



FORT CLINCH STATE PARK

EIGHT FLAGS OF HISTORY & MORE

Amelia Island's backstory is the stuff of legends. Its colorful past stretches back more than 4,000 years in a tumultuous timeline of early Timucuans, European explorers, and a dizzying mix of maritime and military history that has unfolded under eight different flags of dominion. Visitors can discover and relive this intriguing past at every turn, from pirates and Spanish treasure fleets to the Civil War, Golden Age and beyond. Exploring notable sites, museums, and the National Historic District in downtown Fernandina Beach, it's easy to see why Amelia has exerted such a powerful pull throughout the centuries.

TUG OF WAR

During the 16th century, the quest for land and riches brought France, Spain and Britain to the newly discovered shores of what would become Florida, starting an international tug of war over Amelia.

- ➲ The island's natural beauty, ideal climate, and location attracted a lively cast of adventurers, pirates, princesses, robber barons, and artists of all varieties.
- ➲ Amelia's history could be summed up as "the French visited, the Spanish developed, the English named, and the American tamed."
- ➲ At just over 18 square miles (roughly the size and shape of Manhattan), Amelia Island is the only place in America to have lived under eight different flags of dominion.

THE INSIDE STORY

Step inside some of Amelia Island's award-winning museums and attractions to unlock the past through tales of pirates, politics, and the booming Victorian era.

- ➲ Florida's first spoken history museum, the Amelia Island Museum of History is a local favorite for tours, exhibits and interactive programs.
- ➲ Roam the grounds, hallways, and staircases of Fort Clinch, exploring the bastions, guard rooms, prison, and barracks of this Civil War era treasure.
- ➲ The one-of-a-kind A.L. Lewis Museum tells the inspiring story of American Beach and its intrepid founders.
- ➲ Drop by the Amelia Island Welcome Center on Centre Street downtown, where interactive displays give a snapshot of island history. It's a great photo spot, too!



PAST YOUR BEDTIME

Each of Amelia Island's six bed and breakfast inns offers its own unique character, with secret gardens, shady courtyards, porch swings, fountains, stately architecture, and distinctive dining. Choose the comfort and charm of Amelia's B&Bs to relive the island's colorful past.



HISTORIC HIGHLIGHTS

- As early as 2,500 B.C., ancient Timucuan Indians praised the attributes of Amelia Island, which they called "Napoya."
- In 1562, Frenchman Jean Ribault first landed on Amelia, what he called the "Isle de Mai" (Island of May).
- Spain had eyes for Amelia, too, which they called "Santa Maria," until they swapped Florida with England for Havana.
- British loyalists established plantations for the King and named the island "Amelia" after Princess Amelia, daughter of King George II.
- Under Spanish rule, the harbor of Fernandina was a national smuggling center for slavery, liquor and foreign luxuries, attracting racketeers from around the world.
- Fernandina Beach has 450 ornate Victorian structures built prior to 1927, most of which are listed on the National Register of Historic Places.
- David Yulee, the "Father of the Florida railroad," later made Fernandina Port the hub of his shipping and railroad venture and the beginning of Florida's first cross-state railroad.

AMERICAN BEACH

- An oceanfront haven during segregation, American Beach promised "rest and relaxation without humiliation" for African Americans in search of a restful beach vacation. It drew hundreds of tour buses around the clock, bringing visitors to fill the beach, businesses and neighborhoods where they were welcomed as family.
- In its heyday, the restaurants and nightclubs of American Beach attracted celebrities such as Cab Calloway, Hank Aaron, Ray Charles and James Brown.
- American Beach was founded by Florida's first black millionaire, A.L. Lewis, and other founders of the Afro-American Life Insurance Company.
- American Beach is now the first stop on Florida's Black Heritage Trail and home to the A. L. Lewis Museum.
- MaVynee Betsch, great-granddaughter of Lewis, was known as "The Beach Lady" for her devotion to environmental causes, including saving the majestic "NaNa" dune system on American Beach.

READY TO MAKE HISTORY

Learn more about Amelia Island's past [here](#).