

NOTEBOOK

'Transformers' car on view at museum

GATLINBURG, Tenn. – The Bumblebee 1977 Chevrolet Camaro which was in the 2007 "Transformers" movie is on display in the lobby entrance of Hollywood Star Cars Museum in Gatlinburg, Tenn. The new "Transformers: Revenge of the Fallen" is now in theaters.

The Hollywood Star Cars Museum is home to 40 vehicles featuring movie, television and real life music superstar cars. Many of the cars are the creations of George Barris, who has created more famous cars than anyone. Another new car is Dolly Parton's 1997 Cadillac Elegance she drove for 10 years.

Popular cars are displayed from movies such as Ghostbusters Ecto-1, The Munsters Drag-u-la, General Lee from "The Dukes of Hazzard" television show, the Beverly Hillbillies Jalopy and the Batmobile from "Batman Returns."

The museum is located at Traffic Light #8 in Gatlinburg, across from the Hollywood Wax Museum.

Call (865) 430-7900 or visit www.starcarsmuseum.com for more information about the museum.

Polo, wine event set for Sept. 12-13

THE PLAINS, Va. – Great Meadow Equestrian Center, just west of Washington D.C., will be the venue for two of Virginia's pastimes, polo and Virginia wine, combined on one ticket Sept. 12-13.

The pairing of the 24th annual Commonwealth Cup of Polo and The Wine Festival at The Plains will showcase Virginia's locally-grown award-winning wine and the "sport of kings."

The Commonwealth Cup is moving to its new home at Great Meadow Equestrian Center.

The event will continue to host the annual challenge that pits the U.S. Military Combined Services Team against the British Combined Services Team for a match to benefit the Wounded Warriors. This match happens at 3:30 p.m. Sept. 13.

The Wine Festival at The Plains is set to host tasting rooms. Select wineries will showcase more than 275 locally-grown wines.

The combined event will also feature hat and tailgate contests, a horse-drawn carriage champagne divot stomp and more.

Visit www.commonwealthcup.net or www.winefestival-atthepains.com for more information.

Arts 2 People plans downtown festival

ASHEVILLE, N.C. – Arts 2 People is planning the 8th annual Lexington Avenue Arts and Fun Festival (LAAFF) in downtown Asheville. Local art, food, beer, music, street performers and more will be on display Sept. 6 from 11 a.m. to 9 p.m. between College Street and the I 240 overpass.

Some of the performers this year will include The Blue Rags (reunion show), Jen and the Juice, The Mad Tea Party, The Swayback Sisters (Nikki Tally and Laura Blacky), Taylor Martin, Galen Kipar, Hunab Kru B-Boys, Brishfire StankGrass and Chix with Stix.

The event is free. Visit www.arts2people.org or www.lexfestasheville.com for more information.

Knoxville museum acquires more works

KNOXVILLE, Tenn. – The Knoxville Museum of Art has acquired a painting and seven drawings by Knoxville-based artist Jered Sprecher and a photograph by Israeli artist Ori Gersht.

The museum purchased Sprecher's painting, "A Type of Magic," with the assistance of more than a dozen KMA patrons.

In honor of the purchase, the artist donated seven of his drawings.

From VARIOUS SOURCES

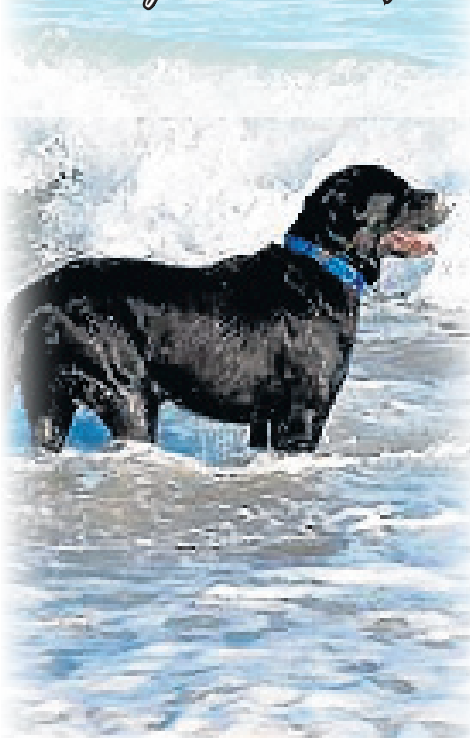


PHOTO COURTESY ANN YUNGMEYER

Coombs Inn, a bed and breakfast which has been carefully restored by co-owner Lynn Wilson, a noted interior designer of luxury hotels, is one of several historic inns in the area. Even if you're not spending a night, stroll in to one and have a look.

Basking in a bit of 'old' Florida

Along the middle stretch of Florida's Panhandle lies an area seemingly overlooked by resort developers.



TIPS ON TASTE AND TRAVELING TO FRANKLIN COUNTY, FLA.

■ **Franklin County** is a good day's drive from Northeast Tennessee. The closest airports are Tallahassee and Panama City; private airstrips are available in Apalachicola and St. George Island.

■ **St. George Island** is pet-friendly – dogs, above, are allowed on the beach with some restrictions.

■ **Spring and fall** offer the most pleasant temperatures, but summer is high season for family beach vacationers.

■ **Pack bug spray.** For hiking or camping in the state parks, you'll need it unless there is a strong breeze.

■ **Oysters, oysters** everywhere, be sure to try a slider. If you've ever eaten them in Florida, chances are they were harvested in Franklin County. The county supplies more than 90 percent of Florida oysters and 10 percent of those nationwide.

■ **Fresh-squeezed** orange juice is a must-have in Florida, and you'll find the best tall glass at Carrabelle Junction, a funky lunch café in Carrabelle.

■ **You'll get the most** out of your trip if you like fish – either to catch or eat.

■ **Above all, feast** on the serenity and natural pleasures to be found.

■ **For more information** on Franklin County, visit www.anaturalescape.com.

Pristine beaches and bountiful natural resources make the area of Apalachicola Bay and surrounding Franklin County a treasure to discover for anyone seeking to experience a bit of "old" Florida.

Instead of high-rise condos and shopping malls, I found miles of protected forest land and unspoiled beaches along the coast and barrier islands of St. Vincent, St. George and Dog Island.

My home for a few days was a vacation beach house on the 22-mile long St. George Island, which boasts a state park, a newly restored lighthouse and museum, a few restaurants and a nice bike path. Island rental properties include cottages, townhomes and luxurious beach and bayfront homes, many with all the amenities.

From our island base, my group of outdoor enthusiast friends and I found endless adventure in fishing, kayaking, canoeing and discovering nature. St. George Island is connected to the mainland by a masterfully constructed bridge, making it easy to explore the historic coastal communities of Apalachicola, Eastbay and Carrabelle.

ADVENTURES ON THE WATER

Franklin County is an angler's paradise with a variety of fishing in rivers, Apalachicola Bay and the Gulf of Mexico.

We fished on a charter boat called "Pressure Drop" from one of several fully equipped marinas of Carrabelle. Heading just outside the bay, our captain very quickly found red grouper, sea bass, snapper and shark. Farther out the catch might include gag grouper, cobia, amberjack, King mackerel, pompano and countless others, while bay fishing is good for speckled trout, redfish and shark.

Guides will clean your catch (usually for a fee), and some restaurants will cook it to specification. We had our grouper fried at Pirates Tiki Hut on the Carrabelle River.

We took a bay kayaking excursion with Journeys of St. George Island, an outfitter for guided paddling, fishing and boat rentals.

Paddling over an oyster bar, our guide, Justin, hopped out and cut a few oysters for us to taste fresh from the bed. We spotted dolphins at play and tried a hand at net casting for small fish from a shore island.

Justin's crew specializes in family fun excursions. Very popular, he said is a "kids only" kayak trip during parents' happy hour.

EXPLORING THE NATURAL HABITAT

St. George Island is one of the largest loggerhead turtle nesting sites in northwest Florida, and volunteers stay busy from May to November recording where female loggerheads have come ashore to lay eggs.

"Turtle Patrol" expert Bruce Drye and other officials partition off the nests to help survival chances of the eggs and hatchlings.



TRAVEL NOTES
ANN YUNGMEYER

Drye gives weekly turtle presentations during summer months to increase awareness about light pollution and other factors that pose a risk to the baby turtles.

Franklin County's expanse of national and state forest offers plenty to do inland in the way of hiking, birding and hunting.

Some in our group took an excursion to Alligator Point and Bald Point State Park for bird watching and wildlife observation. The area is known for viewing spring and fall migrations of birds and monarch butterflies.

From the park's new boardwalk overlooking marshland, common sightings include black bear, alligators, bald eagle, osprey, falcon and other raptors.

I chose an eco-hike with certified green guide Lesley Cox in the 200,000-acre Tate's Hell State Forest (named for an explorer who had a difficult journey). Cox leads park excursions to point out native coastal habitat and other flora and fauna.

We watched a pair of swallow-tailed kite soaring above us while looking out for warblers, oystercatchers and the endangered red-cockaded woodpeckers. Early May is the time to catch the park's explosive display of blue lupine.

APALACHICOLA: A BLEND OF TIMELESSNESS AND MARITIME CULTURE

The rich history and quaintness of "Apalach," as the locals say, make the town a fascinating destination. Take time to explore Apalachicola's parks, the fishing pier and historic district.

Many Victorian "Cracker" style homes were built by lumber magnates in the late 1800s.

There are several historic inns, and even if you're not spending a night, stroll in to one and have a look. A gem is the Coombs Inn, a bed and breakfast which has been carefully restored by co-owner Lynn Wilson, a noted interior designer of luxury hotels.

Strolling through town, we found eclectic shopping, galleries and cozy restaurants (Tamar's Café for Caribbean flavors). Art galleries feature Florida landscapes, many created during the annual Plein Air Festival which attracts national artists who spend a week or more painting in the area.

The Sponge Company in the historic Sponge Exchange building is worth a look for its architecture, as is the Grady Market, once a ship's chandlery, which now houses a collection of upscale boutiques.

Shop owner P.J. Trowell of Riverlily, a Commerce Street boutique with rare finds, says Christmastime in Apalachicola is a tradition for many.

"People enjoy the experience with the town lit with luminaria and Santa arriving on a shrimp boat," she said, "and they know they'll find something different here."

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PHOTO COURTESY ANN YUNGMEYER

On a bay excursion, kayakers may spot dolphins at play, glide over an oyster bar, or try a hand at net casting for small fish from a shore island.



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