



County Beach Parks

The following locations have restrooms, parking fees and many amenities, including shower facilities.

- 1 Fort De Soto Park**
3500 Pinellas Bayway S., Tierra Verde, FL 33715
Considered the crown jewel of Pinellas County's parks, it was awarded America's Top Beach and Best Beach honors by travel and beach-science authorities. The park has 1,136 acres of beach and protected areas. A Spanish-American War-era fort, listed in the registry of National Historic Places, is on one of the five interconnected islands that make up this park.
- 2 Fred Howard Park**
1700 Sunset Drive, Tarpon Springs, FL 34689
A popular mile-long causeway and beach are highlights of this 155-acre park. There are also walking paths, scenic vistas, a butterfly garden and grassy areas shaded by ancient oaks.
- 3 Sand Key Park**
1060 Gulf Blvd., Clearwater, FL 33767
This 95-acre park is adjacent to Clearwater Pass across from popular Clearwater Beach. This location, on the Great Florida Birding Trail, has a dog park, picnic shelters and a playground.

County Beach Access Locations

The following locations have restrooms, parking fees and shower facilities. These destinations stretch along 15 miles of sandy beach.

- 4 Indian Rocks Beach**
1700 Gulf Blvd., Indian Rocks Beach
- 5 Tiki Gardens/Indian Shores**
19601 Gulf Blvd., Indian Shores
- 6 Redington Shores**
18200 Gulf Blvd, Redington Shores
- 7 Madeira Beach**
14400 Gulf Blvd., Madeira Beach
- 8 St. Pete Beach**
4700 Gulf Blvd., St. Pete Beach



beaches & shells guide

Pinellas County

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- Parks and Conservation Resources:
- Parks & Preserves - www.pinellascounty.org/parks
 - Heritage Village - www.pinellascounty.org/heritage
 - Florida Botanical Gardens - www.flbg.org
 - Pinellas County Extension - www.pinellascountyextension.org
 - Brooker Creek Preserve - www.brookercreekpreserve.org
 - Weedon Island Preserve - www.weedonislandpreserve.org

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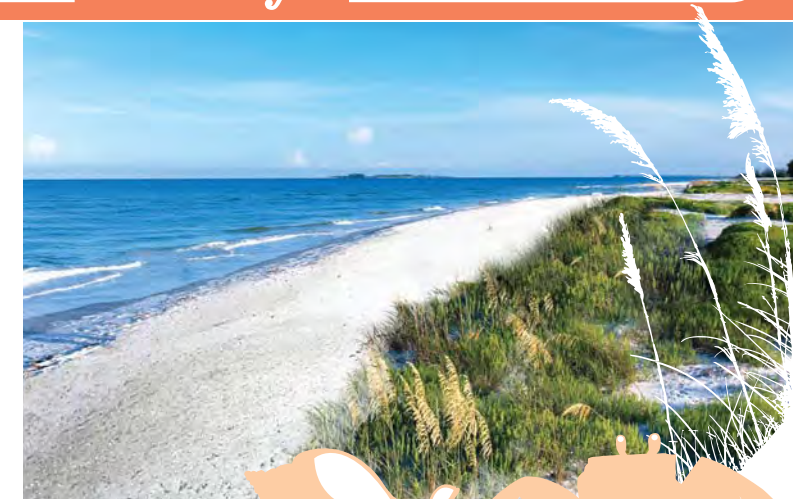
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www.pinellascounty.org/parks
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bird checklist



historic guide



COMMON SHELLS



Apple Murex



Fargo's Worm Shell



Eastern White Slipper Shell



Florida Cerith



Broad-ribbed Cardita



Lighting Whelk

Lettered Olive

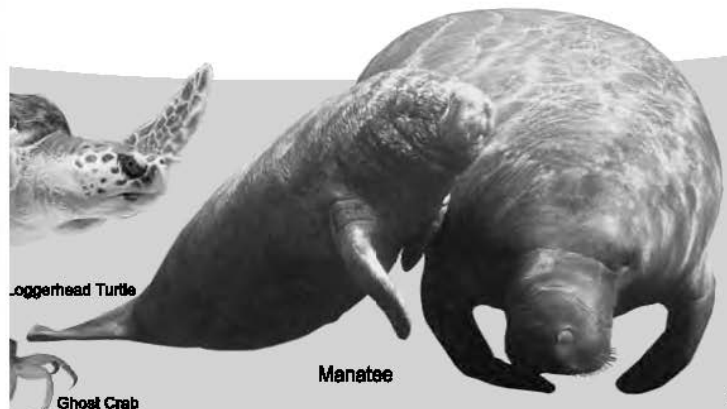
artwork by Diane Rome Peebles

havens for wildlife

Exploring the beach brings endless fascination as each wave reveals previously unseen treasures. **Shells, sand dollars and starfish** are a few of the curiosities that wait to be discovered. In only a few steps you can have the beginning of an excellent shell collection. Each species of shell has a story to tell about where it came from and how it got here. Seashells are the remaining outer skeletons of a group of animals classified as mollusks. Most mollusks are either gastropods, commonly referred to as snails, or bivalves, also known as clams. Shells vary in color and form, affected by environmental factors such as water clarity, temperature and currents. See our common shells on the back panel.

Some of the birds you see on our beaches will nest on the beach during certain times of the year. Migratory birds such as **Red Knots** (a species of sandpiper) need these beaches to find food along their routes. These beaches are more than recreational areas; they are critical habitat. Please do not disturb or feed the birds.

The raucous call of the **Laughing Gulls** can be heard year-round on our beaches. **Ring-billed Gulls** and **Herring Gulls** add to the bird life during the winter months. **Brown Pelicans** stand out as they glide in formation just over the water's surface.



Loggerhead Turtle

Manatee

Ghost Crab

White Ibises, with their long, curved, red bills, feed by probing into the moist sand. **Great Blue Herons**, **American Egrets**, **Tri-colored** and **Little Blue Herons** are commonly seen scouting the shoreline for fishing opportunities. The erratic movements of the **Reddish Egrets** are almost comical to watch as they walk and run through shallow water.

The **Atlantic Loggerhead Turtle** nests on Pinellas County's beaches. These huge sea turtles make their way out of the water to an area above the high tide line and lay 100 to 120 eggs. Pinellas County is usually home to about 150 sea turtle nests annually.

Look for small burrows near the dune line. These burrows, with a fan-shaped pattern at their entrance, are the homes of **Ghost Crabs**. These crabs are active mostly at dawn, at night or in the early evening. Although they are land based, they must keep their gills wet and scurry back and forth to the water's edge. They run sideways at a speed of about 10 miles per hour.

West Indian Manatees are large, gray aquatic mammals with bodies that taper to a flat, paddle-shaped tail. These gentle giants have an average weight of about 1,190 pounds. They feed on a variety of submerged and floating vegetation. This endangered species can be seen in our area, particularly in winter months, in bays, canals and coastal areas. The manatee's closest living relatives are elephants.

The **Horseshoe Crab** is one of the most ancient of marine animals with a relatively unchanged fossil history for over 200 million years. The horseshoe crab is not really a crab at all or even a crustacean. Horseshoe crabs are related to an ancient animal called a trilobite and are more closely related to spiders and scorpions than to crabs.

Horseshoe crabs are very common near the shoreline in the spring when they come in to mate and lay eggs. The highest concentration appears at the time of the highest tide of the full moon. The female lays her eggs in the sand near the high tide line. The tide will not reach this level until the next full moon. This allows the eggs to incubate for 28 days. The young hatch out during the high tide of the next full moon and swim to deeper water where they grow to adulthood in about 10 years. Food consists of small clams and worms

living just below the surface of the sand. As horseshoe crabs grow, they shed their shells. Their lifespan is about 18 years.

The horseshoe crab's spine is not a weapon but a tool used for righting the animal whenever it gets turned on its back by the waves. The horseshoe crab is a gentle, harmless creature.

builders of the community

Seagrasses grow in shallow coastal waters. These flowering plants can grow into vast beds known as seagrass meadows. Seagrass meadows are one of the most productive natural communities in the world and they are a principal contributor to marine food webs. Hundreds of marine plants and animals live in this natural community. Seventy percent of Florida's marine recreational fish depend upon seagrass meadows at some time in their lives.

Sea Oats are an important part of the beach community. These plants can tolerate the low nutrient environment of the beach because they have such a vast network of roots to absorb the few nutrients that are there. These roots help hold the dunes together. Wind blows sand across the beach and it gets stopped in the sea oats; this helps to build up the elevation of the dunes. A specialized stalk produces an attractive cluster of seeds resembling oats and that is how this plant gets its common name.

Mangroves are trees that have adapted to salty environments. Three species of mangroves can be seen in Pinellas County's beach parks. Red Mangroves have arching "prop roots" and are found closest to the water. Black Mangroves are found on the landward side of the Red Mangroves. The Black Mangrove roots, called pneumatophores, are fingerlike projections from the soil. White Mangroves occupy the highest elevation of the three mangroves. Their elliptical, light yellow-green leaves are notched at the tip. Mangroves produce about 7,800 pounds of leaf litter per acre, per year, having a tremendous effect on their immediate area and far-reaching consequences throughout the marine ecosystem. Mangroves serve as nursery areas for fish and rookeries for birds; they protect the shoreline and maintain water quality.

Pinellas County is home to many beautiful, white, sandy beaches along Florida's Gulf Coast. Recreation, relaxation and fitness activities await you among our more than 35 miles of beaches and parks. To help guide visitors, this brochure provides information and directions for county beach parks and beach access locations.

Amenities found at these destinations include fishing piers, recreational and canoe/kayak trails, boardwalks, restrooms, reservable picnic shelters, playgrounds and plentiful parking. Each destination is open daily from 7 a.m. to dusk. Some parks also offer campgrounds, boat ramps, dog parks and viewing towers. Learn more by visiting www.pinellascounty.org/parks.

Welcome. Please enjoy and explore our Pinellas County paradise.

Remember, these sandy playgrounds are not only a treasure trove to enjoy but also to respect. Please do not disturb or take home any living creatures including live shells.

Disturbing, molesting, trapping, snaring, capturing, harming or destroying park flora and fauna is a violation of Pinellas County Ordinance 90-6. Violators may be subject to penalties, including fines or arrest.

