10Best Readers' Choice
Chosen by readers of USA TODAY and 10Best

#10 - Lovers Key State Park - Ft. Myers

Every bit as romantic as it sounds, Lovers Key boasts a wedding pavilion on the sands where hundreds get married every year and hundreds more renew their vows on Valentine's Day. The isolated cluster of islands that make up the park holds unsplashed beaches that birds love as much as sun-worshippers. A tram takes visitors from the parking lot to one of its three beaches, but the walk across estuary to the Gulf of Mexico is a don’t-miss part of the experience.

Photo courtesy of The Beaches of Fort Myers & Sanibel

Gulf Islands National Seashore Wins Title of Florida's Best Beach

Clearwater, Siesta Key, Playalinda and Pass-a-Grille in top 5

In the battle for the title of Best Florida Beach, the Gulf Coast reigned supreme as home to four of the top five winners. Throughout four weeks of voting, it was neck and neck between Gulf Islands National Seashore and Clearwater Beach. The undulating talcum sands of the panhandle near Pensacola won out in the end, and Gulf Islands National Seashore is our winner, with Clearwater Beach runner up.

The brilliant white beaches of Siesta Key, located just off the coast of Sarasota, snagged the third place spot, while it’s over on the Pacific Coast — the Space Coast to be exact — where you’ll find the fourth place winner, Playalinda. Quirky Pass-a-Grille Beach finished in fifth position.
The winners in the ‘Best Florida Beach’ contest category for USA TODAY 10Best Readers’ Choice are as follows:

1. Gulf Islands National Seashore - Pensacola
2. Clearwater Beach - Clearwater
3. Siesta Beach - Siesta Key
4. Playalinda - Titusville
5. Pass-a-Grille Beach - St. Petersburg
6. Caladesi Island State Park - Dunedin
7. St. Joseph Peninsula State Park - Port St. Joe
8. Fort de Soto Park - Tierra Verde
9. Henderson Beach State Park - Destin
10. Lovers Key State Park - Ft. Myers

Congratulations to our ten winning Florida beaches!

The Experts

Lauren Tjadens
Lauren Tjadens joined VISIT FLORIDA, the Sunshine State's official tourism marketing corporation, as the Beaches & Adventure Insider in 2007. She has visited - and filmed - almost every beach in Florida, and enjoys adventures that include skydiving, scuba diving and windsurfing. She helped the U.S. Women's Team win silver in the 2006 Women's World Hang Gliding Championships. Tjadens shares her experiences via blogs, articles and videos on VISITFLORIDA.com and in social media, and answers questions from visitors to the website. Tjadens is co-author of the book "Bombproof Your Horse" and is a frequent contributor to magazines. She lives with her husband in Groveland, Florida.

A.D. Thompson
A.D. Thompson has spent more than 20 years as a professional writer and roughly 15 as a Floridian. The words, she has found, come easier with bare feet and rum. A roller coaster enthusiast, A.D. readily admits there is fun to be had amid the madness of the theme parks, but has found there is magic, as well, in the outlying reaches of Mickey's long shadow. She is delighted to share with you the spoils of her adopted city. Visit her colorful compendium at www.amydrewthompson.com.

Chelle Koster Walton
Chelle Koster Walton -- the Local Expert for Naples, Florida and the Caribbean -- has been covering the destination for 30 years. Her top-selling Saracota, Sanibel Island, and Naples guidebook (Countryman Press) is in its sixth edition. She was contributing editor for Caribbean Travel & Life for 12 years and has written guidebooks on the Bahamas. A veteran of news, magazine and print media, she’s also a spokesmodel and copywriter.

Aimee Heckel
Aimee Heckel's passion for storytelling has brought her around the world as a journalist, writing award-winning articles about Haiti and Uganda. Aimee studied International journalism at the University of Heidelberg in Germany, and she majored in journalism and German at Colorado State University. When she's not covering Colorado for Fodor's Travel Guide, you may find her in another foreign country.