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*It's a
Chocolate-
COVERED
FEBRUARY*

*Caitlin's
SMILES;
ONE MOTHER'S
TRIBUTE*

*BON APPÉTIT:
NINO'S
BISTRO
Delizioso!*

Face
in the
Crowd:

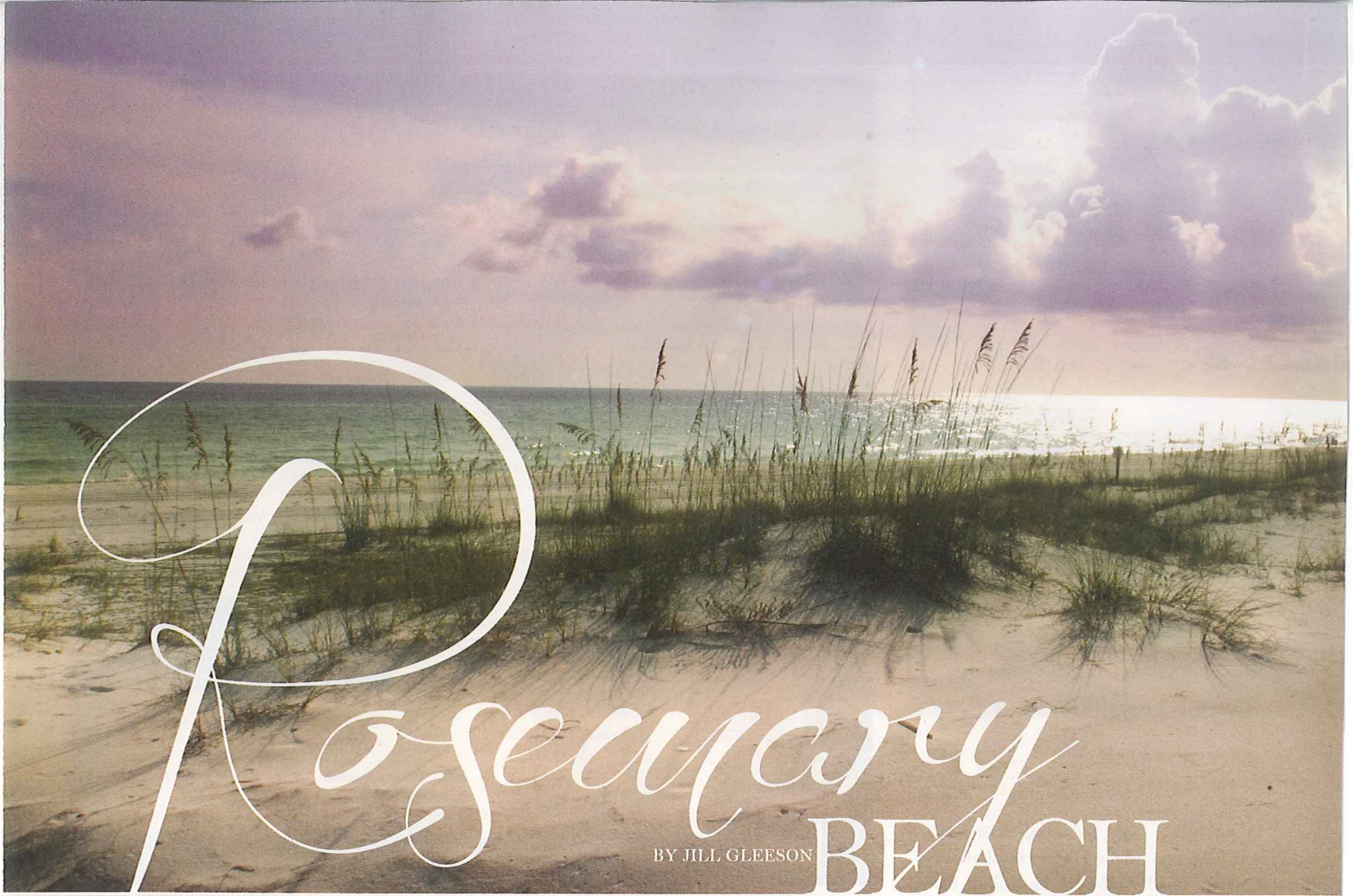
Vicki DiSylvestre

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Rosemary BEACH

BY JILL GLEESON

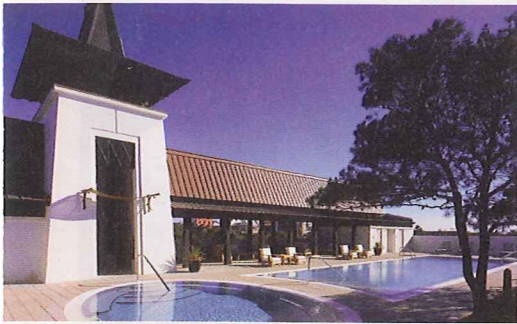
It is seemingly endless stretches of beach graced by sand so soft and white it brings to mind less clichéd sugar than finer flour.

It is the gentle embrace of the Gulf of Mexico's famed waters, luminous even as they fade from indigo to teal, cobalt to aqua.

It is the echo of a seabird's call across the sound of the surf, the caress of an ocean breeze under the lemon-yellow sun's gaze.

It is a place built on that once-cherished idea of community, where bicycles outnumber cars, nature is nurtured and residents greet visitors as friends.

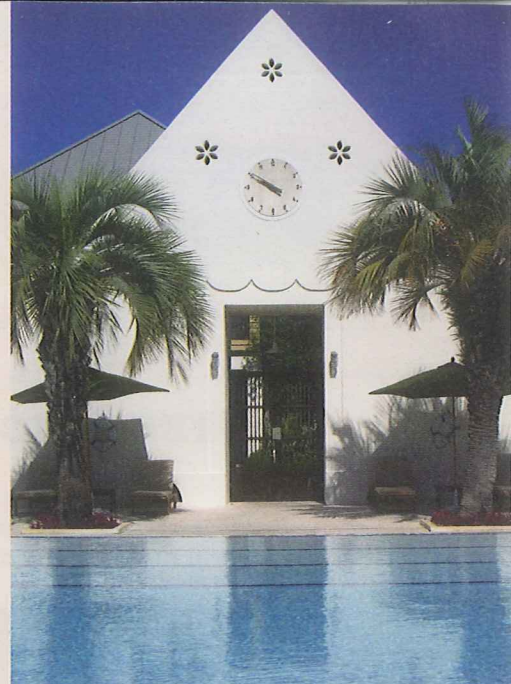
It is Rosemary Beach, Florida, and it seems a glorious, gracious world away from the incivility of the workaday world.



Rosemary Beach was created – born – in 1995 as an antidote to fast-paced, grid-locked, strip-malled boroughs where inhabitants have deeper relationships with their cars than their neighbors and locally owned businesses have been usurped by big-box retailers and fast-food restaurants. Inspired by small-town America of the mid-20th century, Rosemary Beach is a shining example of New Urbanism, a town-planning model that trumpets small neighborhoods rich with green space located a short stroll from a village center enlivened by unique eateries and shops.

Located on 107 acres on Florida's northwest coast between Destin and Panama City, with 2,500 feet of ocean frontage, Rosemary Beach is all this and more. It's a place as free from stress as it is pollution, crime and traffic, where the herb for which the town is named grows wild, dappling the air with its scent. But if the town seems a paradise in which to live and work (a little less than 200 full-time residents are lucky enough to do so), it makes for a veritable heaven for vacationers. With over 200 luxurious rental accommodations to choose from, ranging in size from cozy studios and two-bedroom carriage houses to lavish five-bedroom cottages, individuals, couples, families and even large groups can all find something to suit.

Thanks to strict building codes and guidelines, there is a charming visual harmony to Rosemary Beach. Private and public structures have been designed in the Pan-Caribbean style, recalling the architecture of coastal cities such as New Orleans and Charleston. Linking them are peaceful footpaths and boardwalks winding through and along gardens, pocket parks and lush greens. A commitment to environmentally friendly practices, (which include the use of pervious pavers, dune walkovers and natural construction materials) dictates the use of native



Winter is a great time to get away to Rosemary Beach. Temperatures average in the mid-50s, reservations can be made with little advance notice and rates are at an all-time low. Winter daily rates for carriage houses, loft/flat units and cottages range from \$177 to \$1,143; weekly rental rates from \$1,043 to \$8,001. For those looking to make their escape later in the year, spring and fall daily rental rates range from \$193 to \$1,286; weekly rental rates from \$1,155 to \$9,002. Summer and spring break daily rental rates range from \$218 to \$2,644; weekly rental rates from \$1,330 to \$18,508.

Rental guests receive complimentary access to the fitness center, all pools, the private beach and the racquet club's tennis courts. Information on last-minute specials and packages can be found at rosemarybeach.com under "vacation rentals."

In addition to the current rental options available in Rosemary Beach, the Pensione Inn, an 11-room hotel with a contemporary European appeal, is slated to open by April of this year. Room rates, which include Gulf views, free Wi-Fi and access to the town's amenities noted above, start at \$150.

Should you wish to purchase a piece of paradise for yourself, there are currently almost 100 real estate offerings available in Rosemary Beach ranging from fractional ownership in the two-bedroom, three-bath properties of the private residence club for \$115,000, to a \$4,990,000 five-bedroom, six-bath Gulf-side home.

For more information on rental accommodations at Rosemary Beach, call (866) 348-8952 or visit rosemarybeach.com. For more information on Rosemary Beach Realty, phone (850) 278-2000 or visit rosemarybeachsales.com.

plants in public areas. They not only provide crucial habitat for wildlife and reduce the need for watering and pesticides, but also create a more genuine, relaxed landscape.

Relaxation is the rule, not the exception, in Rosemary Beach. Time seems to slow there, encouraging leisurely strolls down the town's 2.3-mile fitness trail, or alongside the soft surf, under the night sky's starry gaze. Four magnificent pools, including the Sky Pool, an all-weather heated pool boasting a retractable roof, inspire not just swimming but drowsing the afternoon away in a comfortable chaise. Massages may be booked at the fitness club, which also offers personal training, Pilates and yoga classes, and at Vivo Spa Salon in the town center, where clients may pamper themselves as well with face and body treatments and hair and nail services.

A lazy morning can also be spent browsing the exceptional shops of Rosemary Beach — happily without ever running into a tacky T-shirt store or bland chain retailer. Rent a bike at Bamboo Bicycle Company, gear up for the beach at Bombora Sun & Surf or pamper skin, body and hair with the fine products of Pish Posh Patchoulis. Tennis lovers will want to hit up the racquet club's eight clay courts, six of which are lighted for nighttime play. (Private and group lessons with the club's resident pro are available.) For those looking to do more than sun and swim, Sea Oats Beach Service rents surfboards, kayaks, catamarans and more.

Like so much else in Rosemary Beach, dining out is a pleasingly unhurried, leisurely affair; meals made with care from the freshest, locally sourced ingredients encourage lingering. Among the town's options: Restaurant Paradis, an elegantly hip eatery specializing in steak and legendary Gulf seafood exquisitely prepared; Wild Olives, a market, deli and bakery also featuring a to-die-for selection of tapas, cheeses, salads and sandwiches; Summer Kitchen Café, the town's first restaurant and the perfect place to grab a light, healthful bite; and Onano Neighborhood Café, specializing in Northern Italian cuisine so authentic diners swear they're in Tuscany. For dessert, don't miss the decadent chocolate creations at La Crema Tapas and Chocolate.

Quiet and quaint, boasting a congenial charm that recalls the best of long-ago America — and yet offering the finest modern amenities — Rosemary Beach beckons. And with the new Northwest Florida Beaches International Airport now just a 20-minute drive away and shuttle service to and fro available, travel to the town is easier than ever. Isn't it time to heed the call? For more information about Rosemary Beach, call (866) 348-8952 or visit rosemarybeach.com. **HBG**