

Forbes
.com

Feb 28, 2021

Exploring St. Marys, Georgia's Historic Seaside Community

Jared Ranahan Contributor

[Travel](#)

Every destination has a story, no matter how small.



The city of St. Marys was officially founded in 1787.

PHOTOS ST. MARYS CONVENTION & VISITORS BUREAU/ASHLEY ALEXANDER

Located on the easternmost fringes of the Florida-Georgia line, the city of St. Marys is perhaps best-known as the launching point for those visiting Cumberland Island, the largest of Georgia's idyllic seaside isles. Though Cumberland's sprawling sandy beaches and centuries-old ruins are truly a sight to behold, St. Marys is fully capable of holding its own as a fascinating tourist destination packed full of historic landmarks, museums, and drinking and dining venues.

When it comes to recreation, the bulk of activities are centered around the city's namesake: the St. Marys River. Measuring in at 126 miles long, this waterway stretches from the depths of Okefenokee Swamp into the Atlantic Ocean, serving as a prominent recreation site for those who live along its banks. Immediately upon arrival, guests should be sure to take a leisurely stroll along the St. Marys Waterfront, a charming promenade complete with a gazebo offering a spectacular view of the river.



Along with Cumberland Island, St. Marys' Crooked River State Park is an amazing destination for spotting native wildlife.

ST. MARYS CONVENTION & VISITORS BUREAU

Due to its strategic location at the mouth of the Atlantic Ocean, St. Marys has played a crucial role in Georgia's development over the centuries, making it a truly fascinating destination for any history buffs traveling across the Peach State. For some insight into the city's storied past, pay a visit to the St. Marys History Walk, a 600-foot trail equipped with 24 informational plaques highlighting a wealth of bygone eras ranging from the development of St. Marys' shipbuilding industry to its role in the War of 1812. For those interested in the city's maritime history, the [St. Marys Submarine Museum](#) is home to a plethora of educational exhibits related to the US Navy, while the nearby [Cumberland Island National Seashore Museum](#) is packed full of artifacts used throughout the region by early settlers and Cumberland Island's original indigenous inhabitants.

St. Marys' seaside location has fostered a booming seafood scene, though that's far from the only cuisine available around town. For a truly memorable night out, be sure to head to [401 West](#), a polished venue located just past the waterfront. Menu highlights include the bacon balls and lamb ragu with house-made fettuccine, and don't miss out on their extensive cocktail menu, featuring a wide array of selections ranging from the classic rosemary bourbon sour to the sugar cookie martini. If you're craving seafood served in a casual setting, nearby **Lang's Marina Restaurant** is the ideal destination for shrimp and grits, crab cakes, calamari, and a wealth of other shellfish dishes.



The Cumberland Island National Seashore has been federally protected since 1972.

ST. MARYS CONVENTION & VISITORS BUREAU

Perhaps the most endearing venue in all of St. Marys can be found roughly one mile north of the riverfront, located in an unassuming abode on the edge of Dilworth Street. Adorned with glowing string lights and license plates from across the nation, [Brackish Beer Company](#)'s cozy microbrewery is an absolute must-visit for any beer enthusiasts spending a weekend in coastal Georgia. While the Brackyard Ale is a local favorite, Brackish Beer's draft menu is in constant rotation throughout the year, offering visitors a wealth of brews ranging from pecan porter to pineapple sour ale. Those visiting on a Thursday are welcome to pair their beer with a burger from local food truck **Bessie's On The Move**, while anyone seeking out live music should be sure to pay a visit on Friday night.

While St. Marys is the perfect destination for a day trip, those wishing to spend a weekend exploring both the city and Cumberland Island should look no further than the [Riverview Hotel](#), a prominent fixture of the downtown area since 1916. The historic inn comes equipped with twenty cozy bedrooms, an open-air balcony on the second floor, and its own on-property restaurant and martini bar offering an abundance of seafood dishes alongside beer and cocktails.



St. Marys was captured and occupied by British forces for a short time during the War of 1812.

ST. MARYS CONVENTION & VISITORS BUREAU

Though small in stature, what St. Marys lacks in size it makes up for in rustic charm, beautiful riverside views, and great beer. For any ambitious travelers planning a trip along the South Atlantic coast, be sure to save a spot on the itinerary for St. Marys and neighboring Cumberland Island. Whether you're heading south from historic Savannah or driving north after a stay in Jacksonville, this underrated gem of the Georgia coast shouldn't be missed.

Follow me on [Twitter](#) or [LinkedIn](#).



Jared Ranahan