

History

St. Lucie County

According to historians, it is believed that the name “St. Lucie” was first given to the area by the Spanish. The name was given after the Spanish began construction of a fort on December 13, 1565 – the feast day of the Roman Catholic, Saint Lucia.

The “Santa Lucia” colony was established somewhere between Vero Beach and Stuart around 1567, as old Spanish maps identify the area as Santa Lucia, which included roughly what is now known as Vero Beach to Stuart—and today known as the Treasure Coast.

St. Lucie County is located in the heart of the Treasure Coast, a tri-county area that received its name after a hurricane sunk a fleet of Spanish galleons just off the shores in 1715. The shipwrecks left millions of dollars of gold, silver and other treasures on the ocean floor. Although the Spanish set up salvage camps, many treasure hunters have found and still find treasures off the shores today.

St. Lucie County is approximately 600 square miles with a diverse population that includes two cities and one village: Fort Pierce, Port St. Lucie and St. Lucie Village. Hutchinson Island is also a recognized geographical area, but is not an established jurisdiction. With more than 280,000 residents, St. Lucie County was once one of the fastest growing counties in the United States. And it’s no wonder, with its 21 miles of unspoiled beaches, charming neighborhoods, rich history and friendly locals; St. Lucie County is truly the heart of the Treasure Coast.

Fort Pierce

Fort Pierce is one of the oldest communities on the east coast of Florida. It is widely known that Fort Pierce was named after Lt. Col. Benjamin K. Pierce, who established a U.S. Army fort here during the second Seminole War in 1838. The days of one-room log houses and quiet river commerce have given way to diverse possibilities as the city has grown to over 42,000 residents; however, the echoes of the rural past can still be felt in the peaceful quality of the lives its residents lead just a short distance from the hustle and bustle of Miami to the south and Orlando to the northwest. Fort Pierce is a diverse yet neighborly community, embracing the richness of its heritage through its “Old Florida” landscape and lifestyle and the promise of its future with its world-class sport fishing, nationally acclaimed education and research organizations and thriving arts and culture scene.

The newly revitalized downtown Fort Pierce is a welcome gem situated on the calm blue waters of the Indian River Lagoon. Downtown Fort Pierce offers unique shopping, local dining options, art galleries and a range of entertainment from live theatre to cultural outdoor festivals and markets.

Modern educational and visitor-friendly research facilities such as the Smithsonian Institution Marine Research Center, the Manatee Observation and Education Center and Harbor Branch Oceanographic Institute live in harmony with historic relics such as the renovated historic, 1,200-seat Sunrise Theatre and the PP Cobb General Store, which first opened its doors in 1882.

Port St. Lucie

Its history may not be as old as Fort Pierce’s, but the story behind Port St. Lucie is just as interesting.

In 1958, General Development Corporation (GDC) purchased the River Park property as well as an adjoining 40,000 acres. A subsidiary of Mackle Co., GDC had a budget of \$50 million to develop a new community on the North Fork of the St. Lucie River.

The population boom was on. Full-page ads drew the interest of retirees from the Northeast, offering them 80 x 125-foot lots for \$10 down and \$10 a month. Homes sold for as little as \$9,000. Soon ranchers began selling pasture land that they had purchased for just \$6 an acre for as much as \$225 per acre. At its sales office on US1 and Prima Vista Boulevard, GDC sold as many as 300 lots per day.

Today, Port St. Lucie is still young and growing, with the picturesque St. Lucie River winding through it. Home to the PGA Village and spring training home to the New York Mets, it is a mecca for golfers, baseball fans and people with families who love a friendly, small-town atmosphere with a modern, south Florida feel. Port St. Lucie is conveniently located along Interstate 95 and Florida Turnpike and is just a short distance from Palm Beach International Airport.

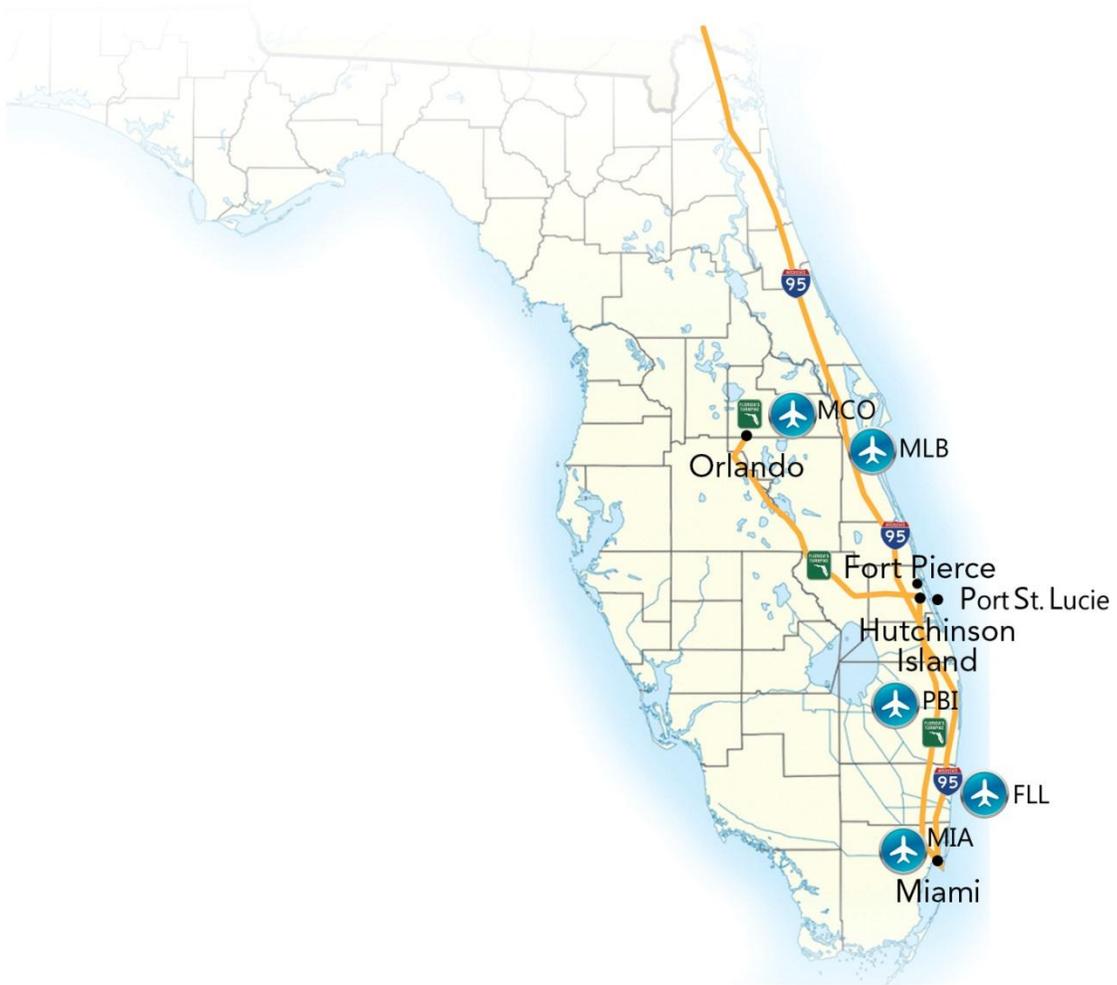
Hutchinson Island

It may not be an established city or jurisdiction, but many people have heard of Hutchinson Island in Florida. Hutchinson Island is a barrier island on the coast of St. Lucie County as well as to southern Martin County. The northern two-thirds of the island are part of Fort Pierce or St. Lucie County and boasts 21 miles of beautiful beaches. It is bounded on the east by the Atlantic Ocean, on the west by the Indian River Lagoon, and on the north by Fort Pierce Inlet. It's important to note that of the 21 miles of beaches along Hutchinson Island in St. Lucie County, nearly half are nature preserves—that means it's not completely covered with high rise buildings and overdeveloped concrete communities—just Old Florida at its finest.

As soon as you cross over the Indian River Lagoon via the north or south causeway bridge in Fort Pierce, you are instantly introduced to the “island life.” From the Old Florida style hotels right on the water to palm-thatched tiki-style restaurants, seafood restaurants, casual and sandy gatherings, or romantic waterfront dining, the islands may be what you've been dreaming about. Drive along State Road A1A with the windows down, breathe the salty air, and discover lots of places where you can park and walk to catch the sight of turquoise waves rolling in to wide uncrowded beaches.



Map of Florida



Fact Sheet

Location

St. Lucie and its cities, Fort Pierce and Port St. Lucie as well as the beaches of Hutchinson Island, are located on the south/central east coast of Florida. Fort Pierce lies in the northern part of the County while Port St. Lucie is in the southern part. Hutchinson Island is a barrier island just east of Fort Pierce and Port St. Lucie and is bordered by the Indian River Lagoon to the west and the Atlantic Ocean to the east. The Fort Pierce Inlet allows direct access into the Atlantic Ocean. The area is located about 60 miles north of Palm Beach (45-60 minute drive time), about 135 miles south of Daytona Beach (2 hour drive time), about 120 miles southeast of Orlando (1.75 – 2 hour drive time), about 115 miles (2 hour drive time) north of Miami and about 150 miles east of Tampa (2.5 hour drive time).

Size/Geography

- St. Lucie County is approximately 688 square miles, of which 572 square miles is land and 116 square miles is water—much of it in the Atlantic Ocean. Population is approximately 280,000. (US Census, 2010)
- The City of Fort Pierce is approximately 20.6 square miles. 14.7 square miles is land and 6 square miles is water. Population is approximately 42,000. (US Census, 2010)
- The City of Port St. Lucie is approximately 76.7 square miles, of which 75.5 square miles is land and 1.1 square miles is water. Population is approximately 165,000. (US Census, 2010)

Climate

Fort Pierce, Port St. Lucie and Hutchinson Island feature a warm subtropical climate, falling just short of a true tropical climate which is very ideal for year round outdoor activities. Summers are warmest with temperatures averaging in the low 90s. Winters are usually mild to warm with average temperatures around the 70s. The average yearly precipitation is approximately 53.5 inches with most of the rainfall occurring during the summer months.

Transportation/Getting Here

By Air

Several airports are close to St. Lucie County.

- **Orlando International Airport (MCO)** provides numerous rental car companies and airport shuttle options to bring you here. Driving time to St. Lucie is 1.5 – 2 hours.
- **Melbourne International Airport (MLB)**. MLB is about an hour away by car.
- **Palm Beach International Airport (PBI)**—your commute to St. Lucie County should be less than an hour.
- **Miami International Airport (MIA) and Fort Lauderdale-Hollywood International Airport (FLL)**, you can reach St. Lucie County by car in about 1.5 – 2.5 hours depending on traffic.

Traveling in a private aircraft? St. Lucie County has its own general aviation airport and a U.S. Border Control and Customs office. Touch down at **St. Lucie County International Airport** and be just minutes away from all the exciting things to do and places to stay.

By Car

Two major state roadways serve St. Lucie County—**Florida's Turnpike** and **Interstate 95**. Florida's Turnpike has exits for both Port St. Lucie and Fort Pierce. If you're traveling along I-95, look for exits 114 through 138, which serve as access points into Fort Pierce, Port St. Lucie and Hutchinson Island.

By Boat

A private vessel can also serve as transportation into St. Lucie County from the Atlantic Ocean via the **Fort Pierce Inlet** or navigate your way on the scenic the **Intracoastal Waterway** from the north or south. Many affordable full-service marinas and marine service providers are available for overnight dockage and services.

Accommodations

A variety of accommodation types are available in St. Lucie ranging from an all-inclusive resort to primitive campsites on pristine nature preserves. The area offers nearly 60 properties and over 4,000 rooms for overnight accommodations. One thing to note, nearly all of our accommodations is very affordable. The area is considered an “undiscovered” paradise, therefore the influx of over-commercialization and tourist traps have not wreaked havoc on the destination—a trait the area is especially proud of.

Each city’s array of accommodation choices varies, simply because Fort Pierce and Port St. Lucie along with Hutchinson Island are each uniquely different in their own special ways. Accommodations in the Fort Pierce area include well-known chain hotels along the Interstate 95/Florida Turnpike corridor, privately-owned and chain hotels and motels near downtown as well as full service RV parks and campgrounds. Accommodations in Port St. Lucie include a major district of chain hotels and condo vacation rentals in the St. Lucie West area just off Interstate 95 and the Florida Turnpike. These properties cater to golfers, NY Mets fans and business and leisure travelers. Along U.S. Highway 1, a handful of branded chain hotels offer accommodations for travelers and business people. And located in the southern part of Port St. Lucie, the one and only North American Club Med property, an all-inclusive resort, is located on the St. Lucie River. Accommodations on Hutchinson Island are for the traveler looking to get away from it all and enjoy the island life. There are hundreds of condo vacation rentals along the north and south coasts of Hutchinson Island, vacation home rentals, quaint bed and breakfast, the perfect couple retreats, oceanfront timeshares, RV parks and oceanfront hotels.

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