

Sugar-White Sand by Day, Beach-Town Porches by Night — A 3-Day 30A Road Trip

A 3-Day 30A Road Trip | I-Journey

DURATION

3 Days

BEST TIME TO GO

Mid-April – Early June

Spring brings warm water and thinner crowds than summer's peak; Atlantic hurricane season runs June 1-November 30, and July-August add the Panhandle's heaviest heat, humidity, and afternoon storms, so late spring is the sweet spot.

FROM

\$700 USD / person

for 2 people, incl. 2 nights' lodging, a day's bike rental, and the SUP eco-tour

Day 1

Arrival in Seaside & the Historic Town Square

Fly into the Panhandle and head straight for 30A's original planned town, the pastel-cottage New Urbanist community that put this stretch of coast on the map.

Drive In — Northwest Florida Beaches Airport to 30A

~30-40 minutes · rental car

A short hop south from VPS airport in Miramar Beach onto Scenic Highway 30A itself, Walton County's speed-bumped, bike-lane-lined two-lane that strings together a dozen beach towns over 19 miles — pick up the rental car at the airport since 30A has no ride-share density to rely on.

Seaside's Central Square

~1.5 hours, self-guided · free

The original 30A town, planned in the 1980s around a grid of picket-fenced cottages and a central square of shops and double-decker Airstream food trailers — its candy-colored symmetry and instantly recognizable town square were the filming location for *The Truman Show*.

WaterColor Inn & Resort — Check-in

From \$500-525 USD / night, for 2 people

A low-rise, screened-porch hotel on the beach just east of Seaside, built around WaterColor's own coastal dune lake and boathouse — the base for both nights on 30A, within walking or biking distance of Seaside's square.

WaterColor Inn & Resort · +1 850-534-5000 · watercolorresort.com

Dinner — Great Southern Café, on your own

~1.5 hours · mains from \$18-34 USD

A Seaside institution on Central Square from chef Jim Shirley, mixing Southern cooking with a raw oyster bar and a menu built around Gulf seafood — ask for a porch table for the walk-by people-watching.

Great Southern Café · +1 850-752-9191 · 83 Central Square, Seaside, FL

Day 2

Grayton Beach, Bikes & a Coastal Dune Lake

A full day split between one of the country's best-rated beaches, a car-free ride on 30A's paved trail, and a paddle across a type of lake found almost nowhere else on Earth.

Grayton Beach State Park

~2.5 hours, self-guided · \$5 USD per vehicle (2-8 people)

Dunes, scrub pine, and a wide, powder-white beach backed by Western Lake, one of the rare coastal dune lakes found on only a handful of coastlines worldwide — regularly ranked among America's best beaches for its clarity and lack of development.

Bike the 30A Trail, with Big Fish Bike & Beach Rentals

~2 hours, self-guided · \$45 USD / bike per day

A ride on the paved, mostly car-free trail that runs parallel to the highway between Grayton Beach, Seaside, and WaterColor, past gulf views and the turnoffs into each town — flat, shaded in places, and the easiest way to cover ground on 30A without a car.

Big Fish Bike & Beach Rentals · +1 850-231-1343 · bigfishbikerentals.com

SUP Eco-Tour on a Coastal Dune Lake, with YOLO Board

~2 hours, guided · \$95 USD / person, board incl.

A guided stand-up-paddle crossing of one of 30A's coastal dune lakes, where fresh water from coastal creeks occasionally breaks through the dunes to mix with the Gulf — a naturalist guide points out the birdlife and explains why this geology exists almost nowhere else.

YOLO Board · +1 850-424-6852 · yoloboard.com

Overnight — WaterColor Inn & Resort

From \$500-525 USD / night, for 2 people

A second night at the same beachfront inn.

WaterColor Inn & Resort · Santa Rosa Beach, FL

A quiet antebellum garden and the most polished of 30A's town centers before the short drive back to the airport.

Eden Gardens State Park

~1.5 hours, self-guided · \$4 USD per vehicle

A restored 1897 lumber-baron mansion set under moss-draped live oaks on the shore of Tucker Bayou, surrounded by formal gardens of azaleas and camellias — a slower, shadier contrast to 30A's beaches, usually quiet even in season.

Rosemary Beach Town Walk

~1.5 hours, self-guided · free

30A's most architecturally strict town, all Caribbean-influenced tin roofs and brick streets around a central green, with boutiques and galleries tucked into walkable lanes a short stroll from the beach boardwalk — a good last stop for souvenirs or a coffee before the drive out.

Departure — Northwest Florida Beaches Airport

~30-40 minutes · allow 90 minutes before a domestic flight

A short final drive back west on 30A and up to VPS, with direct flights to most major hubs in the Southeast and Midwest.