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'Port A' is Texas' very own island oasis

The island oasis of Port Aransas, Texas, is a favorite vacation spot for beach camping, fishing, and hunting for buried treasure. That's right, hunting for buried treasure.

After you locate Nessie in Rockport/City by the Sea, continue south on I-35 BUS toward Aransas Pass. Take 361 through town, and follow the signs for the free ferry to Port Aransas, the only city on Mustang Island.

Whether crossing with your bicycle, car, or RV, the short ferry ride alone is worth the trip. It was easy to board the ferry in my RV – they gave me two lanes. The wait to board the ferry is usually under ten minutes, except during spring break or the Fourth of July.

Once you disembark, you're on island time and you'll find the pace relaxed. Known to the locals as "Port A," the town is full of bright, pastel-colored restaurants, boutiques and souvenir shops, their signs announcing never-ending bargains. RV parks, cottages, and beaches make up the rest of the small island town.

Camping on the Beach

Got \$12? For \$12 you can RV or tent camp on the beach for three nights in any three week period. It's one of the best camping deals around. The sand is hard-packed and safe for even large RVs. It is primitive camping without any RV hookups, known as "boondocking". Although not plentiful, there are bathroom and shower facilities,

Prefer such basic amenities as electricity and running water? You're not alone. It will cost a bit more, but you can stay at one of the many RV parks, several of which are next to the beach.

Ahoy, Matey!

Pirates aren't the only ones who can hunt for buried treasure. Once you've settled in your camping spot, it's time to get out the shovels and fulfill your childhood dream of finding buried pirate treasure. Possibly.

To quote Murphy Givens of the Corpus Christi Caller Times, "... ancient and encrusted Spanish doubloons were found so often in one sand dune on the [Padre] island that it was called Money Hill. Some of the coins were dated 1525. One story told of a man going egg-hunting on the island and returned with his pockets filled with Spanish coins. Another man, an Englishman known as "Buttermilk" Bill, found \$4,000 in gold coins near Devil's Elbow."

Pirate Captain Jean Lafitte supposedly buried treasure in his favorite hangout, Port Aransas, but that story remains unconfirmed. However, it is true that in 1554 a Spanish fleet shipwrecked in the area spilling her golden cargo. Much of the treasure was recovered by salvage crews, and is now part of the Shipwreck Exhibit in the Corpus Christi Museum of Science and History.

In another story of buried treasure, John Singer stashed somewhere between \$60,000 and 80,000 in 1857, leaving for safer territory as the war approached. Later, Singer and his wife returned to retrieve the money. Sadly, one of the many local storms removed their markers. They searched for their buried fortune, but never found it.

Forget the lottery tickets, it's time to get out the shovels and start digging. In the event you don't find any buried treasure, you can always visit the treasure-laden Shipwreck Exhibit in the Corpus Christi Museum of Science and History.

In the next adventure, I enter the gaping jaws of a giant Port Aransas shark – and live to tell about it.

Know of a unique roadside attraction you'd like to see here? Submit your suggestion by emailing Juliana at TheGreatRVRollabout@yahoo.com.



On the ferry to "Port A."



The replica Nina, Christopher Columbus' flagship, at the Corpus Christi Museum.



Beachfront at Port Aransas.