

DENVER LIFE

MARCH/APRIL 2009

CULTURE | ADVENTURE | STYLE

Lap of Luxury

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the State

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EXPLORE CRESTED BUTTE

Pure Adventure & Striking Beauty



Sustainable Sanctuary

Situated within a quiet corner of northeastern Florida, bordered by the Atlantic Ocean to the east and the Intracoastal Waterway on the west, rests picturesque Amelia Island. Less than an hour drive time from Jacksonville, this coastal getaway offers an alternative to travelers seeking a natural and off-the-beaten-path Florida beach vacation.

Unlike its coastal cousins down south, Amelia Island features miles of uncrowded beaches; a vast interior old growth woodland, including ancient live oaks, some 200 to 400 years old, bearded and draped in a weave of lacy Spanish moss; an endless blanket of tidal marshlands and oceanfront sand dunes as well as a vibrant wildlife habitat.

Coexisting harmoniously within this pristine coastal community is a resort recognized for its ecologically sustainable practices. Known as the only “green” beachfront



resort in Florida, Amelia Island Plantation Resort offers a wide menu of amenities and activities catering to the luxury resort traditionalist as well as the eco-resort preservationist. For starters, there are pools fronting the ocean, shell-strewn beaches, world-renowned golf and tennis facilities, a luxury spa, entertainment, shopping, award-winning children’s programs, multiple dining

options, lots of beach activities, conference center meeting rooms and a fitness facility offering a multitude of activities including an indoor lap pool. The lodging offers a variety of arrangements from ocean-front hotel rooms to spacious villas with one-, two- and three-bedroom floor plans to accommodate families, couples, groups or solo travelers. This is typical of what one would expect from a four-diamond resort.

As if those wonderful attributes weren’t enough, the Plantation has also consistently won awards in a number of categories. The environmental line-up is the most impressive. The Florida Department of Environmental Protection bestowed on the property a “Green Lodging Designation;” it was presented with the “Leadership Award” by the Governor’s Council, Sustainable Florida; the American Hotel & Motel Association granted the “Environmental Quality Achievement Award;” and Audubon Inter-

DEPARTURES

national awarded the resort with the acclaimed "Golf Courses-Audubon Cooperative Sanctuary System," and these are just a few of the environmental honors.

It's easy to see why the Plantation has been given awards, especially environmental. From its inception in 1971 the developers' goal was to find the optimum fit between human's habitat requirements in a resort community and the existing plant ecology, animal life and topography on a fragile barrier island. They consulted with scientists resulting in a plan to protect tidal marshes, to conserve oceanfront dunes, and to leave sea oats, grassland and savannahs undisturbed, while restricting foot traffic to boardwalks to prevent damage to vegetation. Their careful plans culminated two years later into an environmentally sound recreational community. Covenants were set in place to provide guidelines during the creation of the residential and resort communities. Today, Amelia Island Plantation is a flourishing resort and residential community, offering a well-managed example that man and nature can coexist harmoniously.

There are many ways that guests can enjoy this tribute to the coastal landscape

while enjoying their stay at Amelia Island Plantation Resort. For one, it's not necessary to rent a car when visiting the Plantation. Direct shuttle transportation can be reserved ahead of time from the Jacksonville Airport to the resort. The on-property vans can shuttle guests wherever they want to go within the Plantation's 1,350 acres. However, for those who prefer to walk, there are seven miles of walking paths that wind throughout the property making it an enjoyable outing to go from the pool to the nature center to one of the many shops or spa. For the more active types, Amelia's Wheels rents bicycles, Segways and Island Hoppers (motorized golf carts). The whole family can rent bicycles and wheel around the paths to the many destination points on the Plantation. Guests can even walk/ride or spin to the gourmet market on site, Marché Burette, where they can buy picnic goodies to enjoy a full-day nonstop outing.

For those who have never scooted on a Segway, it provides a unique and adventurous way to explore all the vista points. Amelia's Wheels provides guided tours and instruction on these upright mobilized scooters and there are a variety of Segway tours to select from depending on interests, and all tours are guided. Back to Nature Safari travels around four miles of trails with a coach and naturalist allowing riders to experience the natural beauty of destinations like Drummond Point Park, Egret Airport or Willow Conservancy. Marsh Side Safari travels four miles of trails showcasing the natural beauty of the golf courses and marsh. The Sea Breeze Segway Tour is the newest offering allowing riders to experience the beaches in a whole new way. Glide through the preserved maritime forest to the beach. Explore the sand dunes. Zip along the beach near the surf and smell the salty sea air. There is even a Family Segway Experience which is customized to the



age and experience of its guests.

Another way to discover the bounty of the landscape is by visiting the Nature Center where nature tours widen the scope of enjoyment and education of the area. On-site full time naturalists offer a plethora of seasonal tours. Join a naturalist on a Birds of Amelia tour. This tour is for both experienced birders or novices and explores the prime avian habitat in search of unique and native migratory birds like the male painted bunting, osprey, blue heron and great and snowy egrets. Or take the Beach Bounty tour to comb the shore for treasures and learn when and where to find the best shells, sharks teeth and other beach bounty. Kids can take in the Children's Discovery where they are introduced to bugs, birds, pond life, fossils and more. It includes a craft activity and field exploration too. They even offer tours where guests can go crabbing and learn how to use a seine net to catch fish, crabs and other marine critters. And if an adventurous guest is willing to get a little wet they might even consider a Naturalist Kayaking tour where they can leisurely paddle through the marsh and search for birds, fish and other unique marine animals. So if flora and fauna tours, stargazing, nature photography, owl prowls, sea turtle and birding tours pique an interest, the Nature Center has it covered.

Indeed, it's a jewel within hotel resort-landia coastal properties. Who would've thunk it? That 30-plus years ago developers had the forethought to preserve a small barrier island. The last of the golden isles where the smooth cord grass shimmers in the light and provides a golden grassy blanket along the edges of the salt marsh. This is Amelia Island Plantation—sustainable and enjoyable for generations to come. **D**





TRAVEL PLANNER

Amelia Island Plantation
6800 First Coast Highway
Amelia Island, FL 32034
904.261.6161
aipfl.com

GETTING THERE

Amelia Island, Florida is located just 40 minutes north of Jacksonville and 29 miles from the Jacksonville International Airport.

PINT-SIZED EXTRAS

Kids' Camp Amelia
Open 363-days a year. Kids age 3-10 can attend the morning session and kids age 5-10 can attend the full-day session or afternoon session. Sessions offer nature activities, beach games, arts and crafts, swimming, outdoor discoveries and much more. Golf clinics, tennis clinics, nature clinics, aquatics clinics, field trips, water slide excursions and more are offered June through August.

JUST FOR KIDS

A dinner activity center for kids age 3-10 featuring a children's menu and themed events like treasure hunts, hoedowns with hay wagon rides and pool splash parties.

TEEN EXPLORERS

For kids age 11 and up who are looking for fun and excitement "away" from the parents. Activities programmed seasonally depending on demand may include mini-golf, a trip to the Jacksonville Zoo, etc.

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