

RV Destinations

AN RV TRAVEL MAGAZINE

be inspired.

RV Destinations for Beer and Nature Enthusiast

A Magical Road Trip
Miami to Key West

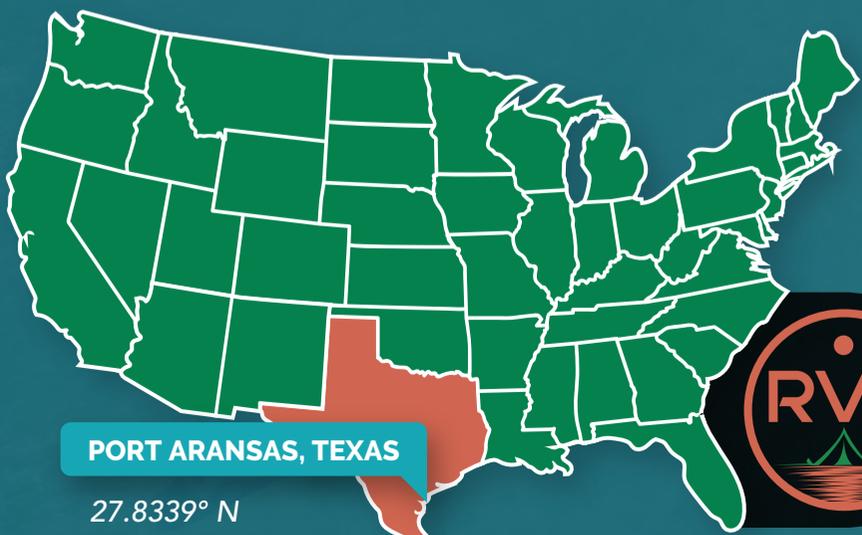
Historical Bridges of Upstate South Carolina

Featured Destination

Port Aransas

Texas Coast Hidden Treasure





PORT ARANSAS, TEXAS

27.8339° N
97.0611° W



PORT ARANSAS

Written by Caly Behymer
Photographed by Randy Behymer and Scott Cleveland





Some RV parks are full of amenities, enticing guests to stay in the park, rarely venturing beyond the front gates. Then there are RV parks that provide a perfect place to park your rig and tempt you to get out and explore the surrounding sights, attractions and town.

THERE ARE TWO SUCH RV PARKS IN PORT ARANSAS, TEXAS

- [Lafitte's Hideout RV Resort](#)
- [On the Beach RV Park](#)





Lafitte's Hideout RV Resort is conveniently located on West Cotter Avenue in the heart of Port Aransas. Walking to restaurants, shopping, bars and attractions is accessible from this location. Lafitte's offers 96 full hook-up sites, partial concrete pads (think concrete strips for your tires) and a community clubhouse and pool. This RV park is a popular destination for Winter Texans—northern folks who like to spend colder months in the south. Lafitte's offers an authentic community feel, with guests becoming neighbors who return to this location year after year. Guests love the community gatherings at the clubhouse, such as poker nights, potluck nights, wine tastings and happy hours. Lafitte's offers the perfect combination of location and community, ensuring your visit feels more like home and less like a place to park your rig.

You can't get any closer than On the Beach RV Park for those wanting to get on the beach. This is one of the few RV parks in Port Aransas that has direct access to the beach, and it's a beach you will want to take advantage of. Mustang Beach was voted one of "America's Top 25 Beaches," according to Trip Advisor. On the Beach RV Park ensures guests experience Mustang Beach as efficiently as possible. A short walk across a dune provides guests at this RV park easy access to the sandy shores of the Gulf of Mexico. Imagine the ease of being able to walk back and forth from your RV to the beach throughout the day to grab snacks, put the little ones down for a quick nap or just to grab some more ice for your cooler.





ON THE BEACH
RV PARK





On the Beach RV Park offers a throw-back feel, back to when parks focused on the surrounding attractions rather than on enticing guests with over-the-top amenities and oversized sites. Sites in On the Beach RV Park are cozy, quaint and beautifully landscaped, easily accommodating smaller RVs. The park features mature landscaping designed to add to the tropical feel of the location and the

sounds of the waves crashing against the shore only add to the appeal of this park. You won't find a pool or lazy river in this RV park. Instead, you'll spend quality time with loved ones exploring the beach and surrounding town, not feeling obligated to use every amenity. For those looking to spread out more, the park is expanding, adding more sites that will be able to accommodate larger RVs.





Lafitte's Hideout and On the Beach RV Park offer exceptional southern hospitality. Staff go above and beyond to ensure your trip to Port Aransas and their parks are unforgettable, memorable and a place you'll want to come back to visit year after year.

www.lafittesporta.com

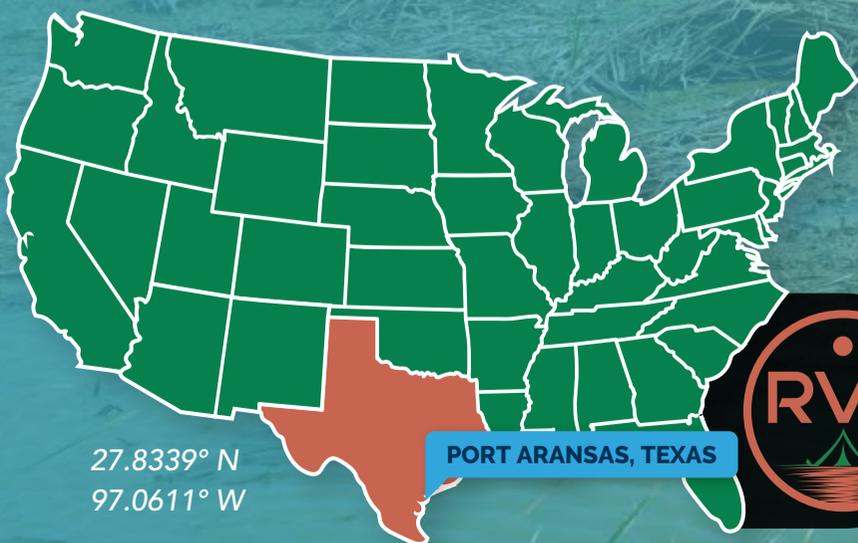
www.onthebeachrvpark.com



TEXAS COAST'S HIDDEN TREASURE

PORT ARANSAS

Written by Caly Behymer Photographed by Randy Behymer



27.8339° N
97.0611° W





Located on one of Texas' longest barrier islands lies Port Aransas, an idyllic little beach town. During the summer, the island comes to life with beachgoers searching for the perfect piece of beach to enjoy the long, sunny days. Streets are filled with golf carts as tourists putz along, passing from restaurant to shop, embracing island time and enjoying life at a slower pace. And for those looking for a quiet, charming, sleepy beach town with plenty to keep you busy even off-season, then Port Aransas, Texas, is for you.

Port Aransas is home to just under 3,000 people and is located on Mustang Island. Less than 45 minutes from the hustle and bustle of Corpus Christi, this small island town feels worlds away from big box stores and chain restaurants that clutter many beach towns. Port Aransas has held onto its charming appeal of a small beach town and offers visitors a chance to breathe and slow down, even if only for a few days.

A nomadic tribe, the Karankawa Indians, once called parts of the region home. And as early as 1519, the Spanish began exploring and mapping Aransas Pass and Mustang Island's shores. The French took their turn along the shores 200 years later, rediscovering the pass and establishing a colony. Jean Lafitte, the famous pirate, spent time on Mustang Island in the early 1800s, revisiting the area several times as it was one of his favorite places. Tall pirate tales and stories of old whispers of a hidden treasure buried in Port Aransas were begging to be discovered. By the mid-1800s, Port Aransas had its first permanent settler, Captain Robert Ainsworth Mercer, an Englishman from Lancaster. It was then that Mustang Island gained its official name, as it was once home to herds of wild mustangs. As time passed, the Civil War left its mark on the island, and in 1886, leftover lumber from the construction of barracks was used to build the now-famous Tarpon Inn. Slowly, the small town of Port Aransas began to grow as a popular sport fishing destination.

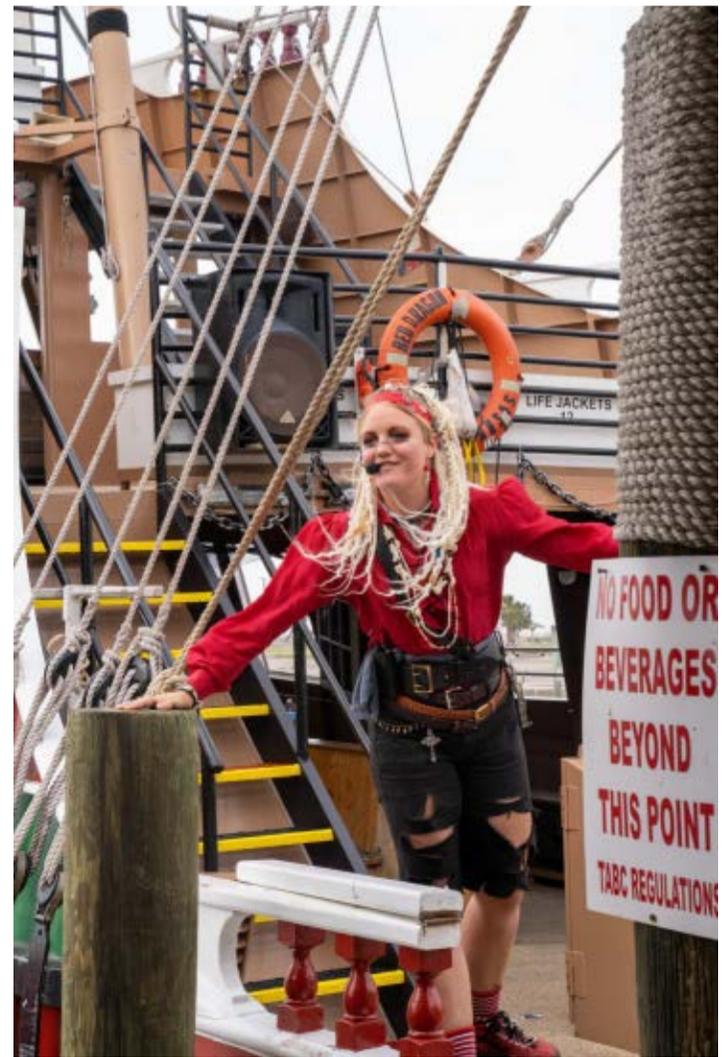
Slowly and almost methodically, Port Aransas grew but never into a town full of beach high-rise condos and mini-golf courses. Port Aransas has been blessed with small-town charm, small-town appeal and beaches that are uncluttered with steel and concrete structures. Port Aransas is an expanse of raw Texas shorelines that promises to deliver any beach vacation you seek.





IT'S A PIRATE'S LIFE FOR ME

Floating in the waters of Turtle Cove and Aransas Pass lies a red beast. It beckons those daring enough to sail the seven seas with the likes of a shady pirate crew. Step aboard the Red Dragon only if you dare and seek high-seas adventure and fun. Whether you're looking for a break from the sand and sun or want to add a unique experience to your beach vacation, this pirate cruise is sure to please. The Red Dragon Pirate Cruise is the perfect family-fun activity in Port Aransas. Lining up at the dock, you could see the excitement on the face of every child as they were getting ready to board a pirate ship. Plastic sword fights broke out between siblings as laughter filled the air behind eye patches and fake-hoop pirate earrings. The Red Dragon gently bobbing in the dock added to the excitement. Soon everyone would board the infamous Port Aransas pirate ship, and the real adventure would begin.





The cruise lasts about an hour and a half and is chock-full of entertainment, laughs, treasure hunts, sword fights and more. Every crew member on the ship does a great job playing their role as the boat cruises along the Lydia Ann Channel past the historic Lydia Ann Lighthouse. Guests wanting to enjoy the cruise but not be in the middle of all the action will enjoy the adults-only section at the bow of the ship, providing a bird's eye view of all the fun. The Red Dragon sails seven days a week and offers (off-season only) adult-only sunset cruises, more akin to a booze cruise for those looking to leave your young pirates back at the RV with grand-ma and grandpa. The full bar is open during family-friendly and adults-only sunset cruises, so be sure to grab a pirate-themed libation while sailing the seas. This fun-filled high-adventure trip will surely have you saying, "Argh!"; a pirate's seal of approval.

www.reddragonpiratecruises.com

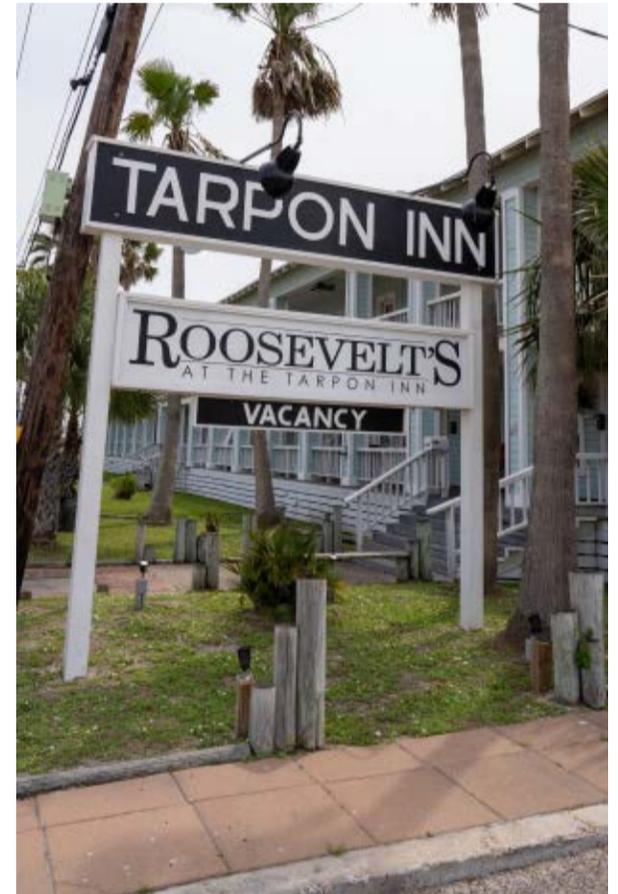


HISTORY GALORE!

Though the town is small, it packs a mighty punch regarding history. Dating back to the early 1800s, the famous pirate Jean Lafitte frequented Mustang Island. It was one of his favorite places to visit, having set up a base on San Jose Island, which sits directly north of Port Aransas. Outside of pirate history, the town also has a history dating to the Civil War and World War II.

Located on E. Cotter Avenue lies the historic Tarpon Inn, constructed in 1886 from leftover lumber used to build Civil War barracks for the Union Army. Though several disasters destroyed the original building, the current structure has stood

the test of time since 1925. The building is historical and on the National Register of Historic Places, but you'll find some fascinating history in the lobby. As a fish, the tarpon is a mighty species with a top weight of 280 pounds at upwards of 8 feet long. It's considered a sport fish, and the waters off the coast of Port Aransas used to teem with them. Tapped along the lobby walls of the Tarpon Inn are tarpon fish scales with the date, name and size of the fish written on them. Some of the scales date back to the late 1800s, and one is signed by former President Franklin Roosevelt when he went tarpon fishing while visiting Port Aransas. Also located on site are Roosevelt's Fine Dining and the 1886 Bar, making visiting the Tarpon Inn genuinely memorable.





As you head toward the beach, you can view remnants of World War II history located on a large dune on the right side of E. Cotter Avenue. You'll see signage and a small parking area. Stop here and take a short walk to see Battery 155. Built in 1942, this battery was temporary and held two 155mm M1918 rapid-fire guns. The site was quickly deactivated in 1944 after enemy naval threats were no longer a concern.



After viewing the World War II gun mounts, head over to the Port Aransas Museum on North Alister. This free museum is open only on certain days, so check their website for a current schedule. This museum is home to Port Aransas's history and the place to learn more about the historic Chapel on the Dunes and tour inside. Aline Carter built this tiny chapel upon the sand dunes of Port Aransas in the late 1930s to share the gospel with the children. She would regularly teach the children Sunday school and serve cake and ice cream after her Sunday school lessons as a special treat. In the late 1970s, artist John Patrick Cobb painted murals inside the chapel, depicting the bible from creation to Revelation. The artwork is stunning in its muted lines and colors. Though it raised local controversy by some folks who believed the chapel should've remained white on the inside, the murals stand today. They're an absolute masterpiece that you must see. The small chapel is awe-inspiring and provides some beautiful picture opportunities as well.

You can see another piece of Port Aransas's history on the water. The Lydia Ann Lighthouse was constructed in 1856 and is the second-oldest lighthouse in Texas. Though closed to the public, you can still see the lighthouse via the water. Some local kayak tours take guests by the Lydia Ann Lighthouse to see her up close and personal.

www.thetarponinn.com

<https://portaransasmuseum.org/visit-the-museum/>

<https://portaransasmuseum.org/chapel-on-the-dunes-tours/>





NATURE PRESERVES AND BIRD VIEWING

The Leonabelle Turnbull Birding Center is located behind the Port Aransas Water Treatment Facility, but don't let the location deter you; the birding center offers beautiful views across the salt marsh nestled amongst a slice of peace. As a migratory and permanent home to many species of birds, the Birding Center has hundreds and hundreds of birds to view at any given time. The birding center allows bird viewers to get up close and personal with the birds that call the birding center

home, whether full-time or just as they migrate through. Follow the 750-foot-long boardwalk atop the wetland to view the birds from above as they feed and splash in the waters below. Be sure to grab a telephoto lens and capture a flock of birds as they take flight in unison; it's quite a sight to behold. Continue to walk out onto the 750-foot-long path across the salt marsh to benches to sit and enjoy the view of the expansive birding home.



PORT ARANSAS — NATURE PRESERVE —

Leonabelle Turnbull Birding Center
Est. 1994

Please enjoy our boardwalk overlooking a freshwater marsh.

From the tower, enjoy the expansive views of the entire Nature Preserve including saltwater marshes and coastal prairies.

Look for waterfowl, shorebirds, birds of prey, gulls, osprey, pelicans, cormorants and herons.

Stop to examine the native plants as you walk; their blooms help to attract pollinators.

Listen for warblers and other songbirds that shelter here during migration.

Watch for the resident alligators and remember to keep your distance!

Hours of Operation
Sunday - Saturday, Dawn - Dusk

Weekly birding programs offered, see website for details.



* No pets allowed
* No alcohol or tobacco
* Do not feed the wildlife
* Take only photos, leave no trace



Located on the north end of the salt marsh lies the Port Aransas Nature Preserve at Charlie's Pasture. Covering more than 1,200 acres, the Nature Preserve offers walking paths, benches, picnic tables, a pavilion and guided nature walks. Future plans include connecting the walking paths from Leonabelle Turnbull to the Nature Preserve to allow visitors to traverse the expanse of the salt marshes and view its inhabitants. For something truly unique, try your hand at yoga in the peaceful surroundings of the Nature Preserve, currently offered on Tuesdays. Be sure to check the preserve's website for up-to-date details and offerings at the nature preserve.

<https://cityofportaransas.org/departments/parks-and-recreation/nature-preserve/birding-center/>
<https://cityofportaransas.org/departments/parks-and-recreation/nature-preserve/>



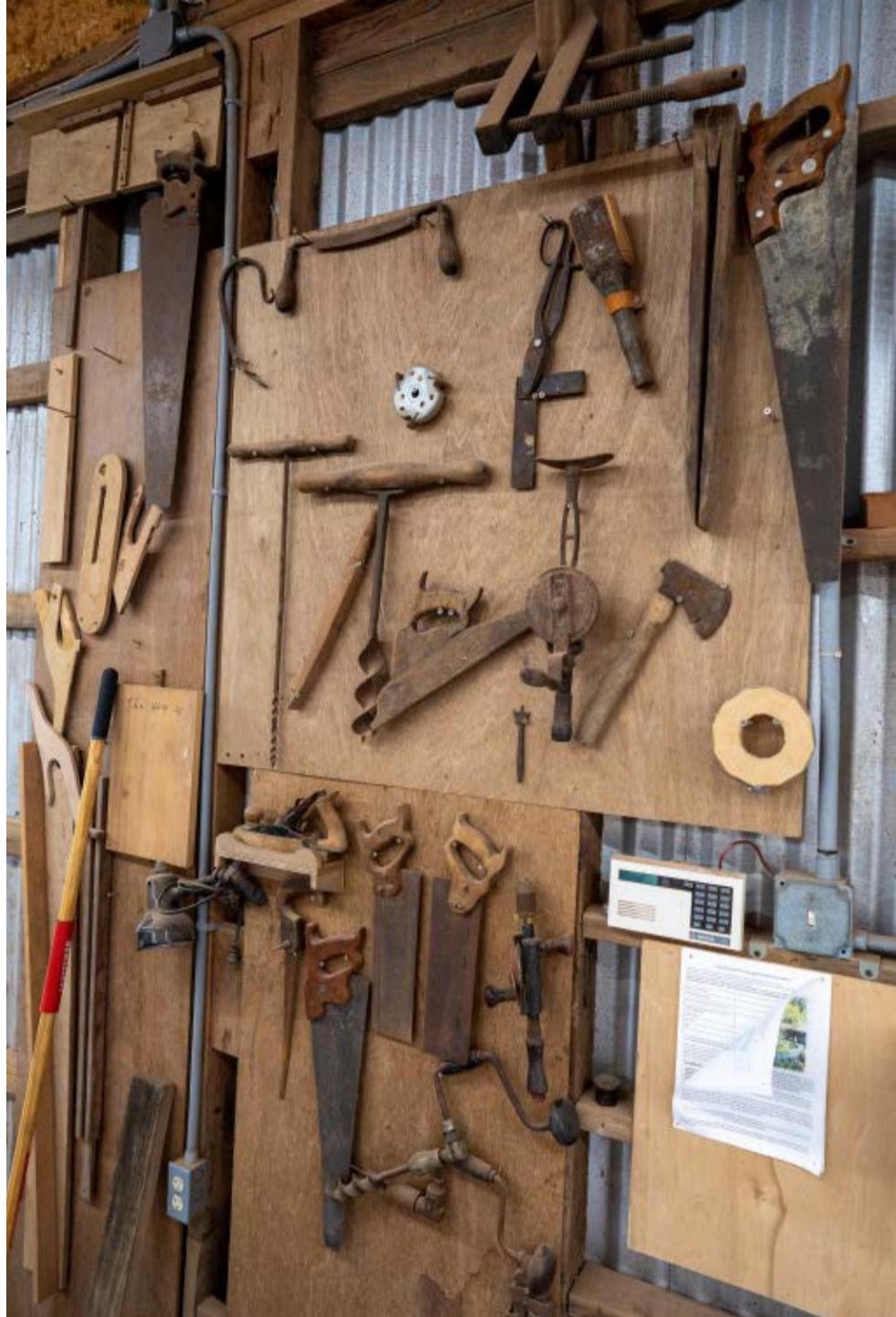


BUILD A BOAT AT FARLEY BOAT WORKS

Farley Boat Works is a working museum with a mission to teach the art of wooden boat making. In 1915, two brothers established Farley and Son Boat Builders to build a vessel that could handle the rough coastal waters and meet the needs of the local fisherman. From 1915 until 1973, the Farley family designed and built boats for the local community and soon became a local legend. Today you can visit the working museum to learn about wood boat making, the same way the Farley brothers built their famous boats. For those wanting to get their hands dirty, you can create a 14' Farley skiff boat in just two days at the museum. Yes, you can build a boat in a matter of days. The museum also offers workshops over the summer to learn the skills of wooden boat building and opportunities to volunteer your skills if you spend an extended period in the Port Aransas area.

If you want to experience everything wooden boats, schedule a trip toward the end of October for the three-day Wooden Boat Festival held yearly in Port Aransas. During this festival, Farley Boat Works offers families opportunities to build a boat over the three-day weekend. Start at 9:00 a.m. Friday, and by 2:00 p.m. Sunday, your newly built boat will be floating in the marina, seaworthy and ready for your next adventure. Though it may not be the yacht you'd hoped for in retirement, it will be a wooden boat made by the hands of you and your loved ones, which promises to provide a lifetime of cherished memories.

<https://portaransasmuseum.org/visit-farley-boat-works/>





FIRE IT! CERAMICS

If building a wooden boat isn't your thing or is outside your budget, but you're still looking for family-together time, look no further than Fire It! Ceramics. This massive 3,600-square-foot facility has everything you need to paint the perfect pottery. The process is as simple as picking your blank piece of ceramic from their extensive collection, selecting your glaze colors, grabbing a handful of paintbrushes and painting your masterpiece. Melissa, the owner, has worked diligently at curating pottery pieces to ensure that there are pieces that meet a variety of interests and fit every budget. For those needing some liquid inspiration, Fire It! Ceramics also offers a selection of adult beverages to help get your creative juices flowing.



Worried about the time it takes to fire your finished piece? Worry no more. You can pick up most pieces the following business day before closing. And if picking up your finished work the next business day doesn't fit your vacation schedule, Fire It! Ceramics offers shipping options to safely get your vacation masterpiece into your hands once you arrive home. Fire It! Ceramics is a great way to commemorate your Port Aransas trip while putting your personal touch on each piece.

www.fireitceramics.com



SHOW ME THE BEACH!

No beach vacation is complete without spending time with your toes in the sand and saltwater in your hair. Port Aransas is home to 6.3 miles of hard-packed beaches along Mustang Beach, so you'll find your slice of paradise to park your family for the day. But Port Aransas beaches have a fantastic twist; you can drive on and camp on them. Imagine packing up your vehicle full of the kids, sunscreen, beach toys, coolers, beach chairs and beach towels and getting to drive your vehicle to the exact spot where you want to spend your day on the beach. It is a game-changer! And for those wanting a unique camping experience, you can bring your RV onto the beach to camp. Beach access, whether for the day or to camp, requires a pass, but the pass is easily obtainable in town and covers parking on the beach between mile markers 0 to 62.



SUMMARY

At first glance, this small, beachside town may not seem like the perfect beach destination. But, after spending some time in this quaint town, you'll realize that Port Aransas is so much more than just a beach destination. Though compact, the community offers plenty to do to keep you and your family busy. Yet, if you're looking for a place to kick back and relax, Port Aransas offers plenty of beach space to spread out on and take the time to do absolutely nothing.

Port Aransas is a popular winter-over town and offers Winter Texans and folks vacationing over the summer plenty of RV campground options. There are plenty of camping options for a small town, from basic campgrounds to swanky RV resorts. LaFitte's Hideout RV Resort on West Cotter Avenue, though not beachside,

is centrally located, making walking to restaurants and shopping an easy feat. For those looking to get beachside, On the Beach RV Park is located on the sandy Port Aransas dunes and is within walking distance from the beach. This no-frills campground is the perfect beach escape ensuring that your time is well-spent beachside and isn't competing with mini-golf and wave pools. But if large, sunny pools are your beachside dream, Tropic Island Resort or Gulf Waters Beach Front RV Resort may be the perfect fit. With more than ten different RV parks, including the budget-friendly Nueces County RV Park, there is a park to fit every need and every budget.

Port Aransas offers picture opportunities, like the historic Chapel on the Dunes, birds soaring over the Leonabelle

Turnbull Birding Center or a burnt-orange sunset dipping over the gulf waters. However, this may be a vacation destination where you focus more on capturing family moments on the sandy beaches, sharing memories over a delicious meal or capturing your kid's ear-to-ear smile during a sword fight on a pirate cruise. This may be the vacation where you put your big camera away and focus on time well spent making unforgettable memories with those you love the most.

Port Aransas, Texas, is the perfect small-town beach getaway vacation you never knew you needed. From the moment you step into town, you're transformed into a place where time slows down just a smidge, allowing you to step back, relax and be in the moment. This is what small-town vacations are all about.

PLACES TO STAY

www.onthebeachrvresort.com

www.lafittesporta.com

www.nuecesbeachparks.com/i-b-magee-beach-park

www.sailfishrvresort.com

www.tropicislandresort.com

www.surfsiderv.com

www.alohabeachresort.com

www.portarvresortparadise.com

www.pioneerrvresorts.com

www.gulfwatersrvresorttx.com



RATING

4 
OUT OF 5

PHOTO OPPORTUNITIES: 

HOW FAR YOUR DOLLAR WILL GO: 

VARIETY OF THINGS TO DO & SEE: 

CAMPGROUND AVAILABILITY: 

DINING OPTIONS: 

RV DESTINATIONS MAGAZINE OVERALL SCORE: 



PRINT, DIGITAL OR BOTH

YOU CHOOSE RV DESTINATIONS MAGAZINE YOUR WAY



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AN RV TRAVEL MAGAZINE

 SCAN ME

