

Florida by Land: Climb a Historic Lighthouse

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Thirty lighthouses dot the shore of Florida's coastline.

Photograph by Chris Bickford, National Geographic Travel

Florida's lighthouses are credited with saving countless ships by guiding vessels safely into port and clear of treacherous coral reefs. At one time, 65 lighthouses stood watch over 1,350 miles of coastline. Today, only 30 remain. Help support preservation efforts by visiting a lighthouse that's open to the public.

Cape St. George Light, St. George Lighthouse Park, St. George Island

It's 92 pine stairs and eight iron ladder steps to the lantern room of the [Cape St. George Light](#). The masonry lighthouse was built in 1833, rebuilt in 1848 and 1852, and, in 2008, relocated to

the center of St. George Island and rebuilt using new and original materials, including 22,000 original bricks. Once at the top, stop to catch your breath and take in the sweeping Apalachicola Bay and Gulf of Mexico views.

Carrabelle, or Crooked River, Lighthouse, Carrabelle

Built in 1895, decommissioned by the United States Coast Guard a hundred years later, and destined for the auction block in 1999, the iron-and-steel Carrabelle, or [Crooked River](#), Lighthouse was saved and restored by local residents. Officially, the 138-step spiral staircase up to the watch room is open Saturdays and Sundays from 1 to 4 p.m. Unofficially, visitors are typically permitted to climb the tower Thursday to Sunday from noon until 5 p.m. “Walk out onto the gallery to see a magnificent view of Carrabelle Beach, St. George Sound, the Gulf of Mexico, and [Tate's Hell State Forest](#),” says Carrabelle Lighthouse Association president Delores Hardin.

St. Augustine Lighthouse, St. Augustine

From the observation deck 140 feet off the ground, it's possible to see about 40 miles in all directions, from the Atlantic coast to the St. Johns River. To watch the sun set over the oldest continuously populated European-settled city in the continental U.S. (dating to 1565) and the full moon rise over the Atlantic, join the monthly [Sunset/Moonrise tour](#), which includes hors d'oeuvres and champagne served atop [the 1874 lighthouse](#).

TRAVEL TIPS

Practical Tip: Join the effort to protect and promote historic lighthouses by participating in the [U.S. Lighthouse Society Passport Program](#). Follow the [Florida Lighthouse Map](#) and get your USLHS passport stamped at each location. If a lighthouse is closed, take a photo to document the visit and earn a stamp.

Best Bet: The [Crooked River Lighthouse](#) is open for night climbing during Carrabelle's Fourth of July celebration and during Lantern Fest, the lighthouse's birthday party, held the last Saturday in October.

When to Go: Visitor traffic at the St. Augustine Lighthouse is typically lightest early and late in the day (opens from 9 a.m. to 6 p.m.).

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