which crosses the Chipola River at the dam. An 80 square mile area provides some of the best freshwater fishing in the nation. A fisherman's paradise, the Dead Lakes provides freshwater fishing to satisfy the ardent fisherman. So, if you are after the "big one" or just watching your fishing cork bobble on the water, this is the place for you!

It also features a variety of trees and plants, including the Florida green fly orchid and ball moss, as well as many species of birds, amphibians, reptiles, and mammals. The natural areas of the park are maintained to appear as they did when the Spanish arrived there. Activities throughout the park include fishing, camping,

boating, canoeing, kayaking, and picnicking. The Dead Lakes offers a getaway you won't forget! For further information or to make reservations contact (850) 639-2238.

The Beaches

Enjoy the serenity and quiet of what the local residents call "The Beaches". Sugar white sand beaches, facing west for the most striking sunsets, crystal clear waters.... All located just three miles west of Port St. Joe. Protected by St. Joseph Bay Peninsula, which creates a barrier island, the beaches has very little undertow.... Making it one of the safest beaches in Florida, the emphasis here is family. The fishermen find a mecca of ideal angling, mama is pleased, the children are safe on the calm beaches and everyone goes home with a famous Florida tan. St. Joe Beach offers seclusion and easy access to the all the conveniences: airport, shops, mall, etc. Among the many local opportunities: surf-fishing, crabbing, strolling along the water's edge, picking up shells while enjoying the clear blue water and the seagulls cry while the sandpipers weave in and out along the shore. There are no crowds here, no hordes of tourists, no throngs of people jostling for a place on the beach. In addition to the rolling waves, visitors may quietly observe a sea turtle laying its eggs at moonlight or hatchlings erupting from the sand to begin life's journey. Surf, sand and sun all combined to lead you into one of the most beautiful beaches along the Florida Coast. You will truly "Discover Old Florida", as you enjoy Mother Nature at its best!

Veteran's Memorial Park of Beacon Hill: Located on 40 acres, Beach Hill Park once housed St. Joseph Bay Lighthouse. Known for its breathtaking view situate high among the dunes, this park features two baseball/ softball fields, tennis court, a paved walking track, nature trail, playground facilities, basketball court, picnic pavilion, restroom facilities, and bird sanctuary. The park offers a boardwalk leading you over the dunes and past the sea oats to one of the world's most beautiful beaches, and is the site for the Annual Beach Blast Triathlon.

Cape San Blas

Ranked #1 in the Continental United States by Dr. Stephen P. Leathermann, more commonly known as "Dr. Beach", Cape San Blas is truly a vacationer's paradise. Refresh your senses with the majesty of glorious sunsets while you share a stroll listening to the rustling of the surf as it laps onto the coastline. The "Cape" as it is commonly known is truly what "Discover Old Florida" is all about. A rare, beautiful peninsula nestled in a curve of the Florida's big bend where sugar white sands await you. Over 17 miles of white sandy beaches border the peninsula; Cape San Blas has remained virtually untouched. The area is low in density, featuring mainly single family homes, ideal for a retreat or simply an escape from the hustle and bustle of the big city.

Wildlife abounds in this scenic haven offering a view of the majestic bald eagle, the loggerhead turtle laying its eggs, an osprey that has a fish in its talons or to see a dozen bottle nosed dolphins frolicking in the

bay. These magnificent sites that were taken for granted not too long ago, are truly a rare event in today's world.

Best of all this is an area with limited commercialism, motels do not exist here. Rentals in quaint and lovely cottages, cabins, and beach homes are available. Favorite activities on the Cape are swimming, sunbathing, surf fishing, seashell hunting, snorkeling and exploring, it is a place where one can sit in the sun, read a book and listen to the sounds of the sea. Once the sand gets between your toes and the smell of the salt air envelopes your senses, you will never want to leave!

St. Joseph Peninsula State Park:

This pristine State Park has miles of snowy white sand beaches, striking dune formations, a heavily forested interior and a favorable climate for year-round recreation are but a few of this park's stellar characteristics. This 2,516-acre park is bounded on three sides by the waters of St. Joseph Bay and the Gulf of Mexico. This impressive park has routinely been rated in the top in the county's top five by Dr. Beach. In 1999 it rated # 1 in the continental United States.

Named for lifelong community leader T.H. Stone, the park is teeming with wildlife and marine life. Noted as an excellent birding area with sittings of 209 species recorded, it is in a premier location in the eastern United States for observing hawks during their fall migration. Many species can be seen including the endangered peregrine falcon and the majestic bald eagle. The monarch butterfly is also in the wing in autumn, making its long migratory journey to Mexico. Shore and wading birds are abundant throughout the year.

The best areas of the park to observe birds are along the beach and bay shore, while the sandpipe scrub, pine flat woods and dunes offer protective habitat. The shallow waters of St. Joseph Bay are alive with a variety of marine life. Shelling is a popular activity on the peninsula, however, it is important that no live shells be harmed or removed.

The park offers picnicking, swimming, tent, cabin, and RV camping, saltwater fishing, boating and wilderness hiking in the park's 1,650-acre wilderness preserve. A boat ramp, boat basin and canoe rentals are available. A visitor center displays the highlights of the park's unique ecosystems.

For further information contact: St. Joseph Peninsula State Park, 8899 Cape San Blas Road, Port St. Joe, Florida 32456 (850) 227-1327.

Cape Palms Park: One of Gulf County's recently developed parks; Cape Palms Park offers public access to the beach with convenient parking. Located on Cape San Blas Road, 6.3 miles from the State Road C-30, it has all the amenities to make your day at the beach a great one! This park features a picnic pavilion, playground, grills, restroom facilities, and an observation deck that escorts you over the dunes to the water's edge. This park is also handicap accessible.

Cape San Blas Lighthouse: Not only is Gulf County rich in diverse outdoor recreational activities, it is home to one of the 30 lighthouses still standing in the State of Florida. The first lighthouse was constructed in 1838 and after five reconstructions stands near its present site. The Cape San Blas lighthouse is located approximately 10 miles south- southeast of Port St. Joe, near the pristine St. Joseph Peninsula State Park. The Lighthouse and Sleeping Beauty Gift Shop are open Wednesday through Friday 11-5 and Saturday 10-4.

Salinas Park: Located at the entrance of Cape San Blas, Salinas Park is nestled among scrub oak trees, including picnic tables, grills, and restrooms. Winding boardwalks allow you to meander and quietly observe wildlife while leading you to miles of unspoiled beach. Nature lovers will especially enjoy the chance to explore this rustic setting. Many horseback riders began their beach rides from the comfort and shade of Salinas Park.

Indian Pass

Located southeast of Port St. Joe on C-30, Indian Pass gained its name from the use of the natural pass from the Apalachicola Bay to the Gulf of Mexico. This is truly a step back in time, with its broad beach allowing the sport fisherman and water enthusiasts opportunity to seek refuge and isolation from the crowds. You can enjoy unique dining experiences and savor the famous lagoon oyster that this area is known for worldwide.

The Indian Pass Public boat ramp allows you to ferry across to St. Vincent Island. This island is a wildlife refuge that is a primitive barrier island that offers the public the opportunity to observe and photograph wildlife in its natural habitat. Exotic species such as a sambar deer co-exist with native whitetail deer. Endangered and threatened species such as bald eagles and loggerhead turtles live here. Fourteen miles of beaches and 80 miles of sand roads invite fishing, hiking, photography, bird watching and shell collecting. You can access the island by ferry or private boat during the daylight hours only.

Other Areas of Interest

Highland View: A sleepy little fishing community bordered by Highway 98 and the St. Joe Canal just northwest of Port St. Joe. Captain's Cove marina now offers dry storage, dockage, and fuel and is located next to the public boat ramp under Tapper Bridge.

White City: White City lies just north of the White City Bridge on Highway 71 overlooking the Intracoastal Waterway. A public boat ramp allows the avid fisherman quick and easy access to the river systems as well as the Gulf.

Howard Creek: Located 13 miles off Highway 71 on the Apalachicola River, this area is known for its tranquil setting to serve fishermen and hunters. There is a public park that includes an opportunity to navigate the many sloughs to find their own special fishing hole.

Dalkeith: Located south of Wewahitchka, off Highway 71 on CR 382, this quiet community offers many fish camps and is home to the Gaskin Park Boat Landing and park.

Simmons Bayou: Located on C-30, this bay community is the gateway to Gulf County's famous bay scallops. Boating and camping facilities abound!

Overstreet: Located on CR-386, on the Intracoastal Waterway, this area offers yet another opportunity for the eco-tourist to enjoy boating, fishing, and observing nature. Refresh your senses with the majesty of glorious sunsets, the reminiscent sight of fireflies flickering in the night while you share campfire tales and the rustling of the water as you guide your canoe along creeks and rivers.

CAPE SAN BLAS LIGHTHOUSE

The first Cape San Blas Lighthouse was building on the end of St. Joseph Point in 1838. A second lighthouse was built in 1847; however the 65-foot tall brick tower lasted only until 1851 when a hurricane caused it to collapse. Rebuilt in 1856, the third tower lasted only a few months before it was destroyed by another hurricane. According to contemporary reports a lagoon now occupies the site of the lighthouse. The fourth Cape San Blas Lighthouse was completed in May 1858 and the 65-foot lighthouse was lighted with a third-order lens, which is the current lens. The tower was severely damaged by Confederate troops after they burned everything, including the lighthouse keeper's quarters, in an attempt to destroy the light which during that time aided the Union navigation. The tower, and miraculously the lens, endured this period, repairs were completed in 1865 and the tower was relit and remained until 1882.

In 1882, the tower fell again into the Gulf as a result of erosion (the lens was removed prior to the gradual toppling of the tower). For three years the light was shown from the top of a 100 foot tall mast. After this, brick towers proved defenseless against hurricanes and erosion, thus indicating a need to change the design of the next tower. In response to this, the Lighthouse Board erected a steel skeleton structure (the current tower) 400 to 500 yards away from the shoreline and the lens was lit on June 30, 1885.

Nine years later, in October of 1894, the tower was standing in water where it remained until 1919. The skeleton tower was disassembled and moved a quarter mile north to its current location. The lighthouse was

converted from incandescent oil vapor lamps to electricity in the early 1940's. The lighthouse station was used as a manned Loran Station until 1972 when it was automated and unmanned.

During the days prior to Loran Stations and GPS (Global Positioning System), numerous lighthouses dotted the coastline of the Florida Panhandle. However, today few remain lighted, due to technology, the continually eroding coastline, and in this case, government cutbacks. On January 18, 1996, the Cape San Blas Lighthouse dismissed of its responsibility of warning mariners of the treacherous shoals that extend five miles into the Gulf.

More importantly, many fishermen and others who rely on the gulf waters for their livelihood, and who have relied on the lighthouse for decades, must now navigate the hazardous waters off Cape San Blas without the light's aid. The St. Joseph Historical Society is valiantly trying to have the lighthouse relit and is working with local, state and federal agencies to achieve this goal. The current lighthouse was first lighted during a period of American culture that represented progress, innovation and ingenuity. One of the two lighthouse keeper's quarters is now called the Sleeping Beauty Gift Shop. Artwork and mementos are available on the first floor while the upstairs is currently being refurbished as a mini-museum with the goal to represent keeper's quarters living conditions in the early twentieth century when the lighthouse was built. The Cape San Blas lighthouse is located approximately 10 miles south-southwest of Port St. Joe, near the pristine St. Joseph Peninsula State Park.

2008 Calendar of Events

January

January 11: Snowbird Welcome Luncheon

Southern Resorts and the Barefoot Cottages want to welcome all visiting winter guests in the area with Complimentary Lunch. Location: Barefoot Cottages, Port St. Joe. 850-229-1350 or www.southernresorts.com.

Port St Joe

February

February 9: Friends of St. Joseph Bay Preserves Annual Shrimp Boil

Friends of St. Joseph Bay Preserves Invite to join them to enjoy their Annual Shrimp Boil and Open House. This fundraiser serves up great food and music as well as guided tours of the preserve.

Port St. Joe

February 23: 2nd Annual St. Joseph Bay Bridal Expo

Wedding planning is made simple for area and visiting couples at the Bridal Expo. Hosts Petals by the Bay and Panache Tent & Event Rentals have everything for the destination or traditional wedding. 850-227-1564 or petalsbythebay@gtcom.net.

Port St. Joe

March

March 15: Archaeology Days!

March is Florida Archaeology Month (FAM) and the Northwest Regional Center of the Florida Public Archaeology Network will be holding an Archaeology Day at the T.H. Stone Memorial St. Joseph Peninsula Park. The public can meet professional archaeologists and bring artifacts from their personal collections to be examined at this free event. 850- 227-1327 or www.floridaheritagemonth.com

Cape San Blas

April

April - November: SaltAir Farmers' Market

The first and third Saturday from April through November the market brings Just harvested seasonal produce, fresh out of the water seafood, honey, jams, breads, arts & jewelry No better way to spend your Saturday Morning

Port St. Joe

April 7: Easter Egg Hunt

The Junior Service League of Port St. Joe hosts an annual Easter Egg Hunt for kids of all ages with games and prizes at the 8th Street Park.

Port St. Joe

April 12: Kid's Win Fishing Tournament

One of Port St. Joe's most anticipated events. Kids from all around come for a day of fun on the water. Fish from anywhere and bring your catch to weigh in. Prizes awarded in several categories. www.kidswinfishing.com.

Port St. Joe

April 11-12: A Taste of the Coast

Our annual two day juried art auction with coastal cuisine provided by the area's best local eateries held at the historic Centennial Building & Park Grounds. Proceeds benefit local scholarships. www.atasteofthecoast.com

Port St. Joe

April 26: Beach Blast Sprint Olympic Triathlon and Duathlon

Don't miss this year's excitement. Athlete's will run, bike, and swim in a race of speed and endurance. After the race the fun continues at the Beacon Hill Park with food to celebrate the day. 850-522-6666, thebeachblast.com.

Beacon Hill

May

May: Derby Days

Put On Your Sundresses, Seersucker Suits & Hats! Join us for Mint Juleps, Croquet, Horse Racing, Music & More at the Village Center in Windmark Beach. This annual event sponsored by the Junior Service League of Port St. Joe collaborating with the St Joe Company includes 5K/Fun Run, Family Day, and Gala.

Port St. Joe

May 2-Aug 1: First Friday's-A Fine Art & Music Series

Gulf Alliance for Local Arts hosts a music and art reception the first Friday of each month with a little bit of everything as the sun goes down. 850-227-4960 or www.gulfalliance.org.

Port St. Joe

May 8-18: Plein Air Paint Out

Nationally recognized plein air artists have been selected to capture the allure of the Forgotten Coast with paint and canvas. Experience beauty through the eyes of America's finest plein air artists!
www.gulfalliance.org.

Gulf County

May 17: Tupelo Honey Festival

There is something for everyone at the annual Tupelo Festival at Lake Alice Park in Wewahitchka. Arts & crafts of all kinds, food vendors, games and activities for kids, live music and dancing are just some of the usual fare offered. Most important of course is the honey. You can taste honey samples and buy jars of all sizes to take home.

Wewahitchka

June

June 13-15: Big Bend Saltwater Classic Family, Fishing, Fun, North Florida's Premier Fishing Tournament, \$135,000 in Cash and Prizes, Four Competitive Divisions, Over \$450,000 for Artificial Reefs since 1989. Weigh Station at the Port St. Joe Marina 850-227-9393 or www.saltwaterclassic.com.

Port St. Joe

June 28-29 Florida Bass Federation Tournament

Qualifier Tournament your last chance to make the 2008 State Championship beginning at the White City Boat Ramp to Lake Wimico (Apalachicola River System). The MINN KOTA

White City

July

July 4-5: Independence on the Coast

Great hometown activities including a pirate invasion, music, games, treasure hunt, children's costume contest, and spectacular fireworks. 850-227-1223 or www.gulfchambert.org.

Port St. Joe

August

August 2-4: 12th Annual Scallop Festival

This year's Scallop Festival will be centered in Shipyard Cove. Recreational-harvested scallops are enjoyed and celebrated during this event featuring live music, arts and more. 850-227-1223 or www.gulfchamber.org.

Port St. Joe

August 23: 12th Annual MBARA Kingfish Tournament

The Kingfish Tournament host, Mexico Beach Artificial Reef Association, is dedicated to artificial reef deployment, research and public education. Prizes awarded in several categories. 850-648-4354 or www.mbara.org.

Mexico beach

August 29-30: 10th Annual Florida Catfish Classic Tournament

Anglers hunt for the biggest flathead and compete for prizes. Grand prize package worth \$50,000, door prizes and cash prizes will be awarded! www.floridacatfishclassic.com.

Wewahitchka

September

September 7: Barefoot Brides

A Perfect Wedding Guide and Barefoot Cottages team up for a poolside bridal party for planning the perfect destination wedding! 800-337-7767 or perfectweddingdj@aol.com.

Port St. Joe

September 27: Beach Blast Sprint Olympic Triathlon and Duathlon

A favorite course for the race enthusiast. Athlete's will run, bike, and swim in a race of speed and endurance. After the race the fun continues at the Beacon Hill Park with food to celebrate the day. 850-522-6666, thebeachblast.com.

Beacon Hill

September 27: Paws in the Park/Bow Wow Bash

Pet lovers are welcome to this benefit for the St. Joseph Bay Human Society featuring a 5K run and pet competitions at the Centennial Building. www.sjbhumanesociety.org

Port St. Joe

October

October 11: Autumn Action Golf Scramble Golf Tournament

A fantastic way to bring the family together is golfing with combination teams, and parents playing the course along with their teens. 850-229-7799 or dri@talstar.com.

Port St. Joe

October 31: Ghosts on the Coast

Dress up or trick-or-Treat in the safety of downtown Reid Ave. Enjoy storytelling, costume contest and treats! 850-227-1223 or www.gulfchamber.org.

Port St. Joe

November

November 28-29: Christmas on the Coast

Kick-off the season with a parade, tree lighting, 5K Reindeer Run, Santa and all the festive entertainment downtown. 850-227-1223 or www.gulfchamber.org.

Port St. Joe

December

December 31: Beaches New Year's Eve Celebration

Celebrate Safe-Celebrate Twice. No need to wait another 12 months to celebrate the next New Year. Ring in the New Year twice. Start in the Eastern Time Zone in St. Joe Beach, then travel west just five minutes to Mexico Beach and celebrate all over again an hour later in the Central Time Zone. A shuttle bus will be running from Regan's, in Beacon Hill/St. Joe Beach to Mango Marley's in Mexico Beach, and everywhere in between. www.visitgulf.com or www.mexicobeach.com.

St. Joe Beach-Mexico Beach

Please note all events listed are subject to changes or cancelation. Please contact the event host for planning purposes or additional information.

TUPELO HONEY

It is one of the shortest “harvesting” seasons known to mankind. Only a 14-day period in late April and/or early May, Gulf County, Florida beekeepers traipse the swampy edges of the **Chipola** and **Apalachicola** River basin in quest **of the** highly coveted golden nectar known as Tupelo Honey.

It is both a profession that is both labor and timing intensive. Tupelo Honey is produced from the Tupelo gum tree that blossoms in the spring of the year. If weather and critter conditions have been kind they interact to generate what is generally regarded as the world’s finest honey. This area in northern Gulf County is the only region of the country in which the sweet, non-granulating honey is commercially harvested.

One trip to the harvesting “fields” will tell you why there are only a limited number of Tupelo beekeepers. Bees are placed on elevated platforms along the river’s edge. Expensive labor and equipment are necessary in order to access these locations. The coveted “white Tupelo” season is preceded by the blooming of such “bakery grade” honey plants as willow, **ti-ti** black gum and black tupelo. Bee colony strength and stores are built up during this period.

But then the hives must be purged of all other types of honey at the beginning of the “white Tupelo” gathering period. Beekeepers also must insure that the hive doors are shut to any other type of honey deposits during this prime harvesting period. So the results are “Certified Tupelo.”

Real Tupelo Honey is light amber in color and light golden with a greenish cast. The flavor is distinctive and delicious and will not granulate.

As Van Morrison sang, “You’re as sweet as Tupelo Honey”

Tupelo is also beneficial to diabetic patients, who have been permitted by their physicians to consume the all-natural nectar. The average Tupelo Honey analysis is 44.03% levulose and 29.98% dextrose. Because the gathering of “pure” Tupelo is both labor intensive and a fine science it can not be gathered in massive quantities. Therefore it carries a slightly higher price tag than other types of Mother Nature’s “natural sweetner”.

But that doesn’t bother honey connoisseurs around the world. They recognize that Tupelo Honey not only tastes great - it’s good for you!

TUPELO FESTIVAL & MOVIE

On the first Saturday in April in Wewahitchka, Florida in northern Gulf County, the Tupelo Honey Festival is held at Lake Alice Park. Free samples of this wonderful nectar are handed out to everyone. The agricultural extension office and 4-H club provide pamphlets and everyone has a delightful time beneath the canopy of moss draped oak trees in this beautiful park in this quaint community. Generations of Wewa's area residents along with the surrounding area have been involved in the gathering of Tupelo Honey for more than century and their unique occupation and product was the subject of the award-winning movie, "Ulee's Gold."

The film directed by Florida writer/director, Victor Nunez, was inspired to do this movie during his regular visits to Gulf County. He cast Peter Fonda in the lead role along with Patricia Richardson of "Tool Time" fame. The movie is about a Viet Nam war veteran turned beekeeper, with a dysfunctional family. This film gave Mr. Fonda an academy award nomination and boosts the interest and sales of Tupelo Honey.

It was filmed in Gulf County and the film's main consultants were local beekeepers from Wewa.

FISHING

Amateur or elite, landlubber or old salt, a visit to Gulf County must include a crack at the waters of the "world's best fishing". The Gulf of Mexico, freshwater lakes and rivers, St. Joseph Bay and Intra-coastal Waterway provides excellent fishing sites and challenges. If sailing the high seas aboard one of the many charters offered doesn't exactly fit your fancy then surf fishing off the coastline may be more your style. Or you may enjoy trolling along the rivers and lakes to catch the "big one". Both salt and freshwater opportunities abound so put on your deck shoes and head for the water. Chances are, it won't be far away.

Surf/Pier Fishing: It's one of the least expensive ways for an entire family to spend the day. The toddlers can build sand castles while dad and mom cast into the rolling waves for whiting, pompano or one of the many other species that frequent the miles of beach shoreline. Shrimp or cut baits go a long way and artificial lures go even longer. There are any numbers of hot spots along the beach and residents will be more than happy to share their local knowledge of what's hot and what's not!

Deep Sea Fishing: Some dream of going far offshore and reeling in a trophy catch. In Gulf County that dream can become reality. Even if you only enjoy this sport on rare occasions, it gives you a memorable experience comparison to none. With personal or charter boats captained by local experts, the bountiful Gulf awaits the offshore angler with grouper, amberjack, snapper, Spanish mackerel, king mackerel and cobia are among the most popular game fish that abound. Gulf County has an active reef building program insuring that future generations can enjoy deep sea fishing at its finest.

Bay Fishing: Ranked one of Florida's most pristine bays the St. Joseph Bay Aquatic Preserve, allows the fisherman to actually see the catch long before it's pulled into the boat. From inboard motor to the kayak, St. Joseph Bay is accessible to all anglers. Here you can find Redfish, trout, shark, mullet, flounder and tarpon. For those unfamiliar with the term "skinny water", it is fishing shallow water and usually poling within reach of the opposition. Gulf County is home to several outstanding "flats" guides and the many public boat ramps make it easy for "do-it-yourself" fishermen to quickly get out on the bay.

Freshwater Fishing: Gulf County abounds with freshwater fishing opportunities. The Apalachicola River, Chipola River and Brothers River form your journey down our winding river system. Each turn can take you into a new slough or you can grab a cane pole and sit on the banks. Whatever your preference Gulf County has it. White City has hosted many bass fishing tournaments and Wewa plays home to the catfish. With many public and private boat ramps, you are assured a speedy exit into the serenity of Gulf County's beautiful freshwater havens.

BAY SCALLOPS

Bay scallops are secretive bivalves that spend most of their short lives hiding in the underwater sea grass in St. Joseph Bay. Populations in Florida have declined significantly, and the bay scallop is found in large numbers in the coastal water north and west of the Suwannee River, mainly near Steinhatchee and St. Joseph Bay.

Description of a Bay Scallop:

The scallop is considered a bivalve because it has two shells, called valves. The upper one is usually colorful, while the lower valve is typically white. Bay scallops generally live to a 2-inch size and survive only one year in Florida waters. The scallops feed continuously by vacuuming small particles of algae and organic matter from the water. An adult scallop can filter 15.5 quarts of water per hour. The scallops funnel water over open pathways in their shells called gills. One pathway takes in water and skims off the particles, while the other expels the filtered water and wastes. Scallops open their shells while feeding and breathing and close them when predators approach. Numerous tiny blue eyes located along the outer rim of the shell detect movement and serve as a warning system. The scallops swim backward by clapping their valves together and rapidly expelling water.

Life History

A bay scallop has the ability to develop both male and female sexual organs. They produce both sperm and eggs. An interval occurs between release of the sperm and the eggs. This prevents self-fertilization. The random method of fertilization requires the presence of numerous scallops in a small area. The amount of food available and the surrounding water temperature influence development of the reproductive organs. A change in water temperature may trigger spawning. Spawning usually occurs in September through December. Each scallop is capable of producing millions of eggs at one time, but only one egg out of 12 million may survive to adulthood. The fertilized eggs become tiny larvae in about 36 hours and float in the water for about 14 days before they attach to the base of sea grass blades. The juvenile scallops are called spat. The spat move up the sea grass blades to be out of the reach of bottom dwelling predators, such as crabs. As many as 90% of the spat will die within six weeks of latching onto the sea grass blades. Those that survive will eventually drop off the sea grass and fall to the bottom. A variety of marine creatures are able to pry the scallop shells open and extract the inner meat. They can survive by swimming away from these predators or becoming camouflaged in the sea grass beds.

Environmental Significance

Bay scallops are very sensitive to changes in water temperature and water quality. They are considered an accurate barometer of an ecosystem's health. They provide an early-warning system for scientists monitoring the quality of coastal waters in Florida. Bay scallops are sensitive to changes in water temperature and salinity. They are also vulnerable to changes in water quality. Water made cloudy by floating particles and sediments can clog the scallop's gills. The scallop can close its shell for only about two hours before it is affected by dirty water. What can you do? You can shut off your outboard motors when in the sea grass area, unless in a channel. **DO NOT DREDGE CHANNELS IN THE SEA GRASS.** Tilt up your motor, use a trolling motor, pole your boat, use oars or get out of the boat and walk it along the sea grass bed.

Scalloping Regulations

Scalloping is permitted only in certain waters, including St. Joseph Bay from July 1 to September 10th, each year. Each person is limited to 2 gallons of whole scallops or 1 pint of meat per day. A boatload of five or more people can take not more than 10 gallons of whole scallops or 4 pints of meat per day.

All scallopers operating from a boat must have a valid saltwater fishing license from the state. Persons wading in shallow area at low tide do not need a license, but they cannot use dive masks or snorkels to help them find the scallops.

SCALLOP FESTIVAL

The Annual Scallop Festival is held in Port St. Joe alongside the St. Joseph Bay in Shipyard Cove. Shopping, food, music, and entertainment are provided by the many vendors that come to help celebrate the famed scallop with a giant farewell until next season.