

Oceans of Inland Escapes.....by deborah fagan carpenter



It's not just about the snowy white beaches in North Florida! Of course the most beautiful beaches in the world can be found on the Gulf Coast Panhandle, but there are also deep lush country roads, and "oceans" of charming inland places to visit.

Okay, I'm not a big fan of palm trees. So to my delight, that typical Floridian specimen is almost "drowned out" by the abundance of glorious live oaks laden with Spanish moss, which dominate the landscape in and around Tallahassee. Just outside the city, the majestic southern belles form sumptuous canopies over the enchanting country roads, beckoning travelers to delve deeper into their retreat. Restful homes and farms, abundant with the magnificent trees, seem to emphasize the easy-going attitude which is the pervasive approach to life in the area.

Cardiologists and Vegans alike may not be able to resist the temptation to stop for lunch at **Bradley's Country Store**. Located on Centerville Road, twelve miles from Tallahassee proper, **Bradley's** serves hundreds of "sausage dogs" daily to tourists, locals and even legislators who might need to take their lunch break away from the stress of the capital. Diners enjoy their "dogs" at one of the several tables inside, out on the porch in one of the rocking chairs, or just standing out in the parking lot under the live oaks. The hogs are



actually slaughtered, processed and the sausage smoked on the premises, as it has been since 1927. There are other wonderful and popular products to buy there such as hog head cheese, coarse ground grits and cornmeal, noteworthy jalapeño mustard, and unusual and delicious jellies, salad dressings and barbeque sauce. The whole experience is an uncommon treat and one not to be missed by visitors to the area, but all of the products are available to order at www.bradleyscountrystore.com.

Born as a rail and tobacco town, Havana, Florida is today a charming community that



teems with antique stores and alluring cafes. Located twelve miles north of Tallahassee, the lovely town is not only defined by antiques, unique gifts and edible delights, but also by an amazing community spirit. With a population of a little over a thousand, everyone knows everyone, and they all seem to support each other. At the **Havana Trading Company**, havanatradingco@aol.com

shoppers can take a break from antiquing to enjoy an ice cream float, and they can get lost in the 14,000 square feet of display space, brimming with antiques at the **Planters Exchange** planterex@bellsouth.net. A slice of tomato pie is a great beginning to lunch at **The Tomato Café**, havanatomatocafe@aol.com or diners can enjoy Tea for Two, which includes individual pots of tea and a variety of tea sandwiches and scones.

Joanie's Gourmet Market,

www.joaniesgourmetmarket.com

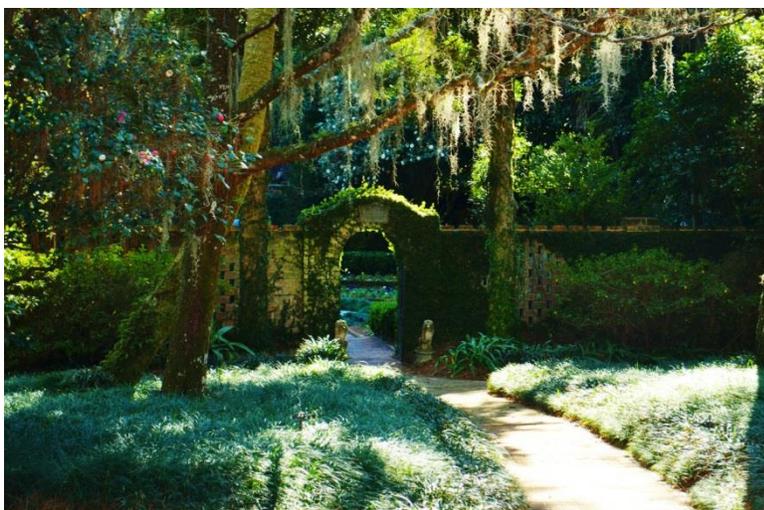
offers more up-scale dining and a market full of gourmet foods and gifts. Lunch is served at **Joanie's** Wednesday through Saturday, with dinner available on Friday and Saturday nights and brunch on Sunday.

Weezie's Cottage Living,

weeziescottage@aol.com provides a

more contemporary shopping opportunity in Havana for furniture, designer lamps, linens and original art.

Located in a Victorian style house, the owners have masterfully created an enticing shopping experience, expertly displaying their inventory. The wood in the old house has soaked up the aroma of the scented candles that burn daily, and the soothing, inviting smell is suggestive of the pleasant shopping experience that awaits. These and a wide variety of other shopping and dining offerings in Havana can be viewed at www.havanaflorida.com



I had lived in Memphis for twenty years before I darkened the doors of Graceland. Hopefully, residents of Tallahassee haven't waited that long to visit the **Alfred B Maclay Gardens**

www.floridastateparks.org/maclaygardens. In 1923, the New York financier purchased the property and built a house to serve as his family's winter residence. He and his wife

created glorious luxuriant gardens, with walkways, a reflecting pool and secret gardens, and entertained such notable guests as the Duke and Duchess of Windsor at their Florida paradise. The property was donated to the State by surviving family members, and in 1994, a piece of land that includes Lake Overstreet was acquired. Today the beautiful walkways through the luxurious gardens border the lake that is open to the public for canoeing and kayaking, and the lake side of the property boasts five miles of horse-back-riding and hiking trails. **Maclay Gardens** is a verdant oasis of peace and

beauty in the middle of Tallahassee, and for a town which itself is quite lovely, the garden is the icing on the cake.

Don't throw away your suntan lotion just yet, but be aware that north Florida has virtues beyond sand.

While I would

never turn down the opportunity to sit on the white beaches of Destin reading a good summer book, the north Florida countryside is an intriguing addition to a travel itinerary, and I have barely scratched the surface of prospects for leisurely excursions while there.

