The state purchased the property from the Henderson family estate in 1983 for $13.1 million. It opened as a state park on March 29, 1991. This was the state’s first acquisition under the Save Our Coast program, a land conservation program initiated in 1981 to protect Florida’s fragile coast. The Henderson family wanted the land preserved to protect its unique natural features and provide the public an opportunity to enjoy the surroundings.

The U.S. Air Force owns two acres of property within the park, the Claussen Tracking Site, where it maintains a rocket-tracking system, installed in 1951 for national security. These systems, placed throughout the coastal United States, played an important role during the Cuban Missile Crisis in 1962. Remnants of the original radar tracking installations can be seen on top of the hill at the beginning of the Henderson Beach Nature Trail.
WELCOME TO HENDERSON BEACH

Located in the heart of Destin, this 208-acre park has one of Florida's most prized assets -- more than 6,000 feet of pristine, sugar-white sands bordering the emerald green waters of the Gulf of Mexico. Outstanding facilities combined with breathtaking views provide the perfect setting for a wide variety of recreational activities.

NATURAL COMMUNITIES

An oasis of natural beauty awaits visitors entering the park. Coastal beach dunes, a habitat that has almost disappeared from the Florida landscape, provide refuge for many rare and unusual plants and animals. Soft rolling dunes, evergreen with fragrant rosemary, sand pines, scrub oaks, and southern magnolias stretch along the coastline.

Wind and salt spray from the ocean stunt the growth of these plants. This "salt pruning" causes the trees to grow horizontally along the ground with their limbs bent in tortured gnarls. They provide a story of exposure to harsh conditions throughout the years.

Coastal dunes provide shelter for the few resilient animals that have adapted to this environment -- lizards, snakes, and the occasional gopher tortoise.

Closer to the shoreline, communities of sea oats are the first line of defense for the dune system; anchoring the soft sand against the eroding forces of the wind and water. During early spring and fall, colorful wildflowers such as blanket flower and beach morning glory add splashing colors to the sand. The prickly pear cactus, another dune native, provides its own color with bright yellow blossoms during the spring.

Visitors enjoy viewing a variety of shorebirds such as black skimmers, least terns, caspian terns, brown pelicans, willets, sandpipers, and laughing gulls. Snowy plovers usually nest in the dunes but are not often seen on the beach. This natural and undeveloped landscape provides a vital habitat for protected sea turtles that nest along the beach in the summer. Although turtles come ashore to nest only at night, they can sometimes be seen in the water during the day. Visitors can also experience an occasional view of a bottlenose dolphin playing in the emerald green waters.
OVER 6,000 FEET OF BEAUTIFUL SHORELINE PROVIDE PLENTY OF ROOM TO RELAX, SWIM, SUNBATH, AND ENJOY THE SURF. DESTIN IS KNOWN AS THE LUCKIEST FISHING VILLAGE IN THE WORLD. VISITORS WISHING TO TRY THEIR LUCK IN THE SURF MAY CATCH POPULAR SPECIES SUCH AS POMPANO, RED FISH, FLOUNDER, CATFISH, WHITING AND SOMETIMES COBIA. BAIT AND TACKLE CAN BE PURCHASED JUST OUTSIDE THE PARK.

THREE PICNIC PAVILIONS ADJACENT TO RESTROOMS FEATURE BARBECUE GRILLS NEAR BEACH BOARDWALKS -- THE PERFECT PLACE FOR VISITORS TO ENJOY LUNCH OR FAMILY GET-TOGETHERS. OUTDOOR SHOWERS AND SOFT DRINK VENDING MACHINES ARE AT EACH PICNIC PAVILION AND RESTROOM FOR YOUR CONVENIENCE. A CHILDREN’S PLAYGROUND IS ADJACENT TO THE DAY-USE PARKING AREA. CONSUMPTION OF ALCOHOLIC BEVERAGES IS PROHIBITED IN ALL DAY-USE AREAS OF THE PARK, INCLUDING PICNIC PAVILIONS AND BEACH.

A 3/4-MILE NATURE TRAIL BEGINS IN THE DAY-USE AREA AND MEANDERS THROUGH ONE OF THE LAST REMAINING AREAS OF COASTAL SAND PINE SCRUB.

CAMPERS MAY USE SEPARATE BEACH BOARDWALKS FROM TWO CAMPGROUND LOOPS TO ACCESS OUTDOOR SHOWERS AND PLAYGROUNDS. SIXTY OUTSTANDING CAMPSITES ACCOMMODATE TENTS OR RV’S AND HAVE WATER, ELECTRICITY (SOME 50-AMP), PICNIC TABLES, GROUND GRILLS, AND CLOTHESLINE POSTS. RESTROOMS, SHOWERS, COIN-OPERATED WASHERS & DRYERS, AND VENDING MACHINES ARE IN EACH CAMPING AREA.

CAMPERS MAY BE RESERVED YEAR-ROUND WHERE CAMPER WILL ENJOY THE SWEET SCENTS AND NIGHTTIME MELODIES OF ...the Real Florida.
SPECIAL EVENTS

The pavilions are available to rent for weddings and other special events. Late afternoon rentals are available year-round, and daytime rentals are available Labor Day weekend through Memorial Day weekend. For more information contact

Anne Marie Diaz, Events Coordinator
Friends of the Emerald Coast State Park
Events.Annemarie@gmail.com
850-269-1062

Henderson beach state park | Destin, FL
Thank you for considering Henderson Beach State Park as the site for your celebration. The park offers several locations for ceremony/events along the 6,000 feet of pristine sugar white sands bordering the Emerald Green waters of the Gulf of Mexico. Henderson Beach also has locations for hosting receptions, reunions, company outings and other events. We will first need to know the date of your event, to check availability. We accept reservations up to 11 months in advance and full payment must be made to confirm a reservation. Henderson Beach State Park is open from 8am until sunset daily. We also offer after hours events, which occur once the park closes at sunset. Please keep in mind that alcohol is prohibited at the park during normal operating hours. Alcohol is only allowed after the park is closed and for scheduled after hours events.

The event coordinator for the park will gladly assist you with inquiries and guidelines of the state park system. Contact Henderson Beach State Park (17000 Emerald Coast Parkway Destin, Florida 32541) for additional information. Available dates or to request event contracts at (850) 269-1062 or email the Friends of the Emerald Coast State Parks Event Coordinator at events.annemarie@gmail.com

Beach Area Set Up Fee is for the park to reserve an approximate area of 50' by 50' on the beach for a ceremony. The beach will be marked with signage indicating the area is reserved for an event. The area is reserved for a (3) three hour time period and must be completed prior to sunset. The specific location of the reserved area is tentative and open to change that best suits the needs of your event. Please keep in mind that the park will be open during your event and there will be guests at the beach, on the boardwalks and throughout the park. We are only able to reserve the specified area on the beach for the ceremony. ** the fee does not include entrance fees into the park for client, guests or vendors**

A refundable deposit is required for all events in case of damages, overages of pre-paid guests, unsatisfactory post event cleanup, use of prohibited items or overtime use of the park. Deposits will be issued within 14 business days of event.

Park Entrance Fees can be pre-paid in advance based on the approximate number of guests attending. Please include any vendors, florists, officiant, rental companies, and caterers in your total estimated count for entrance fees. Refer to entrance fee schedule.

Weather changes may occur for your beach ceremony. We suggest reserving a pavilion during the same time period as your ceremony. The fee is non-refundable and will reserve the pavilion from other guests if needed in the event of rain or weather changes.

Rehearsals may be scheduled for your event and are based on availability. The fee includes reserved area on the beach for (1) one hour and entrance to the park for up to 12 guests. Rehearsal must be scheduled and completed prior to sunset.

Pavilion reservations are available during normal park hours. The pavilions are also available for scheduled after hours events from 4:00pm until 10:00pm. (additional park staff is required for after hours events and additional fees apply)
Destin was settled in 1845 by Captain Leonard Destin who was a fisherman from New London, Connecticut. His descendants still live and actively fish in the Destin area.

4.5 million people visit the Emerald Coast each year and that over 80% of them visit Destin. However, according to 2015 data, Destin’s population is just under 14,000.
Henderson Beach State Park | Destin, FL

A Gem Of The Emerald Coast

HENDERSON BEACH STATE PARK

A Gem Of The Emerald Coast