



A Monthly Publication for the Members & Friends of the First Coast Miata Club

Gator Joe's

Date: Saturday, June 20, 2026

Time: 9:00 am

Location: Hardee's at 2730 Blanding Blvd, Middleburg
FL 32068

Depart: 9:30 am

It's time for some fun in the sun, driving the back roads in the country with the top down with the wind blowing through your hair (if you have any left).

Come out and join us on one of our favorite drives to one of our favorite destinations: Gator Joe's!!!

Don't miss out on this one!



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Annual Picnic/Officer Elections 05/30/26

Congratulations to our newly elected officers for 2026-2027!!! See the front page for the new Board!





It's That Time of Year !!!

As you know, the FCMC membership year starts **June 1st** each year and we wanted to remind you. If you haven't yet renewed your membership, now is a great time to get it done!!!

You may renew online at firstcoastmiataclub.org. Just go to our website and complete the two-step registration. Fast and easy.

This past year was packed full of activities and lots of wonderful roads. All-in-all it was a very busy time and tons of fun!! We have even more planned for the coming year, and we want you to be there!

If you have any questions contact me, Mike French, directly at (904)570-2683 or send me an e-mail (ml_french@comcast.net). I look forward to seeing or hearing from you soon.

From Our Website:

WELCOME TO THE FIRST COAST MIATA CLUB OF NE FLORIDA



Paco's Off-Road Miata Makes Broncos Look Civilized

The [Mazda MX-5](#) has spent four generations being praised for the things it does on a winding road, not the things it might do off one. Paco Motorsports has spent the last few years arguing the case for the other column. After lifting an NA-generation car into something close to a rally raid weapon, the company has now turned the same logic on the current ND.



It started with the Beachster, a raised ND built for a customer based in the U.S. Virgin Islands. A second car followed, this one called Simba, destined for Tanzania to serve as a daily driver in the desert.

While the Beachster was built in Paco's Northern Kentucky facility, the Simba is a different story. Components were crated to Dubai, where a local outfit handled the build with the Kentucky team [coaching](#) from afar. It is an unusual way to construct a one-off Miata, though arguably an appropriate one given the destination.

To support their dune-conquering abilities, both roadsters wear steel fender flares, tubular bumpers with recovery hooks, extra LED lighting up front, side skirts that double as rock sliders, and a custom rear rack. The sportier touches include a vented hood, a lip spoiler, mesh between the taillights, and twin center-exit tailpipes.

The serious work happens underneath. Suspension travel has been [maximized](#) using FOX shocks and a custom spring setup, ground clearance climbs, and chunky all-terrain rubber replaces the standard MX-5 tires. The Beachster goes a step further with a lengthened wheelbase to accommodate a staggered rear setup.

Despite the Mad Max styling, both cars keep the naturally aspirated 2.0-liter, retuned for sharper throttle response. Paco also swapped in the limited-slip differential from the related Fiat 124 [Abarth](#), which runs a shorter final drive than the Mazda unit.

Paco Motorsports: "The Beachster lives literally on the shore and has become a local legend around the island with locals and tourists alike. The owner is a longtime resident who wanted something a bit special to haul his weekly trash to the collection site and pick up a 12 pack on the way back home. It's additional ground clearance makes it perfect for the rugged and very vertical terrain of St. Thomas."



Pricing for these one-offs has not been disclosed, but Paco's MX-5 NA program gives some idea of the cost. The [Offroadster kit](#) starts at \$4,999, while the more involved Conqueror kit is listed at \$7,999. Naturally, neither figure includes the cost of the donor car.

Mazda's MX-5 Miata Jumped 60% While Its \$40K SUVs Tanked

Crossovers are supposed to be Mazda's safe bet, April's numbers tell a very different story

April sales are in, and for Mazda, the picture isn't very pretty. The Japanese automaker moved 31,128 vehicles in the U.S. last month, a 17.3 percent drop from the same period a year ago. Year to date, the brand is down 15.1 percent at 125,601 units sold through April. Models that one might expect to be sure successes are floundering, and on the flip side, the brand's most passion-forward nameplate is flying off dealer lots.

The drop was driven largely by weaker SUV demand across much of the lineup. The CX-90 fell 39.2 percent in April, while the CX-70 dropped 42.6 percent. The CX-30 was down 35 percent, and the CX-5 declined 18.9 percent. There were a few exceptions. The CX-50 posted a 5.8 percent gain and recorded its best April for hybrid sales. Certified pre-owned sales also increased 3.3 percent compared to last year.

Ultimately, though, it's cars that are giving Mazda the best performance so far. The Mazda3 is down 0.3 percent for the year but managed to stay perfectly flat for April. The MX-5 Miata is the real success story, though. While it's down 9.9 percent year over year through the first four months, it was up 60 percent in April. That includes a 44.8 percent bump for the soft top and a whopping 81 percent increase in RF sales.

It's a small-volume win in the context of Mazda's overall business, but it stands out given the direction of everything else. The Miata remains one of the few vehicles in the segment that prioritizes low weight, rear-wheel drive, and a manual-first driving experience. These are attributes that continue to resonate with a specific group of buyers.

Zoom out, and April's results highlight a split within Mazda's lineup. The vehicles responsible for most of the brand's volume are under pressure, while one of its most niche products is growing at a rapid pace. Other manufacturers, like Ford, have seen the same sort of start to the year with its performance car, the Mustang, looking a lot healthier than just about everything else.



FCMC EVENTS CALENDAR

- **JUNE - NO Monthly Club Meeting – Summer Vacation**

Our normal monthly club meeting is cancelled for June.

- **JUNE 20 - 9:00 am. Drive to Gator Joe's**

We will meet at Hardee's at 2730 Blanding Blvd, Middleburg, FL 32068. Our drive will take us through some fun country roads and end up at Gator Joe's at 12431 SE 135 Ave, Ocklawaha FL 32179. See the front page for all the details.

- **JULY 18 - 9th Annual Jim Padgett Ice Cream Drive**

It's that time of year when evening drives are in order to beat the heat. Every year we honor our very own Jim Padgett. More details next month and on our club website and on our Facebook page.

Welcome To Our Newest Members:

The *Road Runner* is published monthly for the First Coast Miata Club of Northeast Florida. The editor and the First Coast Miata Club assume no liability for information contained herein, or for injury or damages resulting from use of such information and should be used at the reader's own discretion and risk. Neither contributors to the newsletter nor the editors express approval, authentication or encouragement of the contents. Neither the First Coast Miata Club, its officers, nor its members are responsible for injury or damages incurred during the events. All members are required to possess valid individual drivers licenses, insurance policies in accordance with Florida state law, and to follow all laws and regulations.



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Middleburg FL 32068



We're on the Web! Check us out!

Web Page: www.firstcoastmiataclub.org

Fan Page: facebook.com/firstcoastmiataclub

Police Say Autopilot Was Engaged When This Tesla Drove Into A Florida Pond

Tesla's Autopilot autonomous driving tech is back in the spotlight again after a fatal accident in Florida. Authorities there say that the driver, an 87-year-old man, hit an electrical box and then went into a pond. A 75-year-old female occupant survived with non-life-threatening injuries. It's beyond those details where the questions begin.

The Florida Highway Patrol says the driver left the roadway around 8:10 p.m. on Tuesday night. He was driving on Overpass Road just east of Infinite Drive. The speed limit there is just 30 mph (48 km/h), and the road is mostly straight with a very gentle left-hand sweep to it. The driver was allegedly using Autopilot when he went off of the road.

Police say he hit an electrical box before his Model Y crossover ended up in the adjacent pond. Emergency workers took the driver to the hospital, where he succumbed to his injuries. That said, authorities didn't release any information about who the victims are and what circumstances led to the bizarre crash. They also didn't indicate why they believe Autopilot was engaged at the time of the wreck.

That last detail matters because we've documented plenty of similar claims in the past, and not all have held up to scrutiny. Of course, there's also no question that modern-day driver aids can and do lull some drivers into a false sense of confidence. Even at 30 mph, a driver aid that inexplicably shuts itself off or makes an odd move could leave a driver with very little time to react.

