

BY HOPE S. PHILBRICK

A member of the Beaches of South Walton, Sandestin Golf & Beach Resort is the only resort situated on both the Intercoastal Waterway and the Gulf of Mexico. Its appeal as a vacation destination for families is clear: Sandestin offers a range of activities geared toward children, including a junior golf program, sailing and tennis lessons, Joe Lee's Tree House, supervised daily activities for kids ages 3 through 10 all summer and live evening entertainment events including a "Mini-Gras" every Tuesday.

TRAVEL

"We're one of the largest all-inclusive resorts on the Gulf Coast," says Colleen Kirsch, public relations manager. "We're really a one-stop shop. Once here, you can never get back in your car until you're ready to leave"—thanks to well-planned walkways, as well as bicycles and a tram (all free). Within the 2,400-acre resort, a plethora of water- and land-based activities is available to entertain guests of all ages—many of them complimentary.

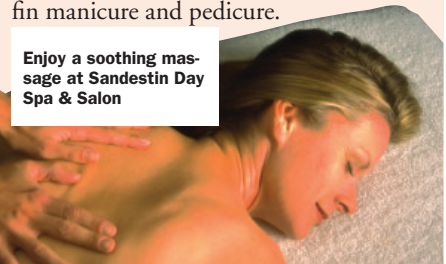
While it's easy to recognize that Sandestin is family-friendly, it may be a less obvious choice for a romantic getaway. But whether you leave the kids at home or take advantage of the certified babysitting program to get a few hours of couple-time, you *can* find romance at Sandestin. Here are 12 suggestions:



Skyline view of Sandestin

1 Dine and dance aboard Solaris, SunQuest Cruises' 125-foot luxury yacht. Every three-hour tour of the Choctawhatchee Bay includes a three-course meal and live entertainment.

2 Enjoy a couple's massage at Sandestin Day Spa & Salon. Or splurge on a pair of packages like "Beach Bliss," which includes a full-body massage, facial, paraffin manicure and pedicure.



Enjoy a soothing massage at Sandestin Day Spa & Salon

3 Share a fine-dining experience at Bistro Bijoux, a Provençal-style bistro, or Marlin Grill, a chops and seafood eatery. Start by popping open a bottle of bubbly to really set the mood.

CIRCLE IN THE SAND

PHOTOS COURTESY OF SANDESTIN GOLF & BEACH RESORT

Sandestin is the perfect spot for a romantic retreat or family vacation.



Sandestin Golf & Beach Resort proves a romance-friendly vacation spot (but kids get along fine there, too)



Solaris SunQuest Cruises' luxury yacht

4 Explore the Choctawhatchee Bay aboard WaveRunners on a 90-minute, guided eco-tour. En route you may encounter a dolphin or turtle, spy on nesting osprey or peek at a variety of blooming foliage.

5 Stroll the powdery beach, hand in hand. Sandestin's beaches have earned the "Blue Wave" award from the Clean Beaches Council, which runs the nation's only environmental and public safety beach certification program.

6 Pack a picnic lunch and walk the boardwalk over to Jolee Island Nature Park, a five-acre retreat dense with pine trees and native wetland scrub. Pick up a bottle of wine from Sandestin Wine World or Seagrapes Wine Bar & Gifts.

7 Play tennis—even if only to say, "love-love." Sandestin offers 15 courts in hard, natural grass and Hydrogrid Clay.

8 Take a golf lesson together at the Hank Johnson School of Golf. Personalized instruction and videotaped evaluations ensure maximum results without compromising fun.



Golf at Sandestin

9 Pedal through Sandestin's quaint neighborhoods on a pair of bikes, available at no charge for up to four hours each day.

IF YOU GO...

GETTING THERE

Sandestin is approximately a six-hour drive from Atlanta. It's located on Northwest Florida's Gulf Coast between Pensacola and Panama City, eight miles east of Destin. Detailed driving directions are posted online at www.sandestin.com.

KNOW BEFORE YOU GO

Sandestin Golf and Beach Resort is comprised of 30 neighborhoods featuring condos, villas, town homes and hotels with more than 1,700 rental accommodations available. The resort offers more than seven miles of white sand beaches, four championship golf courses, 15 tennis courts, 19 swimming pools, a 98-slip marina and 65,000 square feet of meeting space. The Village of Baytowne Wharf boasts more than 30 boutique shops and dozens of restaurants, nightclubs and bars. Check-in begins at 4 p.m. Check-out time is 11 a.m. Registration is open 24 hours a day.

WHEN TO GO

Sandestin Golf & Beach Resort is open year-round. But you may find it's less crowded and has fewer children around during weekdays and/or fall visits.

MORE INFORMATION

Sandestin Golf & Beach Resort
9300 Emerald Coast Parkway
Destin, FL 32550
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10 Paddle around Choctawhatchee Bay in a kayak or canoe, available free for one hour each day.

11 Relax together under a beach umbrella, in one of Sandestin's outdoor Jacuzzi pools, or in the private comfort of your guest room accommodations.

Sandestin offers pristine beaches great for relaxing.



12 Gaze together at the pink and orange sunset reflecting onto the blue-green waters of Florida's Emerald Coast. **SP**