

The gift of thrift

You don't have to be a pirate to find treasure in Fort Walton Beach

If you've been daydreaming about finding hidden treasure but don't feel like digging up the beach you may want to embark on a voyage to the Fort Walton Beach thrift shops.

You're sure to find plenty of worthy swag without spending a fortune.

Many people are discovering thrift shopping as an eco-conscious way to indulge for less. "The resale market is blossoming thanks to value-conscious consumers. With an increasing awareness of the importance of reducing pointless waste, we are progressing from a disposable society to a recycling society—a change that has enormous market potential for the resale industry as a whole," according to the Association for Resale Professionals website.

Thrifters, as they are sometimes called, are a whole subculture immersing themselves for different reasons. Some are looking for high fashion for less while others scour shops for crafts and antiques. There's even a segment of thrifters that make decent extra income finding collectables and reselling them on sites like eBay.

Whatever the reasons for taking an afternoon to explore the wide variety of resale shops available in Fort Walton Beach you are sure to find an adventure – for less.

To start your day there is Junkyard Dog Gifts and Thrift at 179 Eglin Pkwy NE., a gem of a store with a boutique feel. Proceeds from sales support the Panhandle Animal Welfare

Society, better known as PAWS.

Everyone is welcome at Junkyard Dog, and dogs frequent-

ly come shopping with their owners.

Whether or not you want to shop with your canine pal, patrons will welcome a clean, organized store with a high standard for donations they sell. Items not meeting Junkyard Dog's high standards are passed along to other agencies. Call 244-1830 for hours and information or visit them online at paws-shelter.com.

For vintage and antique household items consider stopping by Michael's Angels Thrift Store on 311 South Ave. This small store is crammed with a little bit of everything from tools and fine art to baby items.

The parking lot tends to be an extension of the store with an eclectic collection of boats, outdoor furniture and playground sets lining the edges. Call 499-2359 for hours and information.

For those looking for large selection over lowest prices there is always Goodwill on 913 Beal Parkway NW. If you are looking for something specific you can almost always find it

here for a lot less than buying it brand new.

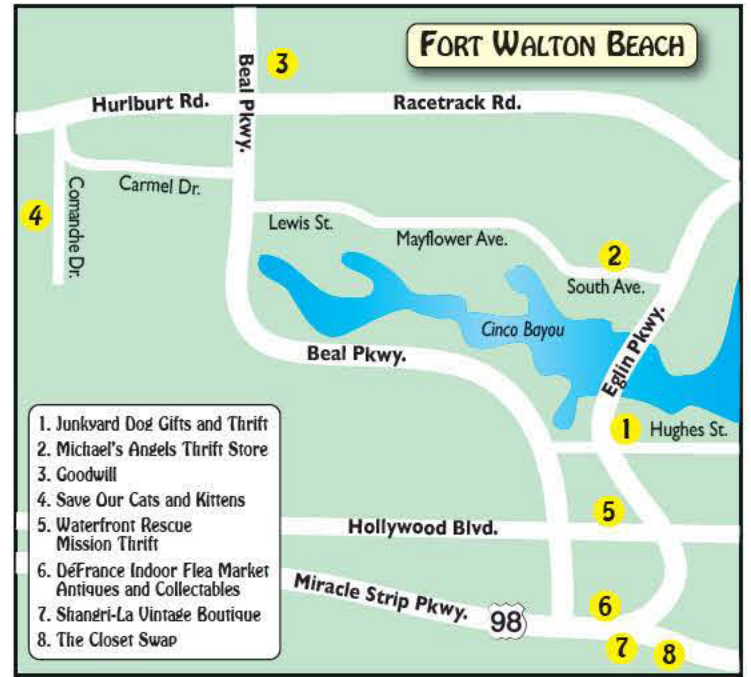
The store is large, bright and organized with large furniture, books, sports equipment as well as the usual shoes and clothes. Prices will be higher than in some of the other resale shops but the items there will still beat out shopping new. Call 864-6677 for hours and information or visit goodwill.org.

Another store that raises the bar for bargains is Save Our Cats and Kittens, better known simply as SOCKS. Located on 498 Carmel Drive in Fort Walton Beach, this shop literally overflows with good deals.

SOCKS is 3,000 square feet of treasure to sift through. Clothes are a dollar, shoes, purses and hats are just \$2. From electronics to toys, all of it is available for less than your lunch. They even have some furniture available. Call 863-8999 for hours and information or visit them online at saveourcatsandkittens.com.

Waterfront Rescue Mission Thrift on 110 Hollywood Blvd., is another larger store with ample selection. Their prices tend to be lower than Goodwill and there is usually a nice selection of larger items such as furniture and bicycles.

With all their space, they frequently have dining, bedroom and living room sets as well as new mattresses. Call 244-2726 for hours and information or visit waterfrontmission.org.



DeFrance Indoor Flea Market Antiques and Collectables at 230 Eglin Pkwy., is a maze of booths rented out by independent vendors and overflowing with goodies. Walking through is as interesting as any museum except here the displays can be yours.

In addition to the antiques DeFrance has a café where they serve up home made lunch specials fresh along with ice cream and homemade fudge. Their fudge in a vintage tin or dish makes a great gift. Call 314-7500 for hours and information or visit defranceantiques.com.

Shangri-La Vintage Boutique on 124 Miracle Strip Pkwy. SE, is an excellent place to shop for vintage items. Specializing in clothes and accessories from the past, you can always find the perfect, unique items to individualize your look.

Prices are reasonable but do reflect the higher quality and rarity of the merchandise. If it was in fashion 25 years ago you will likely find it at Shangri-La. Call 862-4588 for hours and

information or visit shangri-la-vintage.com.

The Closet Swap is another stop you shouldn't miss on your thrift shop tour. Located at 222 Miracle Strip Pkwy., it's just around the corner from DeFrance and the logical next stop.

Only the best quality denim and gently used items are offered at this bright and well organized location. The boutique experience without the high prices, if you bring in items you no longer want you can even trade for store credit. Call 226-7763 for details, hours and information or visit theclosetswap.com.

This is by no means a complete list of every resale shop in Fort Walton Beach, a town known amongst 'thrifters' as being a great hunting ground. These are some of the staples that have lasted the tests of time and maintained consistent quality.

You don't have to be a pirate to hunt down hidden treasures in Fort Walton Beach, but it doesn't hurt either.

Trip Tips

Thrift stores and flea markets

The Junkyard Dog Gift and Thrift, 179 Eglin Parkway N.E., Fort Walton Beach, 244-1830

Michael's Angels Thrift Store, 311 South Ave, 499-2359

Goodwill Industries Thrift Store, 913 Beal Pkwy. N.W., Fort Walton Beach, 864-6677

SOCKS, 498 Carmel Dr., Fort Walton Beach, 863-5756

Waterfront Rescue Mission Bargain Center, 110 Hollywood Blvd., Fort Walton Beach, 244-2726

DeFrance Indoor Flea Market Antiques and Collectables, 230 Eglin Pkwy., Fort Walton Beach, 314-7500

Shangri-La Vintage Boutique, 124 Miracle Strip Pkwy. SE, Fort Walton Beach, 862-4588

The Closet Swap, 222 Miracle Strip Pkwy., Fort Walton Beach, 226-7763

Accessibility: Most stores are wheelchair accessible; however depending on the amount of goods displayed, getting around may prove challenging. Thrift stores tend to have linear aisles, while antique stores are more of a maze.

Entrance fees: None, just gas money getting there.

Other information:

Bring cash for shopping, as some thrift stores don't accept credit or offer cash discounts.

Always check the return policy before committing to a questionable item. Items are often sold "as is."

It's a good idea to plan a stop for lunch or bring a lunch so you don't undo all your savings on an unplanned meal.

Thrift Shops and antique stores are located in almost every city in the nation. Before your next travel adventure, check the national directory of thrift stores: thethriftshopper.com