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**Dauphin Island, AL: An Idyllic Beach Vacation**

**By Susan Dunn**

**Dauphin Island, AL: An Idyllic Beach Vacation by Susan Dunn, MA, The EQ Coach**

Part of the fun of vacationing on Dauphin Island is driving there. Coming east on IH-10 from Houston, you will watch the landscape change dramatically as you experience the states of Texas, Louisiana, Mississippi, and finally Alabama. And then you can easily include Florida while you're there, too. As you near your destination, you'll see men wearing big white boots for clamming, known locally as "Baldwin County Nikes".

You'll drive through casino land, then, turning south from Mobile, enter beautiful Baldwin County, AL. To me, the roads are exceptional and the scenery peaceful and pastoral. I love that there are both trees and water, and the farm country is very peaceful.

Dauphin Island, AL is a barrier island located about 30 miles from Mobile, AL. It's 17 miles of white sand beaches with some of the most beautiful sunsets I've ever seen, and is surrounded by Mobile Bay, the Gulf of Mexico and the Mississippi Sound.

How to get there? Here is a map: <http://dauphinisland.cc/map.htm> . You can get there by ferry or by car.

First colonized in the 1600s, it was named "Dauphin Island" in 1707, after the heir to the French throne (dauphin = prince). At this time it was the capitol of the Louisiana territory, which you'll recall at the time was about two-thirds of the United States.

In 1954, a bridge was built connecting Dauphin Island to the mainland and the Dauphin Island Park & Beach Board was created. The sand dunes which had covered the walls of FORT GAINES were excavated, piers built and recreational amenities begun. Fort Gaines is now an historical site you'll want to visit when you're there.

Once you enter the island, part of your adventure can be driving through Tupelo Gum Swamp. Here is a photo: <http://chris.dauphinisland-info.com/upelo.html> .

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### THE AUDOBON BIRD SANCTUARY

Dauphin Island was recently named one of the top four locations for viewing spring migrations by Wild Bird Magazine, and one of the ten most important sites for migrations globally. Located at the Eastern end of the Island, it includes 64 acres of maritime forest, marshes, and dunes, including a lake, a swamp and a beach.

### THE DAUPHIN ISLAND SEA LAB

The Sea Lab is also located on the eastern end of the island, spanning it north–south, and is a five–minute walk from the Mobile Bay Ferry and Fort Gaines. An educational facility, it includes the Estuarium / Public Aquarium (<http://estuarium.disl.org/>), with touch tanks ("Get hands–on experience with aquatic animals"), a living marsh walk, and a weather station. For map and driving instructions, go here: <http://www.disl.org/location.html>

### EXCURSION CRUISE

Along with swimming and fishing, you can take a two–hour excursion cruise (<http://gulfinfo.com/cruises/index.html>) starting in Little Dauphin Bay and heading east past Fort Gaines, the Ferry landing and the Sea Lab. You'll then enter the Gulf of Mexico where you can see the shrimping, and, says the captain, sometimes dolphins will come play alongside the yacht. You'll also cruise near an oil field platform. A 3–hour cruise is also available.

FISHING is a must, and so plentiful, the Island hosts 10 annual fishing rodeos. There are charter boats (<http://gulfinfo.com/fishing.htm>), and a 850 ft. fishing pier where you can rent fishing rods.

### BELLINGRATH GARDENS

On your way down from Mobile, you'll want to stop by Bellingrath Gardens, a 65–acre floral paradise. Keeping a full calendar, here are some of the things you can expect:

- February: 50,000 bulbs are planted and you'll see tulips, daffodils, hyacinths, pansies and more.
- March: The azaleas are in bloom. Here are photos of the Spring Garden:  
<http://www.bellingrath.org/bloom/spring.asp> .
- May: Over 130 varieties of roses to delight the eye, plus marigolds, tropical flowers and foliage, hydrangeas, Allamandas, and more.
- November 9 is the Chrysanthemum Extravaganza
- November 15 is the Mum Festival
- November 28–December 31 (closed Christmas Day) is Magic Christmas in Lights, with myriads of twinkling lights, music, food, poinsettia displays and more.

You can take a River sightseeing cruise or dinner cruise from the gardens on the Southern Belle. For admission, schedule, and map, go here: <http://www.bellingrath.org/rates.asp> .

### ACCOMMODATIONS

You can rent a private beach house here: <http://www.beachhouserentalondi.com/> and this site will show you many options, services and links: <http://gulfinfo.com> . There is also a Campground (<http://dauphinisland.org/camp.htm>) with 150 sites, pavilion with grills, free boat launches, walking trails into the Bird Sanctuary, bicycle rental, playground, and boardwalk to a beach on the Gulf.

Porch on rented home: me on the porch

And don't miss some of the great food in the area. I especially enjoyed Catalina Restaurant, on your way back up to IH-10, it's on Highway 188 up toward Bayou La Batre It's on Highway 188 up toward Bayou La Batre (pronounced Bat-Tree). Call 334.824.2104.

Also recommended, if you want to swing east and enjoy a drive in the beautiful countryside over toward Pensacola, try the Catfish barn on Highway 98. You won't believe the food and you won't believe the prices. Take a look: <http://www.webstrategies.cc/P1010607.JPG> . Best catfish I ever had and I'm from Texas for heaven's sake!

For a peaceful, idyllic beach vacation, try Dauphin Island. As one person said who goes there often, the welcome sign ought to say "Welcome to Paradise."

©Susan Dunn, The EQ Coach, <http://www.susandunn.cc> . I coach around emotional intelligence for

wellness, success, and personal and professional development. I also offer distance learning courses and ebooks, and train and certify EQ coaches. Mailto:[sdunn@susandunn.cc](mailto:sdunn@susandunn.cc) for free ezine. For daily EQ Tips, send blank email to [EQ4U-subscribe@yahoogroups.com](mailto:EQ4U-subscribe@yahoogroups.com) .

## **The Perfect Beach Vacation For You**

**By Jolana Klobouk**

What makes the perfect beach vacation? The most important thing in having the perfect beach vacation is to choose the right destination. Couples don't want to end up with screaming kids by the pool and families don't want to end up at a romantic resort designed for couples with no activities to keep the kids amused.

There are hundreds of places that you can select for your perfect beach holiday. You can choose from beaches in the United States, the Caribbean, or decide to go overseas to find additional tropical climates and idyllic beaches.

If you are searching to get away with a spouse or significant other for a romantic beach vacation, Maui may be one of the perfect beach locations. One of the many areas in Hawaii, Maui is one of the top romantic beaches in the world. Maui is also well known for honeymoons, and offers an abundance of incredible beaches with plenty of other things to do as well.

Another well-known destination for a romantic beach vacation is the Virgin Islands. The Virgin Islands is the perfect destination to get away from it all and just spend time together to get to know each other all over again in paradise. Couples have been choosing these islands for many years for getaways and romantic vacations and honeymoons.

For a family beach vacation, there are lots of places that you and the kids will love. One of the favourite

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spots in the USA is California, as there are many additional things to interest the kids as well. There are over 1,000 miles of California beaches along the California coast and approximately 118 beach cities. In addition, there are oodles of attractions, including Sea World, Disneyland and the San Diego Zoo.

For the perfect beach vacation, select a location that will have activities that you and your traveling companions will enjoy. If you love surfing, pick a location with waves. Families with small children will prefer calmer waters. If you love going out at night, or collecting seashells or just doing nothing – there is a beach destination to accommodate you.

Once you have narrowed it down to a few perfect locations, look at the costs involved and pick one that fits into your budget. You will not enjoy yourself knowing you broke the bank but at the same time, pick a few things to splurge on to reward yourself and enjoy it.

No matter where you decide to go on your beach vacation, pick the spot that is best suited to who is going, what type of activities you enjoy and one that fits into your budget. A beach vacation can be a perfect vacation because whether you are traveling with that special someone, your family or friends, it will help you unwind, relax and have some fun. We can all use more of that!

Jolana Klobouk is a former travel agent who loves to travel and write about her experiences. She is currently the editor of

and

– visit them for more great travel information.



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