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North Florida



The Brumos Collection, Jacksonville

North Florida offers a vibrant history, diverse culture, natural splendor and Southern charm. This region of the state promises varied dining choices, and a plethora of entertainment options. And its wide-open spaces promise numerous activity options for groups sensitive to social distancing.

SOUTH WALTON

South Walton, located in Northwest Florida, is a 26-mile stretch of white sandy beaches and emerald waters that offers several exceptional parks, in addition to 16 vibrant beach communities that each feature a distinct personality and unique architecture.

Being located directly on the beach gives **Hilton Sandestin Beach Golf Resort & Spa** a natural advantage over more dense resort destinations, explains Kevin Rosa, director of sales and marketing. “The resort property itself is located in a less-populated rural area, making it easy for guests to enjoy a relaxing escape in a safe open-air setting,” he adds. Features include secluded balconies for all guest rooms, private poolside cabanas and distanced chaise lounges along the expansive 20,000-sf beachfront deck. Additionally, extensive new cleaning protocols and safety guidelines have been implemented.

For groups willing to venture off property, the resort is conveniently close to four state parks, 15 coastal dune lakes, and **Point Washington State Forest**, all ideal for outdoor exploration.

David Demarest, director of marketing & communications for **Visit South Walton**, is seeing more of the destination's meeting venues feature outdoor meeting spaces, making cleaning practices more frequent and more visible to help reassure guests, using AV staff to help facilitate hybrid online/in person meetings, and hosting smaller group sizes in larger spaces to increase social distancing.

"In South Walton, many of our outdoor meeting spaces are either Gulf-front or bayfront, so meetings have the added advantage of beautiful views in these open-air settings. Likewise, hosted beach bonfires have long been a popular group activity in South Walton, but are even more so as meeting planners try to find ways to host unique and attractive open-air events. I think that we all understand more than ever the importance and appeal of in-person meetings, so as meeting planners find ways to host creative, beautiful and safe events (and openly address attendees' concerns) meeting and incentive travel will bounce back, too," Demarest says.



Point Washington State Forest

ST. AUGUSTINE/PONTE VEDRA

Promising 42 miles of unobstructed beaches, Ponte Vedra is renowned for its quiet old-world charm, laid-back luxury and natural beauty that promises myriad outdoor activities for those looking for those wide-open spaces. Ponte Vedra's seaside resorts are known for their world-class golf courses, private, breathtaking beaches, and relaxing spas. Golf enthusiasts will definitely want to visit **TPC Sawgrass**, home of THE PLAYERS Championship.

Last September, **Ponte Vedra Inn & Club** unveiled two new landmark complements to its oceanfront accommodations with the addition of 41 beachfront rooms and suites, bringing its total guest room count to 262.

Ponte Vedra Inn & Club's *Ocean Course* is one of Florida's oldest and most iconic golf courses, and just reopened after being closed for renovations over the past year. Overseen by celebrated golf course architect Bobby Weed, there have been significant enhancements to the golf course and the practice facilities. And water is definitely the dominant feature for the resort's *Lagoon Course*, a sprawling 30,000-sf space. The Racquet Club features tennis facilities, three pools, an 8,000-sf fitness center with direct ocean views, the Surf Club and endless beach and outdoor activities, as well as a wide range of culinary options by Erik Osol, celebrated Chef de Cuisine.

The resort has numerous COVID-19 standards and measures in place that are comprehensive, but fluid, allowing the resort team to pivot if and when needed, explains Craig Schoninger, director of sales and marketing. "Another fantastic feature of the resort is its campus-style layout. During COVID this has been not only a distinctive feature, but an advantage that allows guests to social distance when getting around without worrying about crowded, high-traffic spaces," he adds.

Schoninger notes that the resort was built to complement its natural surroundings and that it's perfectly located between the Atlantic Ocean and Lake Vedra. The resort, all amenities and culinary establishments are open only to resort guests and members.



Destin Harbor, Emerald Coast

JACKSONVILLE

Jacksonville delights visitors with its vibrant downtown riverfront, lively local culture, 22 miles of pristine sandy beaches, easy access to nature and wildlife, and world-class golf, shopping, and dining. It is ideally suited for drive-to meetings and smaller, regional gatherings. The destination offers more than 3,250 new hotel rooms planned or proposed for a total of 35 new projects in the works for 2021 and beyond. For example, Jacksonville Beach's 202-room **Margaritaville Beach Hotel** will offer groups a true license to chill come spring 2021.

The elegant, newly opened **Brumos Collection** museum (temporarily closed due to pandemic) offers multiple meeting rooms, indoor-outdoor event space with 35,000 sf of space dedicated to more than three dozen rare and historically acclaimed race and collector cars.

EMERALD COAST

Collectively known as the Heart of Florida's Emerald Coast, Destin, Fort Walton Beach, and Okaloosa Island are considered some of America's most favored coastal destinations. The area offers some of the world's most spectacular beaches, legendary fishing and boating, Gulf-to-table seafood, watersport activities, golf, and nightlife for groups to enjoy.

The **Destin-Fort Walton Beach Convention Center** provides more than 32,000 sf of indoor meeting space, with an additional 30,000 sf of outdoor space on Bayview Plaza. The center includes a 21,200-sf column-free Grand Ballroom and five smaller meeting rooms.

Destin-Fort Walton Beach offers diverse accommodation options, ensuring planners have plenty of options to choose from.