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Florida is now up to 20 cases of vibrio vulnificus. See how that compares to recent years

A potentially deadly strain of bacteria is increasingly being reported along the coasts of the Southeastern United States, but the number of infections in Florida seems to be about average for this time of year.

Vibrio vulnificus can cause severe and life-threatening infections, and the number of cases in Florida has risen to 20 this year, according to the Florida Department of Health.

Five of those infections have led to deaths. One case has been reported in Collier County, and one case in Lee County, according to DOH, with no deaths in those counties this year. The department noted that both counties had unusual increases in cases in 2022 due to impacts from Hurricane Ian.

And while the infections are certainly scary, cases of infected individuals in Florida this year is on pace with other comparable years, according to DOH.

So, with waters still warming in the Gulf this summer, is it safe to get in the water this Labor Day holiday weekend?

“Temperature is definitely one



of the factors that affects microbial activity,” said Florida Gulf Coast University professor and researcher James Douglass. “You put them in the refrigeration and they don’t grow as fast as they do on the counter, and the same applies with oceans. I do think that’s part of seasonal risk factor. It doesn’t mean you’re fine below a certain temperature threshold because you can get it

anytime of year.”

The gulf measured 88 degrees Aug. 26, according to several sources.

Vibrio is among one of the untold number of microbes found in oceanic environments.

“If there’s a lot of organic material being input in the marine environment, like from runoff or water being stirred up,” Douglass said. “That can create a lot

of food for the microbes and big rainfall events or hurricanes plus warm water, all those things really get the stew cooking.”

But would Douglass get into the water now?

He waded into the water waste deep Aug. 26 while taping a video segment for a local television station.

Douglass should be a good measuring mark as he is both a

professor and marine expert as well as someone who recreates on local waters.

He’s also had a nasty water-borne infection that required multiple treatments with multiple antibiotics.

“You don’t want to get any open wound or anything wet, ever, but especially not when you’ve got warm, stagnant water and lots of discharge from the land,” he said.

No county has reported more than two cases, according to DOH records.

What is *Vibrio vulnificus*, also called ‘flesh-eating bacteria’?

Vibrio is naturally occurring in warm seawaters like those found along the Southwest Florida coast.

“*Vibrio vulnificus* is a bacterium that normally lives in warm seawater and is part of a group of vibrios that are called ‘halophilic’ because they require salt,” the CDC says.



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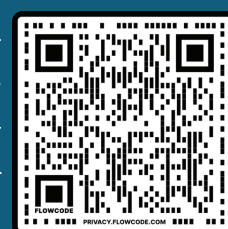
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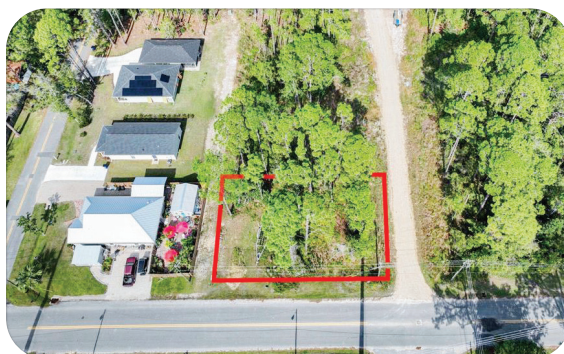
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Coffee on the Coast: Where to Find the Best Brews

BY JAE GLASS

There's something special about sipping coffee along The Forgotten Coast on a fall morning - or afternoon for that matter. Life on the coast just seems to slow down when there's a cup of coffee in hand. Whether you're starting your day with a morning espresso, getting over the afternoon drag with an iced coffee, or winding down with a seasonal cup of joe, there are plenty of options for coffee on the coast! Here are a few places we love to gather, sip, and savor that coastal charm one cup at a time.

Caribbean Coffee, Mexico Beach

Caribbean Coffee has been part of Mexico Beach for over 13 years — through sunshine, storms, and everything in between. When Hurricane Michael hit in 2018, they were the first business to reopen, serving hot coffee to a community finding its footing again. Today, they remain the only coffee shop in Mexico Beach.

More than just a café, Caribbean Coffee is a little piece of what makes this place special — warm, familiar, and full of soul. They're proud to be part of the story of Mexico Beach — past, present, and still brewing strong.



Quinn & Co., Port St. Joe

Meet Jeni Quinn, a passionate young entrepreneur who's bringing big-city coffee culture to her small hometown with Quinn & Co. — a stylish mobile coffee shop serving gourmet brews and delicious baked goods. Driven by a love for community and craft, Jeni

launched her coffee truck to offer something fresh, upscale, and distinctly flavorful. From Lavender and Honey Iced Lattes to Chocolate Chip Cookies, every item is made with care and creativity. With an all-female team by her side, Jeni is redefining the local coffee scene, one handcrafted cup at a time!



Bayside Bakery, Port St. Joe

Start your day the Bayside way: The Forgotten Roast coffee from our friends at Bayside Coffee Co. in Eastpoint, plus a warm brown sugar pecan scone that's just begging to be dunked. Local beans, local bakes, and a whole latte coastal charm.



Sweet Bunz, Port St. Joe

What began as Sweet Bunz Donuts quickly evolved, driven by a passion that extended beyond the perfect pastry: coffee. After acquiring Sweet Bunz Donuts, they knew their ambition went beyond simply serving drip coffee. However, the small, rented location limited the ability to truly expand the coffee offerings. For about a year, they focused on perfecting the donuts and serving traditional drip, all while dreaming of more.

Today (after expanding into a larger location), Sweet Bunz Coffee proudly offers a delightful assortment of fresh donuts and pastries alongside a comprehensive coffee menu fea-

turing lattes, espressos, and refreshing cold brews. They are proud to serve Lucky Goat coffee, a fantastic roaster based in Tallahassee, ensuring every cup is a premium experience.



The Joe Coffee Shop, Port St. Joe

The Joe is a quaint, cozy coffee shop located on Reid Avenue in the heart of downtown Port St. Joe. Inside you will find a cozy interior, your favorite barista handcrafting your espresso drink of choice, freshly prepared breakfast sandwiches, and mouth-watering pastry items from local bakeries to snack on. Along with seating inside, the outdoor covered patio offers a place to catch up with a friend, work on your computer, read, or simply enjoy the bay breeze. Opened in 2019, The Joe has become a staple in the PSJ community. As the new owners Rob and Delanna Clendenin are no stranger to small town life, they are excited to solidify and grow The Joe while keeping the reputation the community has grown to know and love!



St. Joe Nutrition, Port St. Joe

Nearly four years ago, Darrel and Lisa opened the doors to St. Joe Nutrition with a dream of bringing something fresh, fun, and uplifting to downtown Port St. Joe. What started as a simple coffee and tea shop has grown into a thriving commu-

nity hub where friendships are built daily over good drinks and good conversation.

We're proud to be more than just another coffee stop — St. Joe Nutrition is known for its unique, healthy options that can't be found anywhere else, like the protein filled coffees, that are sure to please your pallet. They've quickly become customer favorites because they're as energizing and delicious as they are good for you — truly what dreams are made of!

From day one, our heart has been serving this community with quality, positivity, and a smile. And thanks to the support of our locals and visitors alike, St. Joe Nutrition continues to grow, thrive, and feel like home.



Sugar Shack, Port St. Joe

Sugar Shack is a local shop that has always been known for hand crafted artisanal ice cream and treats. We make a variety of house made ice cream that have developed a following far and near.

For coffee lovers, this cold brew can't be beat. You can have it straight or add any of the imported syrups to flavor your treat to your liking.

Stan and Tina fell in love with the shop when they first visited Port St Joe several years ago. When the opportunity arose to purchase it, they did so because they knew that they wanted to be a part of this vibrant community.



Apalachicola Chocolate & Coffee, Apalachicola

If you could describe the Apalachicola Chocolate & Coffee Company in one word, it would be genuine. Located in the heart of downtown Apalachicola, Florida, this shop has an environment that is as unique as it gets. At this shop, everyone feels at home.

At the Apalachicola Chocolate & Coffee Company, they've got something for everyone. They roast coffee fresh daily using Central and South American beans as well as beans from Africa and Indonesia.

COFFEE
continued on page 6

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Community

Alice Collins, Queen and Protector of St. George Island



event, it can be controlled, as Alice Collins has done for the past fifty years for St. George island. When we were first introduced I knew that I had met a kindred soul and a fellow warrior and pledged to help with her crusade to keep the island a pristine and special place.

You don't often hear "real estate broker" and "nature preservationist" used in the same sentence, to describe the same person. But that's the case for Alice Collins. St. George Island, Florida - a pristine strip of barrier island flanked by The Gulf of America and Apalachicola Bay- owes much of its natural splendor and protected turtle habitats to the vision and courage of a real estate developer Alice Collins who moved to the Island in 1973. My husband and I lived in Tallahassee for several years, and he visited the island on a fishing trip with some of his buddies. At the time there was no bridge; you came by a ferry that could hold nine vehi-

cles provided one was a Volkswagen. We fell in love with it, moved and I opened a real estate office here in 1973 and created an Island of our own.

St. George has been compared with Key West (in the old days) and The Outer Banks of North Carolina. We're very interested in controlling density and we still don't have any high rises. Back in 1973, a fast talking Alabama developer wanted to build high rise condos on little St George Island. I was in the meeting when he unrolled his map and showed his plans to the county commission, he was not tarred and feathered, but was run out of town with the phrase 'No, this is not happening here' ringing in his ear. At that point, there was no zoning yet in the county. They contacted the Conservation Foundation, and people like myself and others putting together what was needed to protect the area. We have controlled density by what was accomplished during that time. I know that you have heard the

expression "don't mess with Texas", here is another "don't Mess with the Queen from Tallahassee."

Publishers Note

To all residents and politicians, if you want to keep the Forgotten Coast pristine start a commission and ask Alice to be the president, and pray she says yes.

COFFEE

continued from page 2

They focus on fair trade, organic, single origin coffee but also take pride in offering unique blends.

Stop by here to enjoy a flavorful cup of coffee, and grab a pie or homemade chocolate to pair with it!



Publisher's note:

In every edition I like to include a "Letter from the Publisher." July was our first edition and I wrote to congrat-

ulate and to warn the residents and politicians of the upcoming growth explosion headed to the Forgotten Coast. While there is no way to stop this

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September Fishing Report: From Captain Krista



The bull redfish are in town, and they're eating live baitfish like it's their last meal! Every hookup sounded like an alarm going off: drag screaming, anglers passing rods around one another, and the never-ending debate, arguing "I caught the biggest fish!" (even before they were in the boat).

Double and triple hookups were the norm. It looked less like a charter boat and more like a fire drill, with rods bent, nets flying, and me trying to referee the world's messiest jump rope contest.

We saw schools of redfish chasing one another to the surface, and huge redfish even breached a couple of times, chasing our bait back to the boat.

The real kicker? After hauling in what felt like every oversized redfish in the Gulf, we finally caught a few that were (gasp) small enough to actually keep. Nothing says victory like holding up a modest 18-incher after releasing its 38-inch cousin with a "catch ya later, go make babies" speech.

My usual rigging includes 15lb braid with a 20lb fluorocarbon leader, but the feed was so aggressive, for the first time in over a decade, I had to swap to 30lb leaders.

Meanwhile, the trout bite has been so hot it feels illegal. We caught one so big, my fellow captain argued that it was a spotless redfish! We tossed out Fish Bites and they attacked like piranhas at a buffet. I swear some were fighting each other just to get to the hook. My only regret: through all the excitement, I was too busy to video

most of the action. Note to self: don't forget the GoPro!

We're still reeling in plenty of Triple Tail, with some boats catching 20-30 per trip. But this time of year, they're making us work for the dinner fare. Most of the catches are just shy of making the box, but if you're patient and booked with the right guide, 1-2 keepers will make it to the table. If you've never tried Triple Tail, you're missing out. Try one at a local restaurant and you'll know why we call them "Bay Grouper".

I'm happy to report the flounder have shown up several miles offshore, and though most catches have all been too small to keep, they're getting bigger by the day!

Bottom line: The bite is hotter than the asphalt on St George Island. Book a trip, bring a sense of humor, and maybe add some arm exercises before your trip. The good news: we'll have fun, no matter what.

Report Provided By Captain Krista.

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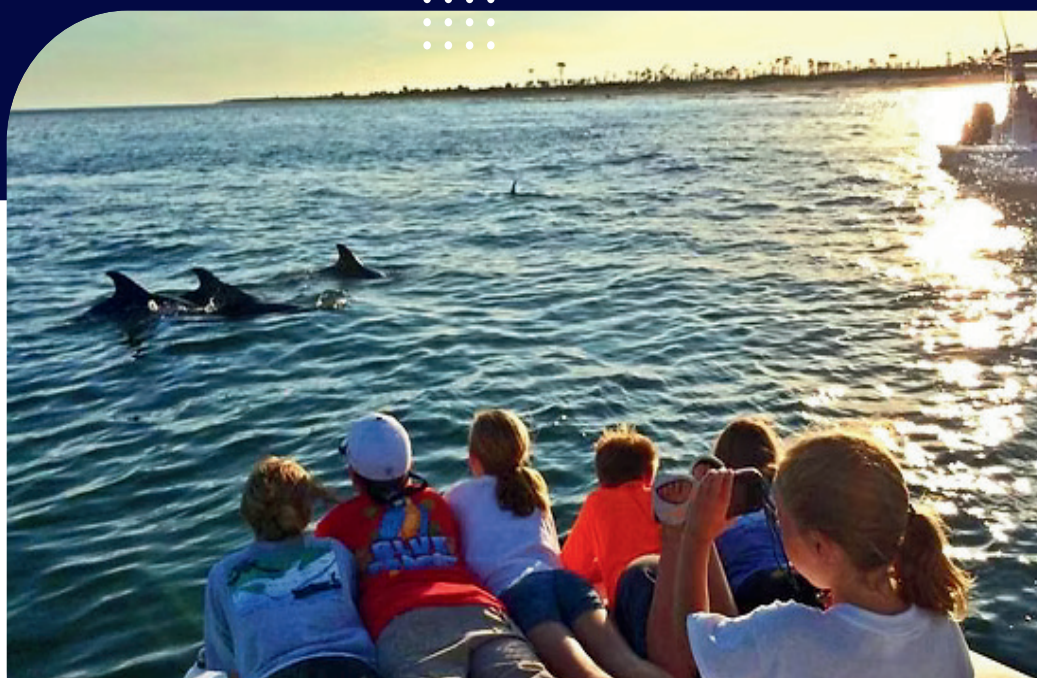
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Captain Krista is a St. George Island native and 5th generation fisherman, specializing in bay and gulf fishing charters around St. George Island, the Gulf of Mexico and the Apalachicola Bay.

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Update from the Office of Congressman Neal Dunn



When President Trump took office, Republicans made a commitment to end business as usual in Washington by ending D.C.'s spending addiction and putting our country back on the path to financial sanity. By passing the One Big Beautiful Bill, my colleagues and I have kept our promise to the American people to reduce the wasteful spending and bureaucratic bloat that is weighing down our country.

However, ending wasteful spending does not mean that Republicans are cutting vital

programs. Instead, I am working with my colleagues to ensure that federal dollars are still funding important initiatives in Northwest Florida and across the country.

Earlier this year, the National Science Foundation announced it is awarding FAMU a \$7,500,000 grant to develop new technologies and materials as part of its Centers of Research Excellence in Science and Technology program. This exciting new initiative will allow FAMU students and researchers to create exciting new products, including plastic made from plants! In partnership with FSU, FAMU is ready to tackle this challenge, and I'm honored that the Administration is looking to Northwest Florida to lead on these groundbreaking scientific advancements.

Earlier this year, I submitted a Community Project Fund-

ing request for FSU to develop a hypersonic test facility. I'm proud to announce that I have secured \$4.2 million in the Commerce, Justice, and Science appropriations bill for Florida State to develop this cutting-edge facility! A hypersonic test facility will serve as a crucial space to test new technology, strengthening our commercial and national security interests. I'm proud to get this funding into the appropriations bill. The next step is to pass the legislation and help Florida State create countless good-paying jobs in the region while supporting the university's vital work.

This isn't the only area where my colleagues and I are planning to invest in Northwest Florida. In addition to these federal dollars for our universities, I'm also pursuing \$2 million for Panama City Beach's potable water redundancy im-

provement project, \$375,000 to upgrade the Washington County Sheriff's Office public safety communications tower, and \$2 million for infrastructure improvements at Northwest Florida Beaches International Airport in Bay County.

I also want to highlight one additional development that is improving life for veterans nationwide.

One of the most important functions of the federal government is caring for our veterans. On Wednesday, Secretary of Veterans Affairs Doug Collins announced that his agency has set a record for claims processed in a single year. In addition to this success, the VA has also reduced the backlog of claims by 37%. It is safe to say that Republicans are delivering on our promise to provide better federal programs without wasting taxpayer money.

It is an honor and a privilege

to serve as your voice in Washington. Congress still has a lot of work to do, and I hope you will add your voice to the conversation as we continue the policymaking process. If you have a comment about upcoming legislation or need assistance with a federal agency, please contact my office in Panama City at (850) 785-0812.

CALENDAR OF EVENTS

OCT 4-5 JUNIOR SERVICE LEAGUE PICKLEBALL TOURN

OCT 4-5 FORGOTTEN COAST MUSIC FESTIVAL

OCT 11 PORCHFEST IN APALACHICOLA

OCT 16-19 SONGWRITERS FESTIVAL - BLAST ON THE BAY FESTIVAL

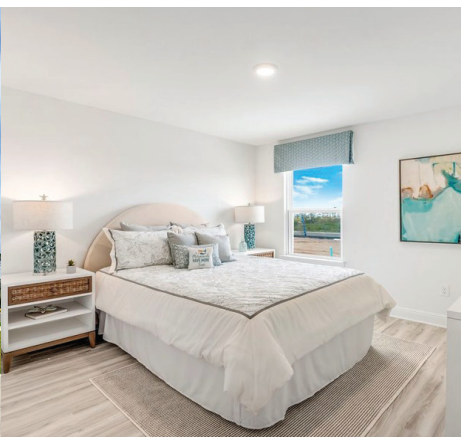
OCT 21 SGI LIGHTHOUSE ASSOCIATION TRICK-OR-TREAT SPOOKTACULAR

**OCT 31 GHOSTS ON THE COAST ON REID AVENUE IN PSJ
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From the Desk of Pastor Logan Simmons: This Is Bay View



FROM THE DESK OF PASTOR LOGAN SIMMONS:

This Is Bay View

Greetings, neighbors! My name is Logan Simmons, and I have the joy of serving as the lead pastor of Bay View Baptist Church, a brand-new church plant meeting right here in our community. It's a privilege to introduce ourselves to you through these pages and to share not only what we do, but why we do it. More than a name on a sign, Bay View represents

people—ordinary men and women, families and children—gathered together with a shared hope in Jesus Christ. Bay View Baptist exists for one simple reason: to help people meet Jesus and grow in grace, no matter where they're starting from. We're a church planted on biblical truth, grounded in love, and passionate about seeing lives transformed by the Gospel. We believe that the message of Jesus is good news for every generation, and that no story is too broken and no past too heavy for God's grace

to redeem. Whether you've walked with Christ for decades, stepped away from church for a season, or are just beginning to explore questions of faith, there's a place for you here.

Our weekly gatherings are centered on worship, teaching, and community. We sing, we pray, we open the Scriptures, and we encourage one another. But church is more than just an event on Sundays. We want Bay View to feel like family—a place where you are known by name, where your children are cared for, and where your burdens are carried alongside others. We long to be the kind of church where people not only hear about God's love but experience it in practical, everyday ways.

As we grow, we're developing intentional discipleship opportunities for all ages. This means children's ministry that points kids to Jesus in a way they can understand, youth gatherings that give students a safe place to ask hard questions, and

adult Bible studies that help people put their faith into action. Following Jesus is a journey, and no one should have to walk it alone. At Bay View, we're committed to walking together, sharing life together, and helping one another grow deeper in our faith.

We also believe the church exists not only for itself but for the good of the wider community. Part of our mission is to serve the community in tangible ways—whether through outreach events, acts of compassion, or simply being good neighbors. We pray that as our church takes root, the love of Christ will ripple out into schools, neighborhoods, and homes across our town.

If you're searching for a church home, new to the area, or simply curious about who we are, we'd love to welcome you to a Sunday service. Come as you are—no pressure, no pretense. Just a

community of everyday people learning how to follow Jesus together.

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Wellness

The Many Benefits of a Microneedling Facial



BY BRIDGET SULLIVAN, PA-C,
COA STAL SKIN SURGERY AND
DERMATOLOGY

I have many patients who come into the clinic wanting to look younger and improve their skin's appearance, but are not ready or interested in doing plastic surgery. While I always ask what their specific goals are, a microneedling facial is often a good option. This article will explain what a microneedling facial procedure is and highlight the many benefits. A microneedling facial is a cosmetic procedure done in a medical office setting. After cleansing your skin, a numbing cream will be applied to your face and neck and you will sit

there for 20-30 minutes, ensuring that your face is numb so that you will not feel any pain or discomfort during the procedure. We have a device, a "Skin- Pen," that has fourteen needles at the end of it. We can adjust the depth of the needles with the device. After washing off the numbing cream, the device with the needles will be placed on your face and the procedure will begin. The procedure will last between 15-30 minutes and there is no downtime.

This procedure is making "micro injuries" in the deeper layer of skin called the dermis and causing punctate bleeding. That's why sometimes this procedure is called "the vampire facial." The microinjuries in the deep layer of skin force new skin cells, collagen and elastin to regenerate and form. This also increases your skin cell turnover rate. When you leave the office, your skin will look bright red, like you just got a sunburn, and you will



not want to put any products on your face that day. Like a sunburn, you might experience mild irritation and peeling for 1-2 days, but can resume normal activities the following day. This procedure has many benefits. It is fantastic for textural issues, particularly acne scars, but also fine lines and wrinkles. The benefits also include minimizing pore size, evening out skin tone, lightening dark spots, boosting product absorption, and giving your skin a natural glow. Please do not buy the skin

rollers over the counter or online. These products only penetrate the top layer of skin, the epidermis, and will actually lead to damaging your skin barrier and can cause irritation. If you are interested in this procedure, please make sure you are a candidate by your medical provider. Not everyone is a candidate for this procedure; for example, if you are prone to forming keloids or have certain autoimmune conditions. I have over ten years of experience with this procedure,

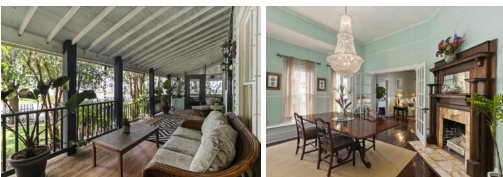
and I have seen firsthand how transformational it can be for improving skin texture, the skin's overall appearance and giving patients a natural glow. If you have any questions about this procedure or any other cosmetic procedures we offer at the office, please feel free to reach out and make an appointment at Coastal Skin Surgery and Dermatology (850) 500-3376. Remember – healthy skin is beautiful skin and we all deserve to love the skin we are in! I look forward to meeting you and discussing your skin care needs!

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Lithium Batteries vs. Lead-Acid: The Clear Choice for Golf Carts

BY KATE BRYANT

The sun is shining, the breeze is perfect, and you're set for a ride down to the beach... until your cart won't start. If you own an electric golf cart, you've probably been there before. With lead-acid batteries taking 8-12 hours to fully charge, your day's fun slips away before it even starts. You're not alone in the frustrations of traditional golf cart batteries, but there may be a better solution. Surely you've heard the buzz about lithium batteries for golf carts, but is it just hype, or is it a valuable upgrade for your cart? They have become the industry standard over the past few years for good reason:

Zero Maintenance

Unlike traditional lead-acid batteries, which require consis-

tent water-level checks, lithium batteries require no maintenance. No more adding water or worrying about acid spills!

Faster Charging

Say goodbye to slow charge times and ruined plans! Lithium batteries charge up to 5 times faster than lead-acid batteries, usually taking no more than 7 hours to fully charge, even when completely depleted. Best of all, they don't need to be fully charged to start your day. A quick partial charge can give you enough power to keep going.

Longer Run Time

Lithium-powered carts run longer per charge thanks to 3 times more energy density, meaning they store more energy to keep you moving. They're also 50-60% lighter than tradi-

tional golf cart batteries, improving overall performance.

Expanded Lifespan

You can expect lithium batteries to last two to three times longer than lead-acid batteries, with an average lifespan of 10 years and the potential to exceed that with proper care. Compare this to the 2 to 5 year lifespan of lead-acid batteries, and it's easy to see why lithium is the better investment.

Safety Improvements

Lithium batteries now have battery management systems that ensure safety by preventing overcharging, overheating, balancing cells, and protecting against short circuits. Unlike lead-acid batteries, they're also sealed and leak-proof, eliminating the risk of acid spills or dangerous fumes.



If you're ready for more freedom, convenience, and performance, a new lithium-powered cart is the best way to go. Every new cart at Coastal Cars & Carts comes equipped with lithium batteries, so you can enjoy the latest technology from day one, without the hassle of conversions.

Already own a cart you love?

We can still help. Our lithium conversion bundles include the battery, on-board charger, digital gauge, and converter, with packages starting at \$2,000 depending on your cart and battery size.

At Coastal Cars & Carts, we're a trusted, family-owned dealership with a full range of services from sales to repairs. Whether you're looking to invest in a brand-new lithium cart or upgrade your current one, we'll guide you through the best options for your lifestyle.

Call us today or stop by to explore our lithium-powered lineup and experience the difference of lithium for yourself.

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Musing

Sean of the South: The Whale



BY SEAN DIETRICH

Seldovia, Alaska, sits somewhere near the top of the world. It's a nanoscopic village on the North Pacific. Population 225. Tons of fishing boats. A lot of cold, icy, Kachemak Bay water.

A few days ago, a local spotted something huge stranded on the beach. It was a minke whale. About the same length as a midsize Toyota.

The whale was struggling. Thrashing around and panting. The whale was fighting to breathe.

The passerby ran for help. When a live whale finds itself stuck on a beach, you don't

have a lot of time. Maybe 20 minutes, tops.

Dehydration is often what kills the whale. Or the whale might drown because its airway faces the tide. Often, it's suffocation that kills a stranded whale.

Remember when you were a kid, and you swam in the pool all day? Remember how when you got out of the pool, your whole body felt heavy? That's because for hours water supported your body weight while all your friends played Marco Polo, thereby traumatizing some unfortunate child so that this child would be receiving therapy for the next, say, 30 or 40 years of his or her respective adulthood. Not that I would know anything about this.

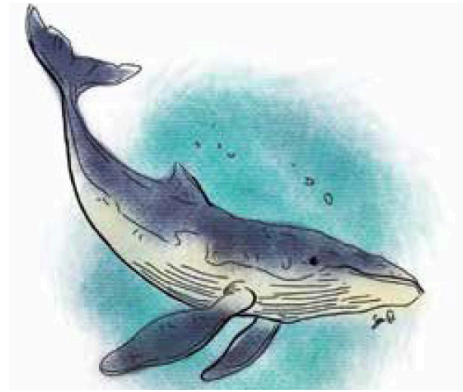
So anyway, after being buoyant all day, your little-kid muscles weren't used to supporting your weight. Once you got out of the pool, your body felt heavy. Likewise, whales spend a lifetime in the water. Their bodies are not built to handle their own weight. When a

whale lies on the beach, gravity crushes its huge frame, making it almost impossible to breathe.

The whale in Seldovia was gasping, with roughly three tons sitting on its lungs. It was dehydrating in the sun. It wouldn't be long before the whale would just give up and die.

Each year, about 2,000 whales strand themselves on beaches and die. That number is rising. Nobody really knows why. Even fewer seem to care.

Someone in the village contacted Stephen Payton, the environmental coordinator. In his 10-year career, he had never encountered a live beached



the whale in wet towels to protect it from sun exposure. They did not leave the whale's side. Twenty minutes turned into an hour. One hour turned into six.

After a full day of caring for the animal, the tide arrived. The whale reoriented itself and swam into the water and the crowd cheered.

But the whale did not swim off into the deep. The whale stayed in local waters for days, surfacing frequently, and spouting at local villagers. Like it was saying thank you.

Now think of all the times you honestly believed you weren't going to make it. Try to remember the individuals who appeared, seemingly out of nowhere, who stood beside you during hard times, even when odds were not in your favor.

Remember those people? Good. Now go be that person for someone else today.

whale. He wasn't sure what to expect when a neighbor offered him a ride on a four-wheeler.

"It was really scratched up," Payton said. "You could tell it had probably been rolling around on the rocks."

When he got to the beach, he had likely expected to find a dead whale. What he found, however, was not a deceased cetaceous creature.

When Payton arrived at the shore, there was a crowd of locals who had formed a bucket brigade. They were hauling seawater from the Pacific, using five-gallon buckets, dousing the whale.

The villagers had wrapped

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Design and Culture: Black and White

Sophisticated and classic, black has been making a comeback into interiors over the last few years. White cabinetry continues to be the most popular color in interior design and black is a stunning accent color, bringing a stark and impactful contrast into our white spaces and creating chic and timeless looks.

If you are thinking about a black and white kitchen space, we have some successful designs and ideas to share with you. A black island with white cabinets on the perimeter or all black lowers with white uppers are wonderful options. You can choose a black painted cabinet or a dark stain wood. The Onyx stain from DuraSupreme Cabinetry on a red oak or Knotty Alder is beautiful. A stained cabinet will also bring some texture into your space. Your countertop selection can help you decide if you want a smooth painted cabinet or to allow your cabinetry to bring texture in your space. Macabus fantasy and White Macabus quartzite are beautiful natural stones with lots of movement that look gorgeous on a black painting cabinet. These two stones have just enough dark veining to accentuate the black cabinetry and bring texture and pattern into the space. If you are thinking you'd like a white quartz countertop, a stain cabinet would be the perfect touch to bring in some texture. Nordic Storm is a new color from Vadara



Kitchen perimeter cabinetry is Dura Supreme's Meridien door style in white paint and the island is the Homestead panel painted on a red oak. Design by Kitchen Design Partners and Photography by Dennis Jourdan Photo & Video, Inc.

Quartz that is a lovely choice for a black and white kitchen or bath and would look lovely on a dark stained cabinet. Vadara explains their journey to this color as "the perfect contrast of light and shadow, a yin and yang of ice over waters so dark they appear black...we wanted to explore extremes of contrast and the striking balance of complete opposites."

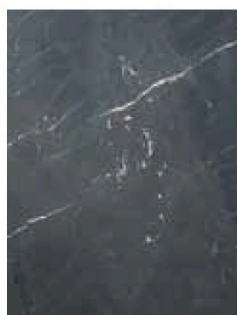
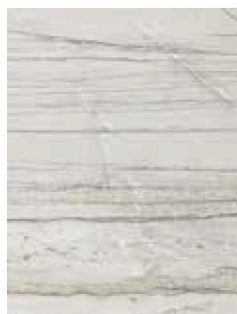
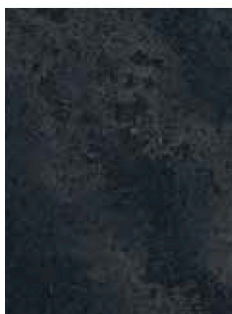
Another great option for creating a black and white kitchen is choosing all white cabinetry with a dark countertop. Brazilian Mist honed granite or Negroesco granite are great options for this look. We have many re-

quests for something that looks like Soapstone. Soapstone is a beautiful stone but not a good option for a kitchen due to its high maintenance qualities, but recently I came across this Black diamond honed quartzite which is gorgeous and would be a fabulous option for someone looking for something similar to the look of soapstone. Quartzite is durable and if sealed properly will be stunning for years to come. If you are interested in using quartz in your kitchen, Caesarstone has a new color called Darcrest which has a honed finish and would also be a striking choice

for this look.

If you have any questions about any of the natural stones or the new quartz colors available you can contact our showroom at (850) 236-6363 or just stop by.

We are located at 17801 Ashley Dr. in Panama City Beach, and the Granite Plus team would be happy to assist you.



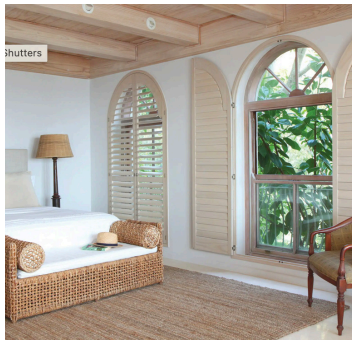
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Kitchen design by local Interior Designer Linda Mugglin of Tassels Interiors in Panama City Beach.

Lifestyle

Soft Window Treatments vs. Hard Window Treatments: What's the Difference?



ing the difference can help you choose the right option for your home or business.

What Are Soft Window Treatments?

Soft treatments are made from fabrics and textiles. They add warmth, texture, and a decorative touch to a room while still providing light control and privacy.

Common Examples:

- **Draperies & Curtains** – Flowing fabric panels that bring elegance, softness, and color into a space.
 - **Roman Shades** – Fabric shades that fold neatly as they rise, offering a clean yet luxurious look.
 - **Sheers** – Light, airy fabrics that diffuse sunlight without fully blocking the view.
- Benefits:
- **Aesthetic Appeal:** Soft treat-

ments introduce pattern, texture, and color, making them a design focal point.

- **Versatility:** They range from casual and breezy to formal and luxurious.

- **Insulation & Comfort:** Fabrics help soften sound and can insulate against heat or cold.

What Are Hard Window Treatments?

Hard treatments are made from sturdy materials such as wood, vinyl, or metal. They create a structured, architectural look and are valued for their durability and functionality.

Common Examples:

- **Blinds** – Horizontal or vertical slats made from wood, faux wood, aluminum, or vinyl.
- **Shutters** – Plantation shutters or other louvered panels

that provide timeless elegance and excellent light control.

- **Shades with Structured Materials** – Roller shades and woven wood shades often fall into this category depending on their construction.

Benefits:

- **Durability:** Built to last with strong, long-wearing materials.
- **Light Control:** Adjustable slats and louvers give precise control over natural light.
- **Clean, Tailored Look:** Perfect for modern, minimalist, or traditional architectural styles.

Choosing Between Soft and Hard Treatments

In many cases, the best design uses a combination of both. For example, shutters or blinds can provide structure and privacy, while drapery panels add softness and style.

The right mix depends on your goals:

- **For Style & Warmth:** Go with soft treatments.
- **For Function & Durability:** Hard treatments may be the better fit.
- **For Balance:** Layer them together to enjoy the best of both worlds.

Final Thoughts

Soft and hard window treatments each offer unique advantages. Soft treatments bring warmth, elegance, and design flexibility, while hard treatments provide durability, precision, and architectural style. Whether you're aiming for cozy sophistication or crisp functionality, understanding these categories ensures you choose the right solution for your space.

BY DONNA GODWIN, OWNER OF MADE IN THE SHADE

When it comes to designing a beautiful and functional space, window treatments play a key role. They don't just provide privacy and light control—they also set the tone for the entire room. One of the most important distinctions in the world of window coverings is between soft treatments and hard treatments. Understand-



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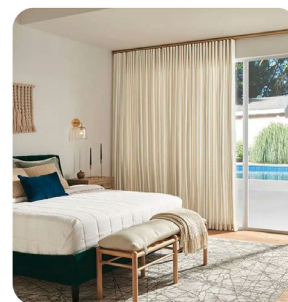
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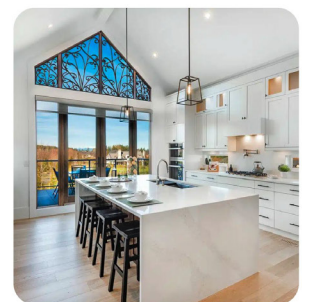
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From Builder Grade to Custom Chic: How Flooring Depot of Panama City Can Transform Your Home

BY AUBRIE ROUNDS, MARKETING COORDINATOR, FLOORING DEPOT OF PANAMA CITY

When you purchase a new home, it often comes with the “builder grade” basics — functional, neutral, and inoffensive, but not always a reflection of you. The walls may be beige, the flooring a standard laminate, and the light fixtures purely practical. While there’s nothing wrong with a builder-grade home, it often leaves homeowners craving more personality, warmth, and character.

That’s where Flooring Depot of Panama City comes in. With a vast selection of flooring, tile, countertops, backsplashes, and even frameless glass shower doors, they make it easy to elevate your space from cookie-cutter to custom chic — all without requiring a complete remodel.

Why Upgrade Builder Grade?

Builder-grade finishes are designed to appeal to the widest audience possible, which

is why they often feel a little plain. Upgrading certain features allows you to:

- Express your style – Create a home that feels uniquely yours.
- Increase value – Higher-quality finishes can boost resale potential.
- Improve durability – Premium materials often last longer and perform better.
- Enhance comfort – From softer carpets to quieter floors, upgrades can make a noticeable difference in daily living.

Start with the Foundation: Flooring

The quickest way to make a home feel completely different is by updating the floors. Flooring Depot of Panama City offers an incredible selection, from luxury vinyl plank (LVP) that mimics hardwood to plush carpet perfect for bedrooms. Kristen Carter, Flooring Depot’s sales manager, is currently going through this process herself. She recently purchased her first home and is making thoughtful upgrades room by room.

“I love my new home, but it



doesn’t quite feel like me yet,” Carter says. “One of the first changes I made was swapping out the generic flooring in my living area for a warm-toned LVP from Flooring Depot. It instantly made the space feel cozier and more inviting — and I know it’ll stand up to everyday life.”

Add a Touch of Luxury in the Bathroom

Bathrooms are another area where small upgrades make a big impact. Frameless glass shower doors, now offered by Flooring

Depot, bring a spalike feel to any bathroom. Replacing a builder-basic shower enclosure with a sleek, modern glass option opens the space and lets beautiful tile work shine.

For a complete refresh, consider updating the bathroom floors and shower tile. With so many materials and styles available, you can create anything from a serene retreat to a bold, modern statement.

Don’t Forget the Details

Sometimes, it’s the little details that turn a house into a home. While Flooring Depot specializes in larger upgrades, their design team can help you coordinate everything, so the finishes flow seamlessly from room to room.

Think about:

- Coordinating transitions between flooring types
- Matching grout colors to your tile for a polished look
- Choosing patterns that complement your home’s architecture
- Incorporating texture with stone-look tile or woodgrain

LVP

Carter emphasizes the importance of these finishing touches:

“When you’re making changes, it’s easy to focus only on the big pieces,” she says. “But the details — like the right transition or grout color — can make your upgrades look intentional and high-end instead of pieced together.”

Work with Experts who Care

One of the biggest advantages of working with Flooring Depot of Panama City is their personalized approach. Their team can guide you from inspiration to installation, ensuring your vision comes to life. Carter explains, “Because I work here, I already knew the quality and variety we offer, but going through the process as a homeowner really showed me how valuable it is to have expert advice. The team helped me narrow down my options, explained what would work best for my lifestyle, and made the installation process smooth and stress-free.”

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Originally from St. George Island, I am a licensed real estate broker since 2005, dedicated to helping buyers, sellers, and investors achieve their dreams with expertise and integrity. With a focus on residential, commercial, and resort second-home properties, I guide my clients to maximize their investment potential, earning recognition as a 2024 Masters Diamond Producer by Century 21. My commitment to delivering exceptional results and fostering lasting relationships ensures that every client feels valued and understood in their real estate journey.



Rick Watson

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Leveraging deep roots and a legal background, I have been a trusted real estate expert on St. George Island for over two decades with Century 21 Collins Realty. A long-time resident since 1974, I have seamlessly guided buyers and sellers through transactions by combining unparalleled local knowledge with professional acumen. My extensive community leadership, including service as Franklin County's tax collector, offers clients a distinct advantage and insight into the market they call home.



Marilyn Bean

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For more than 40 years, Marilyn Bean has been guiding buyers and sellers through the unique real estate market of St. George Island. Known for her deep local knowledge and commitment to excellence, Marilyn offers expert insight on the Island market. Marilyn was awarded the 2024 Centurion award by Century 21. Whether you're searching for the perfect vacation home or selling a cherished property, Marilyn blends professionalism with a passion for helping clients achieve their coastal dreams. Discover how Marilyn can elevate your St. George Island real estate dream.



Deb Robertson

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I know the St. George Island market and the coastal lifestyle that makes this area so special. If you're selling, I'll create a marketing plan to showcase your home's best features and attract the right buyers. If you're buying, I'll help you find the property that fits your goals—whether it's a vacation retreat, investment, or forever home.

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Kara Landiss

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Kara@BeachDreamsNow.com

The key to Kara's success in real estate is her unique ability to connect to her customers and their needs.

This "high-touch" approach focuses on listening to her customers and partnering with them on a plan of action to find the perfect property.

Kara also understands that buying a property in a vacation destination market is unlike the typical purchase of a land-locked property, and her ability to navigate these complex transactions is unmatched.



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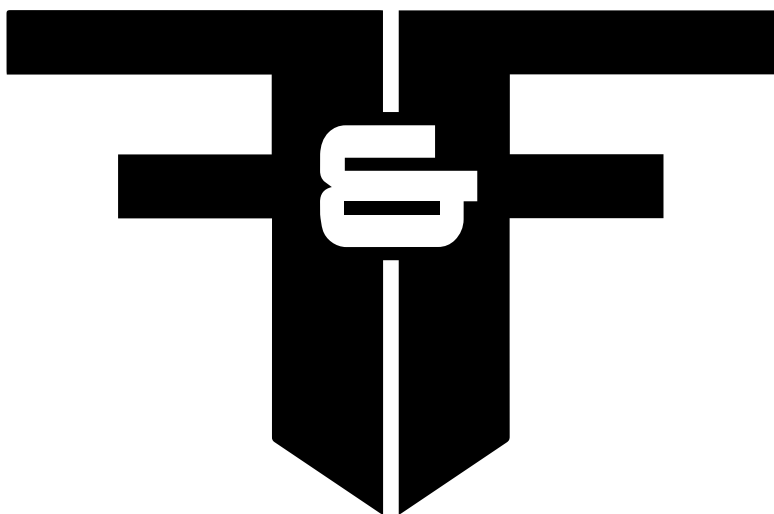
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411 WINDMARK WAY | Bay Views

3 Bed | 3.5 Bath | 2,766 SF | \$1,199,900
Deeded access to the Bay | MLS 319799



204 POND CYPRESS | Pool + Bay Views

5 Bed | 3 Bath | 2,535 SF | \$875,000
View of Pool and beyond the Bay | MLS 321173



528 WINDMARK WAY LOT | Bay Views

.30 of Acre | \$299,000
Gated Section | MLS 321196



610 TIDE WATER DRIVE | Across from Park

.21 of Acre (119x72) | \$179,000
Includes Approved Floor Plans | MLS 320898



Sheila Holmes

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