



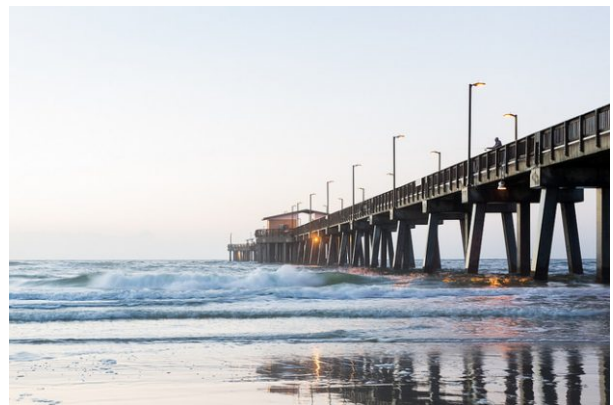
THE BEACH IS CALLING BLOG

Your Guide to Exploring the Gulf State Park

With more than 6,500 acres making up the **Gulf State Park**, it's a place you could spend your entire vacation exploring. Nature enthusiasts visit for bird watching, eco-education at the Nature Center, hiking the trails and just to immerse themselves in the park's natural surroundings. Adventure seekers and outdoor lovers enjoy fishing from the pier, kayaking Lake Shelby or cruising by boat through the park's three lakes.

Nature Lover's Guide to the Gulf State Park

Begin your eco-vacation at the Nature Center at the Gulf State Park. The center holds dozens of special programs year round. It offers visitors a living museum of the plants and animals native to the Alabama Gulf Coast. Weekly programs include guided nature tours, beach and pier walks and even stargazing at the Gulf State Park Pier.



The **Hugh S. Branyon Backcountry Trail** system winds through the park and boasts 27 miles of hiking and biking trails. Paved pathways make it accessible for all nature lovers and it's ADA accessible. The trails are a peaceful way to while away the day and take in a different side of Alabama's beaches. Six different ecosystems take you from coastal dunes to maritime forests and coastal hardwood swamps. Don't forget your camera! Hundreds of species of birds call the trail system their home or temporary home as they migrate through the area. It's an ideal spot for birdwatching and is on the list of Alabama Coastal Birding Trails.

Outdoor Adventure at the Gulf State Park

A week may not be enough time to experience every adventure available at the Gulf State Park. Those new to pier fishing, can join the Nature Center staff for Pier Fishing 101. Here you'll learn how to set up gear, pick your bait and tips and tricks for pier fishing from the pros. You might just reel in flounder, sheepshead, pompano, Spanish mackerel or red fish! The **Gulf State Park Pier** offers 2,448 feet of fishing space along its rails and has restrooms, concession area and a bait and tackle shop. You can also purchase an Alabama fishing license onsite. If you left your gear at home, no problem. Rod and reels rentals are also available onsite, making it easy to make an unplanned fishing stop during your Gulf Shores vacation.

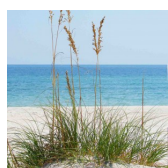
Take your kayak to Lake Shelby for the opportunity to paddle through nearly 900 acres of water when you combine Lake Shelby with Little Lake and Middle Lake. If you don't have a kayak, rentals are available. **Lake Shelby** is actually one of the closest freshwater lakes near saltwater on the Gulf of Mexico.

Each week, the Gulf State Park holds Geocaching 101. More than 60 geocaches are hidden throughout the Hugh S. Branyon Backcountry Trails. Download the Geocaching app on your smartphone for the locations of these hidden items located throughout the trails.

While you make not consider it adventure, golf is a great activity for outdoor lovers. The **Refuge Golf Club and Grill** is an Earl Stone-designed, 18-hole championship course with a driving range, putting green, pro shop and grill. Depending on who you tee off with determines how big of an adventure you have while golfing in the Gulf State Park!



The Gulf State Park offers something for every nature enthusiast and outdoor lover. Share your favorite park activities with us in the comment section below.



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