



Ft. Pickens



On the western edge of Santa Rosa Island, where the Gulf of Mexico meets the deep channels of the Pensacola Bay, sits one of Pensacola Beach's iconic landmarks: Fort Pickens. Built in 1843 from over twenty-one million bricks, the military fortress is firmly planted on some of the Gulf Coast's most beautifully preserved shoreline. If you love exploration, recreation, or American history—and who doesn't?—then the Fort Pickens area of Pensacola Beach is a must-see destination.

Directions:

The most common way to reach Fort Pickens is by car. When you're approaching the Fort Pickens area of the Gulf Island National Seashore and first enter the park, you'll have the Gulf of Mexico to your left and the Pensacola Bay to your right. As you drive, you'll move through the gorgeous greenery preserved by the National Park Service and pass campgrounds and picnic areas. Look closely: when you start to see fixed artillery batteries scattered about, you'll know you're close. Shortly after, the time- and weather-scarred bricks of the fort itself will come into view.



KID FRIENDLY

With its abundance of history and preservation, Ft. Pickens serves up rich educational and outdoor activities for kids of all ages. From guided ranger tours of the fort and the park's ecosystem to miles of pristine beach, we can't imagine a more pure experience for kids.



NATURE

Being located in the heart of the Gulf Islands National Seashore, Ft. Pickens plays host to miles of trails, coastline, foliage and diverse animal species. Whether you're an avid bird watcher or casual hiker, nature based exploring opportunities abound.



CAMPING

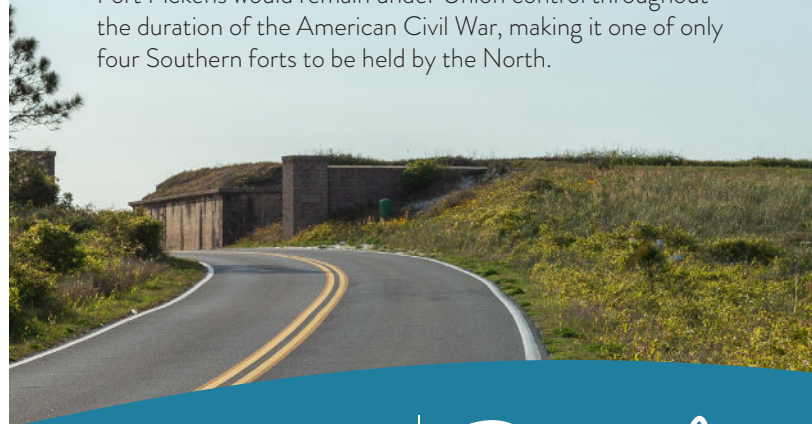
With multiple loops, 137 campsites, and a variety of amenities and access points, you'll find the starry accommodations you're looking for. Some loops offer basic tent camping and bare essentials while others offer electrical hookups, hot showers, and more. Pet-friendly and bonafide group camping are options as well.

History:

After the War of 1812, the American government began building military forts in strategic coastal areas all across the country in order to fortify its shoreline and deter future attacks. Fort Pickens is one such fortification. Designed by a French engineer and constructed almost entirely by slaves, Fort Pickens was completed in 1843, making it the largest structure defending the Pensacola Harbor.

Fort Pickens' importance as a strategic bulwark made it the center of a number of Civil War skirmishes. On the same January day in 1861 that Florida officially seceded from the Union, Lieutenant Adam J. Slemmer took a small battalion of under one hundred soldiers and sailors to hold Fort Pickens, refusing to surrender it to the Florida militia. Slemmer and his men warded off attacks for three months before Union reinforcements arrived. Then, in October, the Confederate army launched the Battle of Santa Rosa Island in order to take back Fort Pickens with the might of a thousand men. But the Union army repelled the attacks, forcing the Confederates to retreat and, after a few more battles, eventually surrender.

Fort Pickens would remain under Union control throughout the duration of the American Civil War, making it one of only four Southern forts to be held by the North.



For more information,
please visit PensacolaBeach.com

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TOP 5 THINGS TO DO AT FT. PICKENS



1

CAMP

If you love the great outdoors and sleeping under the stars, camping in Ft. Pickens is essential. Nationally recognized as a top 10 place to camp, you'll find varying loops, dozens of campsites, and a range of amenities. No matter the campsite you settle on, you're within steps of preserved beaches and trailheads. With the amount of outdoor and adventure activities in the park, we recommend staying at least 2 nights to get the full Ft. Pickens experience.

2

HIKE

If you're an outdoor enthusiast or hiker, there are plentiful trails throughout the park including the Northern Terminus of the Florida Trail. Whether visiting the fort on a day trip or a week of camping, you're within a stone's throw of bonafide hiking trails that span nearly 7 miles of the national park.

3

BIKE

For the casual and avid adventure enthusiasts, we can't imagine a better way to take in the beauty of Fort Pickens than by bike. Whether a relaxed rider or a fitness fanatic, traversing the snaking roads through the fort is an unforgettable experience. You'll be able to observe nature, wildlife, and historic relics that you might otherwise overlook driving. Many of the designated hiking trails are also bike friendly, so you're able to explore every square mile of the park.



4

FISH

Being surrounded by an abundance of water, Fort Pickens is set up for prime fishing with easy access. Whether you're an avid angler or a first timer, fishing in Ft. Pickens should be on your radar. The park has a small bayside pier where Redfish, Mackerel, Sheepshead and a range of other saltwater fish prevail. If you're looking to test your luck in the Gulf waters, you can 'surf fish' right off the white sandy beaches within the park. The Gulf front beaches around the fort are especially known for Pompano.

5

EXPLORE

With miles of pristine gulf and sound shoreline, snaking roads, nature trails, and history, opportunities for exploring Fort Pickens are boundless. Whether you're a history buff, fitness enthusiast or outdoor lover, this section of the Gulf Islands National Seashore never disappoints. We recommend leaving no stone unturned when visiting this iconic national park. From exploring uninhabited beaches to nature seeking or just taking in a golden sunset from the fort, it's all within a day's reach.

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