

Rockets at Dawn, Dolphins at Dusk — A 3-Day Space Coast Road Trip

A 3-day Florida long weekend built around Kennedy Space Center, a surf lesson and pier lunch in Cocoa Beach, and a free morning drive through a wildlife refuge still sharing a fence line with the launch pads — with real stops and 2026 prices throughout.

DURATION

3 Days

BEST TIME TO GO

Oct–Apr

cooler, drier weather and the thick of the launch schedule, with fewer afternoon storms

FROM

\$310 USD / person

for 2 people

Day 1

Arrive & Kennedy Space Center

Drive in from Orlando and spend the whole afternoon at Kennedy Space Center Visitor Complex, then settle in for the night near Titusville with a rock-shrimp dinner that's been a local institution for decades.

Self-Drive In — Arrive Titusville / Merritt Island

Door to door · ~45 minutes from Orlando International Airport

SR-528 (the Beachline) runs almost straight from Orlando to the Space Coast — an easy, flat drive with the Vehicle Assembly Building visible for miles before you arrive.

Kennedy Space Center Visitor Complex, Full Day

~5–6 hours · from \$89 USD / adult, \$79 USD / child

NASA's working launch site, open to visitors between launches — the Atlantis exhibit, a bus tour out to the Apollo/Saturn V Center, and the rocket garden all fill a full day easily; check the day's launch schedule before you go.

Kennedy Space Center Visitor Complex · www.kennedyspacecenter.com

Dinner — Dixie Crossroads Seafood Restaurant

~1 hour · Rock shrimp dinner ~\$25–35 USD / person

A Titusville institution since 1983, known across the state for deep-sea rock shrimp served broiled or fried by the pound, with hush puppies and a lake full of turtles out back.

Dixie Crossroads Seafood Restaurant · www.dixiecrossroads.com

Overnight — Fairfield Inn & Suites Titusville Kennedy Space Center

From \$150–190 USD / night, for 2 people

A straightforward chain hotel built for the Space Coast crowd, a short drive from both the Visitor Complex gates and several good spots to watch a launch if one's scheduled overnight.

Fairfield Inn & Suites Titusville Kennedy Space Center · www.marriott.com

Day 2

Cocoa Beach

South to Cocoa Beach for a surf lesson, a long lunch out on the pier, and an evening along the beachfront strip that made the town famous.

Self-Drive — Titusville to Cocoa Beach

~40 minutes · SR-528 & A1A

A1A hugs the barrier island the whole way south, with the Canaveral Air Force Station and its own launch pads visible across the water for part of the drive.

Ron Jon Surf School, Group Lesson

~1.5 hours · from \$65–75 USD / person

A beginner lesson run out of the famously orange-and-turquoise Ron Jon Surf Shop, on the gentle, consistent beach break that made Cocoa Beach a longtime East Coast surf town.

Ron Jon Surf School · www.ronjonsurfschool.com

Cocoa Beach Pier, Lunch & Walk

~1.5 hours · Free to walk, lunch ~\$15–25 USD / person

An 800-foot wooden pier lined with bars and seafood shacks over the water — the easiest lunch stop on the beach, with surfers visible riding the break on either side.

Cocoa Beach Pier · thecocoabeachpier.com

Dinner — The Fat Snook

~1.5 hours · Est. \$35–50 USD / person

A small, well-regarded Caribbean-leaning seafood kitchen a few blocks off the beach, worth booking ahead for on a Space Coast weekend.

The Fat Snook · thefatsnook.com

Overnight — Hilton Garden Inn Cocoa Beach Oceanfront

From \$220–280 USD / night, for 2 people

A straightforward oceanfront chain hotel right on the sand, a short walk from the pier and the surf shop strip.

Hilton Garden Inn Cocoa Beach Oceanfront · www.hilton.com

Day 3

Wildlife Refuge & Home

A free morning drive through a wildlife refuge that shares a fence line with the launch pads, then the short run back to Orlando.

Merritt Island National Wildlife Refuge, Black Point Wildlife Drive

~2 hours · Free

A 7-mile self-guided driving loop through the marsh that buffers the launch complex — alligators, roseate spoonbills, and, in cooler months, manatees are all regularly spotted from the car or the observation platforms.

Merritt Island National Wildlife Refuge · www.fws.gov/refuge/merritt-island

Breakfast on your own — Cocoa Village

Est. \$10–15 USD / person

A short detour inland to Cocoa Village's walkable brick-street downtown turns up a handful of easy breakfast cafés before the drive home.

Self-Drive Home — Cocoa Beach to Orlando

~1 hour · SR-528 West

The same Beachline run back inland closes out the loop, with one last look at the launch pads in the rearview mirror.