

10 FANTASTIC Florida Vacations

Where Fort Bend Families Enjoy Sizzling Summer Fun

Written by Miranda Enzor



Mickey, Minnie, and friends strike a pose at the doorstep of Cinderella Castle in the Magic Kingdom



Water fun at the dueling gators at Gatorland



Florida's sparkling beaches are a sure bet for family fun in the sun



The Wizarding World of Harry Potter is a favorite destination for both Fort Bend and Hollywood families



A scenic dive off Key Largo in the Florida Keys

Photo by Garth Vaughan



Visitors can walk in the footsteps of American astronauts at the Kennedy Space Center



Florida's beautiful Everglades come alive on an airboat tour



Experience adventures on the high seas at the Pirate and Treasure Museum

Florida might just be the perfect vacation spot for Fort Bend families. With more than 1,800 miles of coastline, the Sunshine State has endless options when it comes to pristine beaches. For families who love to play and learn, there are plenty of parks, wildlife sanctuaries, and museums to explore. With a huge variety of theme parks, Florida is also a popular destination for thrill seekers. And it's all just across the Gulf of Mexico from us.

1. Destin

Florida Panhandle

If you're looking to be a beach bum, Destin is a top spot for sand, sun, and fun. Popular for its sandy white beaches – some of the whitest in the world – and sparkling emerald waters, this Florida hot spot for fun in the sun offers 12 beaches for Fort Bend families to choose from. Visit cityofdestin.com.

2. Wizarding World of Harry Potter

Orlando

Perhaps the most popular destination currently in Florida, the year-old Wizarding World of Harry Potter is a must-see for fans of the books and movies. Step into Harry's world as you wander through Diagon Alley, Gringotts Bank, and even Hogwarts Castle! Send a postcard to friends back home at the Owl Post or sip a butterbeer at the Three Broomsticks, Harry, Ron, and Hermione's favorite hangout away from school. Visit universolorlando.com/harrypotter.

3. Flamingo Gardens &

Wildlife Sanctuary

Fort Lauderdale

This nonprofit wildlife sanctuary, aviary, and botanical garden is located just west of Fort Lauderdale. The 60-acre park contains more than 3,000 species of tropical and subtropical plants, the largest collection of wading birds in the country, and a wide variety of

wildlife, making it the perfect spot for nature and animal lovers. Visit flamingogardens.org.

4. Florida Keys

South Florida

This archipelago of 4,500 islands starting at the southeastern tip of Florida is truly a spectacular piece of nature to behold, with the country's only living coral barrier reef. Families can enjoy scuba diving, snorkeling, fishing, and visiting attractions like the Audubon House and Tropical Gardens. Visit fla-keys.com.

5. Walt Disney World

Orlando

Recently named one of 15 places kids should see by age 15 by *Budget Travel* magazine, Walt Disney World is a landmark experience for any child – or adult for that matter. With the Magic Kingdom, Epcot, Disney's Hollywood Studios, and Disney's Animal Kingdom, there's a spot for adventure lovers of every interest from sports to animals. Visit disneyworld.disney.go.com.

6. Pirate & Treasure Museum

St. Augustine

Ahoy matey! Sail the high seas and search for pirate treasure at the Pirate and Treasure Museum. Learn about infamous pirates like Blackbeard and get an up-close look at pirate weapons and memorabilia. Visit thepiratemuseum.com.

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Larry Caldwell, D.D.S.

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7. Gatorland

Orlando

This 110-acre theme park and wildlife preserve, nicknamed the Alligator Capital of the World, was founded in 1949 by Owen Godwin. Gatorland is home to thousands of alligators and crocodiles, as well as a breeding marsh with a boardwalk and observation tower, reptile shows, an aviary, petting zoo, and swamp walk. Visit gatorland.com.

8. John F. Kennedy Space Center

Cape Canaveral

You've visited mission control right here in Houston, now visit NASA's launch site. Fort Bend families can tour the Kennedy Space Center, along with the Cape Canaveral Air Force Station, or visit the Astronaut Hall of Fame. Visit kennedyspacecenter.com.

9. Everglades

South Florida

These ruggedly beautiful subtropical wetlands cover the southern portion of the state and are a great option for a family of nature lovers. Spend your time photographing birds, hiking to see alligators in their natural habitat, camping at Everglades National Park, or embarking on a canoe tour. Visit nps.gov/ever.

10. Ripley's Believe It or Not Museum

St. Augustine

Prepare to be amazed, amused, and horrified all at once! This St. Augustine staple is the original in the family of Ripley's Believe It or Not museums and houses a fascinating collection of Robert Ripley's favorite artifacts. Located in Warden Castle, families

Photo courtesy of The Walt Disney Company



Your Sugar Land sweetie can be as pretty as a princess in the BibbidiBobbidi Boutique located inside Cinderella Castle at the Magic Kingdom

can see oddities like a vortex tunnel or two-headed rabbit. Visit staugustine.ripleys.com.

A Summer of Florida Fun

No matter what destination you choose, Florida is sure to offer your Fort Bend family a summer vacation they won't soon forget. **SLM**

MIRANDA ENZOR can't wait to visit the Wizarding World of Harry Potter on her next visit to Florida.

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