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ACTIVITIES

Posted by: [Jan Ross](#)

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I vaguely knew there were [barrier islands off the coast of Georgia](#) and the Carolinas, but for years our family beach vacations had been to Pensacola, Florida where my grandmother lived. We rented a beach house out on Santa Rosa Island and enjoyed the beautiful white sand of the Florida Panhandle.

But when we heard from a friend that [Tybee Island, Georgia](#) was beautiful, secluded, and only a 10-hour drive from Lexington, Kentucky, where we live, we decided to give it a try. I was immediately sold when I discovered online that

beach houses on Tybee rent for roughly half of what we had been paying in Pensacola. We got a beautiful 3-bedroom, 2 ½ half bath house with a large screened porch and hot tub which had an easy walk to the beach for only \$2100 total. There's a variety of accommodations on Tybee and plenty of realtors, but we used [Oceanfront Cottage Rentals](#) and were very pleased with their professionalism – they even offered vacation insurance.

You have to drive through [Savannah, Georgia](#) to get to Tybee Island and what a beautiful example of a Southern city it is! The quiet streets are shaded by huge live oak trees adorned with slightly spooky Spanish moss and the gorgeous, huge, historic homes are well-maintained with fabulous gardens. Tybee Island is actually nicknamed "Savannah's Beach" because it's only about 15 minutes away from Savannah; it's very easy to take a day off from the beach and spend some time in Savannah, which we did.

We passed through Savannah and headed through the lush green marshes that bring the island of Tybee. We soon pulled up to our beautiful beach home for the week. Is there anything quite as wonderful as a house at the beach? We were soon unpacking our cars and lugging coolers, luggage and toys for my grandson in to our house, which was

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located on the North side of the island. I recommend this side of Tybee Island for families with children. The South side is much busier with a pier, shops and restaurants and the water is also much rougher. However, the South side is definitely more convenient for activities, so your choice of accommodations just depends on your vacation preferences.



Checking out the Tybee Island beach.

We couldn't wait to see the beach, so we immediately headed across the wooden sidewalk which became a bridge over a quiet, scenic fresh water lagoon with clear green water. As we neared the lagoon, we were puzzled by all the tiny black shapes poking up out of the water and couldn't imagine what they were. When we got closer, we realized they were the heads of turtles that were lazily floating on the clear, green water – hundreds of them! We found over time that they were pretty laid back, until someone appeared on the bridge with bread: you wouldn't believe how fast those turtles can move!



Feeding the turtles.

We saved our leftover crusts, crackers and chips to always have a snack for them since my grandson was fascinated by the little green reptiles.

Finally, we made it to the beach and were pleased with the soft, light tan sand, the calm green water and the absolute privacy of the area. Only those people staying in the immediate neighborhood were allowed access to this beach area and it stayed very quiet all week with mostly families and children playing in the water. The water was alive with sea life and we spent part of every day watching

the dolphins gamboling in the water just off the beach. The shrimp boats cruised by every day on their way back to the dock, and the dolphins and hundreds of sea birds followed in their wake, snatching up the leftovers from the shrimping nets that were dragging in the water to be cleaned.

With four women in our group and one little boy, we decided this was the perfect time to not cook dinner at all – so we ate out every night! We fixed breakfast at the house, took sandwiches and drinks in a cooler to the beach (a cooler on wheels and a small wagon came in very handy) and stuffed ourselves with delicious, local seafood and scrumptious desserts every night.

If you liked boiled seafood with a spicy Cajun kick, I can highly recommend “The Crab Shack”, a rustic seafood restaurant with a huge, wooden deck perched by one of the lagoons with a nice breeze off the water, helped by the many overhead fans. Kids will love feeding the resident (small) captive alligators with special alligator food you can buy from your waiter or waitress. If you like your seafood fried, try the “North Beach Grill”, which has great live music nightly (the steel drums were especially enjoyed by our group) – or “AJ’s Dockside Restaurant”.



Fabulous seafood everywhere on Tybee Island!

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“Spanky’s Beachside Seafood Galley and Saloon” is located right by the Tybee Island pier and is a great place to have yet another fried seafood dinner, then take a stroll out on the pier to see how the fishermen are doing. Go early so you can get ice cream and shop in some of the little shops because they close early on Tybee.

Tybee Island has an [historic lighthouse](#) with tours, as well as a museum and restored lighthouse keeper’s cottage. It was well worth the very reasonable price of \$8.00 – seniors are only \$6.00 and kids 5 and under are free. The lighthouse and the surrounding buildings are perfectly restored and it’s fascinating to view a completely different way of life. Prepare yourself for the 178 stairs to the top, though! Take in the beautiful view of Tybee Island from the top as you take a breather. There’s a nice little gift shop where you can pick up some souvenirs and cool off in the air-conditioning after that climb.



Finding a sand dollar.

One of the best things we did was take a nature tour of the island with [Sundial Charters](#), which offers guided boat tours of the area. We cruised over to [Little Tybee Island](#) in a small boat just for the five of us and our captain, seeing birds and dolphins on the way and then collected sand dollars on the beach. Little Tybee Island is a designated nature preserve and is only accessible by boat; so it was quiet, peaceful and lovely as we strolled along the deserted beach.

We were the only people on the lovely, deserted Little Tybee Island beach and my grandson was thrilled with the perfect sand dollars scattered in the wet sand.

Our week on Tybee Island was a wonderful respite from our hectic lives and the easy, laid-back vibe of the island helped immensely with relaxation. We are counting the days until our next visit to this

beautiful little island!

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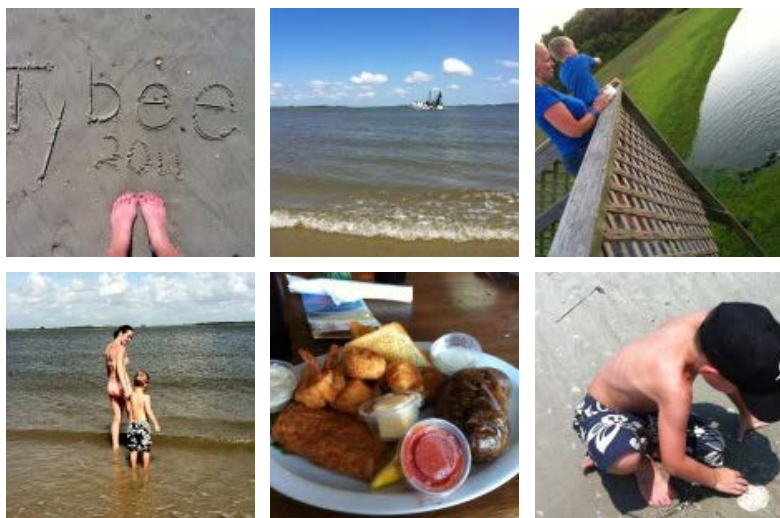
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For twenty years, I worked as a librarian in an elementary school but finally decided to get serious about travel writing and devote all my time to it. Now, I travel the world and write all about it. I can't imagine a more fabulous or fulfilling job. I write a regular travel column for two regional, Central Kentucky magazines and contribute regularly to other magazines and online travel sites, such as The SavvyGal, A Luxury Travel Blog and

The Vacation Gals. I'm an avid reader and stay active with Yoga, Pilates and Zumba classes. My favorite place in the whole world is a beach - any beach. I have been married for 34 years and my husband is my favorite travel companion. I also rely on him for his excellent photography skills. We have two grown children and the best grandson in the world. Slowly but surely, we are visiting all the places we have dreamed about. Hopefully, the next one will be the one you want to read about!

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