2016
AMERICA'S HAPPIEST SEASIDE TOWNS
From West Coast to East, Great Lakes to Gulf, meet the 10 places that are guaranteed to make you smile—for a weekend or a lifetime
BY TRACEY MINKIN

The lush waterfront or smart
Florida
FAIRHOPE, ALABAMA
POPULATION: 17,585 AVERAGE JULY HIGH: 91 AVERAGE JANUARY LOW: 19
AVERAGE NUMBER OF SUNNY DAYS: 221

Located on what’s known as the Eastern Shore of Mobile Bay, this gracious Gulf town has long been a destination for artists, writers (including Flannery O’Connor, Flannery O’Connor, Flannery O’Connor, and Flannery O’Connor), and vacationers. The historic downtown blooms—both literally and figuratively. Colorful blossoms line the sidewalks, streetscapes, and sidewalks, and the town is home to a number of fine restaurants and boutiques.

COOL EVENT Mardi Gras. Fairhope is known for its Mardi Gras celebrations, which include colorful parades, live music, and a variety of activities for all ages.

BEST SOUVENIR Because Fairhope is known for its art community, take home a piece of local art or pottery.

STAY A WEEKEND Most rooms at the 550-room Grand Hotel Marriott Resort, Golf Club & Spa have sweeping views of the bay from their balcony rocking chairs, an ideal place to watch the lights of Mobile across the water. Rates start at $209. 251/938-9201 or marriottgrand.com

SULLIVAN’S ISLAND, SOUTH CAROLINA
POPULATION: 17,585 AVERAGE JULY HIGH: 91 AVERAGE JANUARY LOW: 19
AVERAGE NUMBER OF SUNNY DAYS: 222

Along just 3.3 miles of Atlantic shoreline at the mouth of Charleston Harbor, Sullivan’s Island is a small island that is home to a number of historic landmarks, including the Morris Island Lighthouse, the Sullivans Island Museum, and the Fort Sumter National Monument. The island is known for its beautiful beaches and historic charm.

COOL EVENT The New Year’s Day Polar Bear Plunge is a popular event that takes place on January 1st. The event features a polar bear dip into the Atlantic Ocean.

BEST SOUVENIR A sand dollar—yes, a sand dollar—will make a unique and memorable souvenir.

STAY A WEEKEND With Sullivan’s being a popular residential area, there are many options for accommodations, from bed and breakfasts to luxury resorts. Rates start at $199. 866/539-5593 or widdyunes.com