

FORKS
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THE
ROAD

Florida's **Clearwater Beach** has always had a great rep for its silky sand beaches and the shimmering blue Gulf of Mexico surf, but now it's upped the ante with deluxe hotels and fine dining. It started with the gorgeous \$30-million beach promenade completed in 2008. Then the Hyatt Regency opened in 2010 with its luxurious gulf view rooms complete with kitchens and

large balconies. The sleek and modern Opal Sands just opened this year, and six more hotels are under construction, including a Wyndham coming soon. The restaurant scene is booming. Caretta on the Gulf at the Sandpearl Resort has been the top spot for a fancy meal with its raw bar, wood-burning oven and sunset views. Service is slick and the menu infuses South American and Caribbean with fresh-caught fish and prime-cut steaks. The just-opened Sea-Guini at

sister property, Opal Sands, however steals its thunder with sea-inspired, Italian-influenced dishes such as crab and lobster cake, delicious linguine vongole and tender pan-seared local hog fish. For casual seafood meals nothing beats the five Frenchy's eateries, especially Frenchy's Rockaway Grill on the beach for a local grouper sandwich or in-season fresh stone crab claws. clearwater-vacation.com
Margaret Swaine, Weekend Post