

# A Weekend Getaway in Stuart



The charming and historic town of Stuart, located north of Palm Beach and southeast of Orlando in Martin County, is an ideal Florida weekend escape. Even Coastal Living Magazine proclaimed Stuart as the "Happiest Seaside Town," noting its quaint vibe, endearing bed and breakfast inns, sidewalk cafes, art galleries and boutiques.

Stuart is also known as the Sailfish Capital of the World, where anglers vie for the sports fish in the deep blue Atlantic waters. The ocean, along with the St. Lucie and Indian Rivers, sets a breezy waterfront vibe for the community.

Stuart was once a thriving hub for growing chrysanthemums, where they were often shipped by rail. Stuart still has local trains passing through town, adding historic ambiance of an era when locomotives shipped flowers, pineapples and other goods while hauling the first wave of tourists to Florida's east coast.

Martin County may not be as well known as some of its East Coast neighboring counties. Luckily that is a gift for this south Florida destination that lacks the urban congestion but does have miles of open beaches, parks and conservation lands reminiscent of Florida's past. And Stuart is not only a prime place to enjoy your stay but also a launching point to discover the surrounding areas.

## Kick Off Your Weekend

Begin your Stuart weekend at a comfy bed and breakfast. The enchanting Old Colorado Inn ([www.oldcoloradoinn.com](http://www.oldcoloradoinn.com)), aptly named because it's situated on Colorado Avenue, is in the heart of the downtown district and dates to 1914. This elegant hotel offers a range of accommodations, including luxurious suites, cottages and guesthouses, all in a tropical setting not far from the Intracoastal Waterway. Enjoy a tropical drink at the downstairs Sneaki Tiki Bar.

Then stroll over to the Riverwalk Café and Oyster Bar for dinner ([riverwalkoysterbar.com](http://riverwalkoysterbar.com)). This small, intimate restaurant, located in one of Stuart's most historic buildings, features freshly caught fish and oysters.

Acclaimed Chef Steven Feder was tapped by celebrity Emeril Lagasse to showcase his culinary expertise on *Emeril's Florida* television series. The restaurant's specialty items include the daily fresh catch, rotating daily oyster menu (including baked oysters, black truffle and asiago cheese), cornmeal-crusted fried oysters, ahi tuna nachos and prime steaks coupled with an extensive beer and wine list.







After dinner enjoy some entertainment at the local Lyric Theatre ([www.lyrictheatre.com](http://www.lyrictheatre.com)), a central gathering place in the downtown. The 1926 building was once a silent movie house and is handsomely restored, featuring performances including concerts, musical, dance and comedy on most weekends. On the National Registry of Historic Places, the intimate theatre seats 500 and makes for a special experience.

### Explore Stuart on Saturday

After a restful night you can wake up and smell the coffee and breathe in the fresh salty air on your way to one of the local coffee shops or local eateries. Consider starting your day at Maria's Café for breakfast. This mom and pop local eatery has been in business for 24 years and is beloved by locals for its signature biscuits and gravy, fresh pancakes and made-to-order omelets.

Following breakfast, choose from a long list of things to do and see in this pedestrian-friendly town.

In the center of downtown Stuart is Sailfish Circle, where a signature bronze sailfish sculpture created by renown local sculptor Geoffrey C. Smith towers above a sparkling fountain creating a perfect place to begin your walking tour.

From the Sailfish Circle, stroll to the Riverwalk, a mile-long waterfront promenade along the St. Lucie River. Watch the line of fishermen under the Roosevelt Bridge, or just sit a spell and soak in the warm sunshine while enjoying the gentle breeze and admiring the public art.

You also may want to enjoy some local shopping. Two popular stores include Gumbo Limbo, a home accessories shop, and April Daze gift boutique. Or check out the one-of-a-kind art galleries including the Geoffrey C. Smith Gallery, where this famous sculptor's work "Rising Above" was recently gifted to Pope Francis.

For local history, check out the Stuart Museum, housed in a circa 1901 storefront that was once a mercantile and feed store. The museum features vintage items from yesteryear, including historical displays representing the area. Highlights include a Florida Seminole Village collection featuring authentic clothing, artifacts and a special diorama that depicts an authentic village. Another display features ➤







old Stuart and the Flagler Railroad. A glance outside the window will remind you that times have not changed much as the sounds of a train echo through town.

And if you want to experience more art, try the Courthouse Cultural Center and Gallery (open Saturdays from 11 a.m. to 2 p.m.) The building dates to 1937, once serving as a WPA project during the New Deal. It now features fine art exhibitions of local, regional and international artists.

By now, you may be ready to relax and there's nothing better than setting sail for a two-hour sunset cruise aboard the 19th Century Schooner Lily, an old cargo sail boat ([www.treasurecoastsailingadventures.com](http://www.treasurecoastsailingadventures.com)).



Long ago, boats very similar to this one sailed up and down Florida's coastline, transporting citrus, groceries and lumber. Departing from Shepard Park, enjoy this relaxing trip aboard the wooden sailing vessel, where the captain will invite guests to hoist the three sails, or you just sit back to enjoy an adventure on the St. Lucie River. Be on the look out for dolphins, jumping sea rays and birds flying overhead while relishing a stunning sunset vista. Bring beverages and snacks to enjoy a prequel to dinner.

For dinner, enjoy a stop at the family owned Gafford Restaurant ([thegafford.com](http://thegafford.com)) for some delicious fare, including the famous Mabel's fried chicken, the signature rib eye steak or the local catch of the day complemented by locally sourced fresh greens and veggies. And be sure you don't leave without a glass of the famous pineapple martini.

If you are still up for some late night fun, try the eclectic and local Blue Door Coffee Shop for music and beverages.

## Sunday, Fun Day

The next morning wake up to Sunday brunch at the Osceola Street Café ([osceolastreet.com](http://osceolastreet.com)). Start with a full espresso bar selection or go for the delicious breakfast menu. Sunday brunch serves up shrimp &



grits, biscuits and gravy, eggs Benedict or the tempting French toast made with fresh sourdough bread.

Later, walk to the Stuart Green Market, where the community congregates and you'll have the chance to take home some fresh goods. Located next to City Hall on the St. Lucie waterfront, the farmer's market sets the stage for top quality produce, fresh flowers, homemade baked breads and pastries and artisan crafts. Stay for live music following the market called Rock'n Riverwalk.

What more could you want for a weekend of fun? Stuart melds nostalgia, history, shopping scenery and fun – with a distinctive vibe that embraces its past while celebrating its laid back ambiance. You'll also find that it is an ideal place to begin many more adventures in Martin County and discover more authentic treasures for future travels.

For more information, visit [discovermartin.com](http://discovermartin.com). 



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