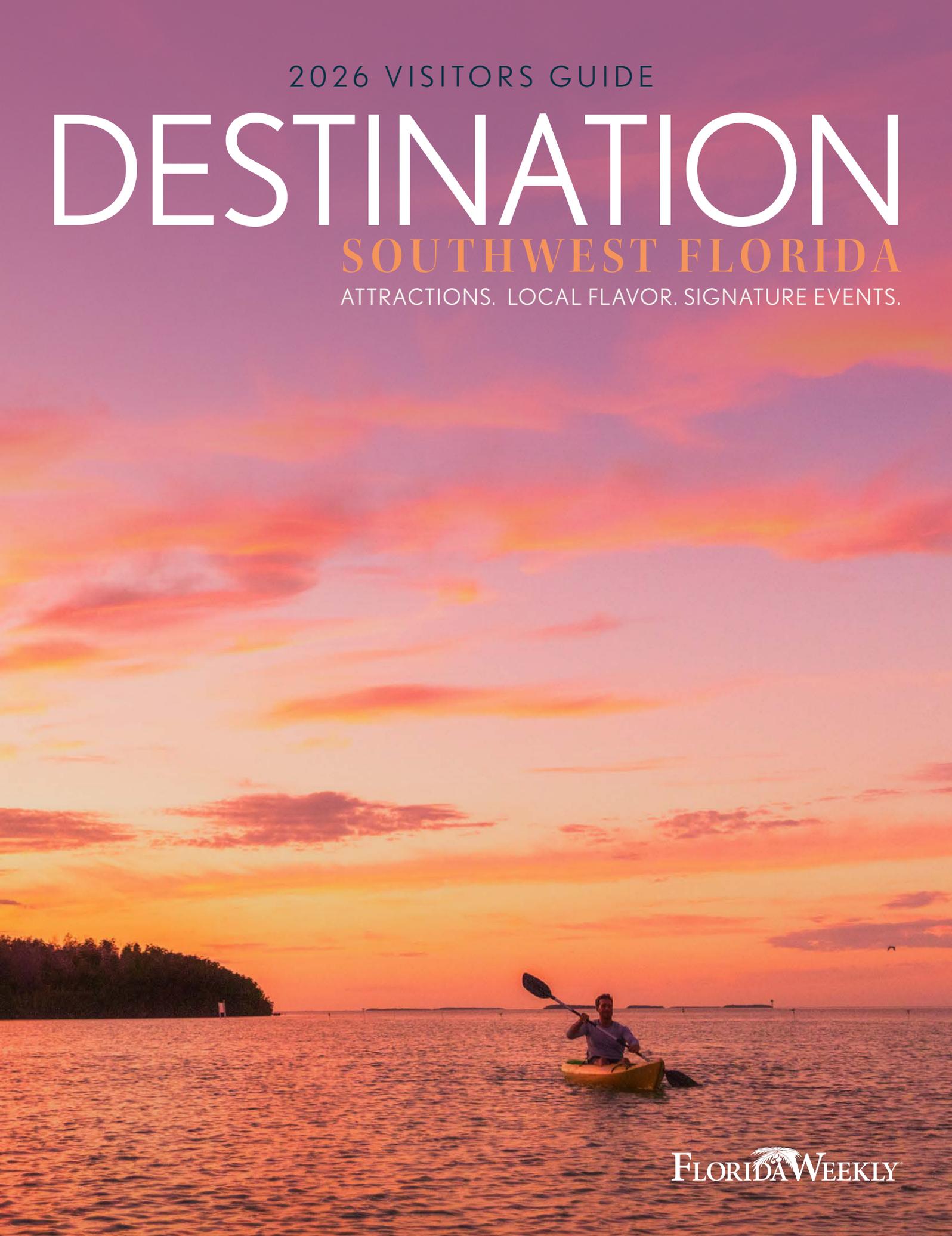


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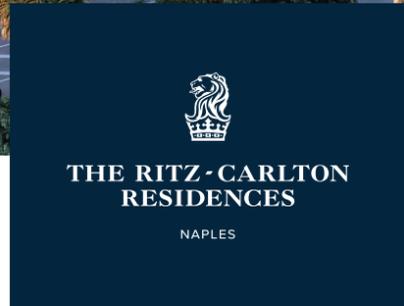
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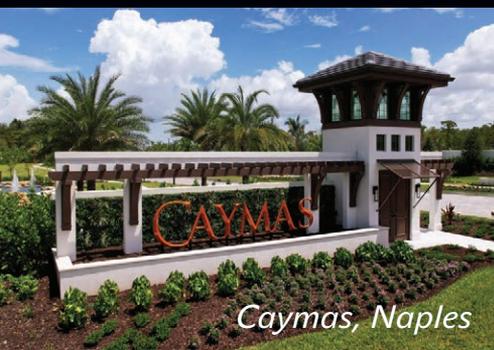
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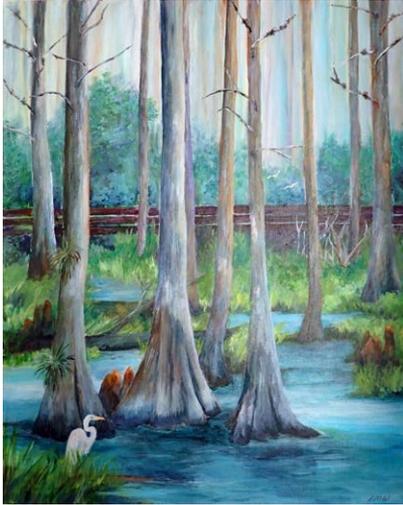
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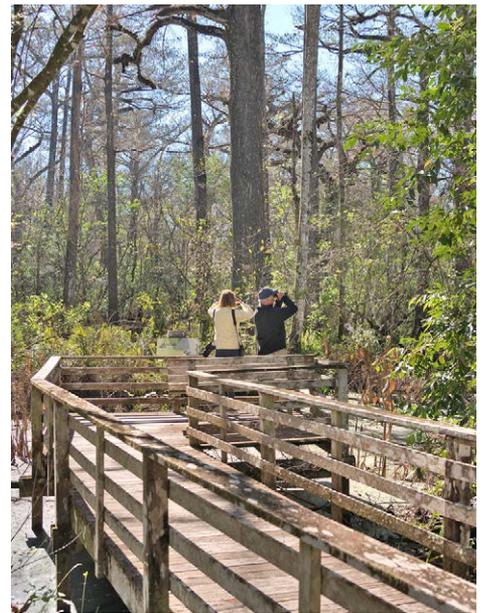
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2301 First St., Fort Myers
239-333-1933 | sbdac.com

Southwest Florida Symphony

Offers masterworks programs spanning the Baroque through today, accompanied by pre-concert lectures. The Youth Orchestra trains student musicians.

7500 College Parkway, Suite 200, Fort Myers
239-418-1500 | swflso.org

Southwest Florida Theatre Company

Presents Broadway-style musicals and plays accompanied by the Gulf Coast Symphony.

13411 Shire Lane, Fort Myers
239-277-1700 | gulfcoastsymphony.org/southwest-florida-theatre-company

Tribby Arts Center

Includes a 400-seat auditorium, three galleries and studios for music and crafts.

17281 On Par Blvd., Fort Myers
239-415-5667 | tribbyartscenter.com

COLLIER COUNTY

Artis—Naples

Presents concerts, visiting dance companies, lectures and Broadway programming.

5833 Pelican Bay Blvd., Naples
239-597-1900 | artisnaples.org

Cambier Park Bandshell

Hosts community concerts, civic celebrations and special events.

755 8th Ave. S., Naples
239-213-7120 | naplesgov.com

Collier Museums

Includes Collier Museum at Government Center, Naples Depot Museum, Immokalee Pioneer Museum at Roberts Ranch, Museum of the Everglades, and Marco Island Historical Museum.

Multiple Locations in Collier County
239-252-8476 | colliermuseums.com

Gulfshore Playhouse

Produces professional classic and contemporary plays and offers educational programs for students and adults.

755 8th Ave. S., Naples
239-261-7529 | gulfshoreplayhouse.org

Holocaust Museum & Cohen Education Center

Preserves the memory of the Holocaust through exhibits, survivor stories and educational programs.

975 Imperial Golf Course Blvd., Suite 108, Naples
239-263-9200 | hmcec.org

International Network of Creatives

Equips creatives to reflect on and proclaim Christ in their lives and work.

1415 Panther Lane, Suite 353, Naples
239-591-6622 | internationalnetworkofcreatives.org

Marco Island Center for the Arts

Offers exhibitions, classes and performances on Marco Island.

1010 Winterberry Drive, Marco Island
239-394-4221 | marcoislandart.org

Naples Art Institute

Presents rotating exhibitions, festivals and classes for all ages.

585 Park St., Naples
239-262-6517 | naplesart.org

Naples Performing Arts Center

Offers training for young performers in theater, dance and voice with student

productions and recitals throughout the year.

1048 Castello Drive, Naples
239-597-6722 | npacfl.com

Naples Philharmonic Youth Orchestra

Trains dedicated student musicians through rehearsals, coaching and public performances.

5833 Pelican Bay Blvd., Naples
239-597-1900 | artisnaples.org/education/student/youth-orchestra

The Naples Players

Presents a full season of plays, musicals and education programs for all ages.

701 5th Ave. S., Naples
239-434-7340 | naplesplayers.org

Norris Community Center

Multi-use venue featuring a black-box theater, meeting rooms and event spaces for performances and gatherings.

755 8th Ave. S., Naples
239-213-3058 | naplesgov.com

Naples Cinemateque

Celebrates the history of cinema with new restorations and rarely seen gems on the big screen.

833 Vanderbilt Beach Road, Naples
david@naplescinema.com | naplescinema.com

Opera Naples

Produces mainstage titles, concerts and education programs.

Wang Opera Center, 2408 Linwood Ave., Naples
239-963-9050 | operanaples.org



DAVID WISHTISCHIN / FLORIDA WEEKLY

CULTURAL VENUES

Paradise Coastmen Barbershop Chorus

Performs an average of eight to 10 private shows each year, as well as community events and an annual show.

1955 Curling Ave., Naples
239-352-6366 | paradisecoastmen.org

Promenade at Bonita Bay

Hosts a series of art festivals and features fine retail stores, boutiques, salons and restaurants.

26795 S Bay Drive, Bonita Springs
239-293-9448 | promenadeshops.com

Rookery Bay National Estuarine Research Reserve

A coastal sanctuary and research center that connects art and science through galleries, aquariums and mangrove-lined trails.

300 Tower Road, Naples
239-530-5972 | rookerybay.org

Seminole Casino Hotel Immokalee

Features touring concerts, comedy shows, gaming, dining and events.

506 S. 1st St., Immokalee
800-218-0007 | seminoleimmokaleecasino.com

The Studio Players

Presents community theater productions that range from alternative and contemporary to well-established works.

Joan Jenks Auditorium,
4701 Golden Gate Parkway, Naples
239-398-9192 | thestudioplayers.org

TheatreZone

Produces professional musicals and concerts with Broadway and regional talent.

13275 Livingston Road, Naples
888-966-3352 | theatre.zone

The Veterans History Museum

Community military museum that features educational opportunities, expanded exhibits and interactive experiences.

3331 Tamiami Trail E., Naples
614-205-0357 | veteranshistorymuseum.org

Voices of Naples

Offers an inclusive environment for singers of all backgrounds and skill levels.

2249 Clipper Way, Naples
239-290-8550 | voicesofnaples.org

Williams Academy Black History Museum

Displays historical memorabilia and the history and culture of the black community.

1936 Henderson Ave., Fort Myers
239-332-8778 | leecountyblackhistorysociety.org

CHARLOTTE COUNTY

Artist Series Concerts of Sarasota

Unites musicians and audiences through musical performances, educational outreach and music scholarship competitions.

1226 N. Tamiami Trail, Sarasota
941-306-1200 | artistseriesconcerts.org

Arts Advocates

Features a historic collection of works by Florida artists, programming, exhibitions and scholarships to local students pursuing careers in the arts.

3501 S. Tamiami Trail, Suite 119, Sarasota
941-356-3088 | artsadvocates.org

Blanchard House Museum

Preserves and showcases artifacts related to African American history and culture in Southwest Florida.

406 Drive Martin Luther King Jr. Blvd., Punta Gorda
941-575-7518 | theblanchardhouse.org

Charlotte Choral

Prepares and presents professional-level choral music of all genres.

P.O. Box 494451, Port Charlotte
941-204-0033 | charlottechorale.com

Charlotte Harbor Event & Conference Center

Features flexible spaces for concerts, plays, community events, on-site catering and ample parking.

75 Taylor St., Punta Gorda
941-833-5444 | charlotteharborecc.com

Charlotte Performing Arts Center

Hosts school productions, community theater, concerts and touring shows.

701 Carmalita St., Punta Gorda
941-505-7469 | yourcharlotteschools.net/cpac

Charlotte Players

Presents plays, musicals, special events

and education programs.

1182 Market Circle, Port Charlotte
941-255-1022 | charlotteplayers.org

Englewood Art Center (Ringling College)

Features exhibitions, classes, studio access, galleries, ceramics and digital media spaces and a lending library.

350 S. McCall Road, Englewood
941-474-5548 | ringling.edu/eac

Fishermen's Village

Features shops, boutiques, entertainment, restaurants, water recreation, luxury accommodations and a marina fuel dock.

1200 W. Retta Esplanade, Punta Gorda
941-639-8721 | fishermensvillage.com

The Florida Philharmonic

World-class orchestra dedicated to upholding the highest artistic standards and serving the Southwest Florida community.

11330 Burnt Store Road, Punta Gorda
941-529-6094 | thefloridaphilharmonic.org

Florida Studio Theatre

Offers mainstage, cabaret, children's theater, new-play development and education programs.

1241 N. Palm Ave., Sarasota
941-366-9000 | floridastudiotheatre.org

Gulf Theater at the Military Heritage Museum

Presents lectures, concerts and theatrical events with modern audiovisual support.

900 W. Marion Ave., Punta Gorda
941-205-8545 | gulftheater.org

Harbour View Gallery

Artist-owned cooperative gallery that exhibits juried local art.

5789 Cape Harbour Drive, Cape Coral
239-540-5789 | harbourviewgallery.com

The Hermitage Artist Retreat

Supports the development and creation of new work across all artistic disciplines.

6630 Manasota Key Road, Englewood
941-475-2098 | hermitageartistretreat.org

Lemon Bay Playhouse

Stages dramas, comedies and musicals with opportunities for volunteers on and off stage.

96 W. Dearborn St., Englewood
941-475-6756 | lemonbayplayhouse.com

CULTURAL VENUES



Fishermen's Village in Punta Gorda

DAVID WISHTISCHIN / FLORIDA WEEKLY

North Port Performing Arts Center

Offers a comprehensive education in theater arts, encompassing acting, musical theater and technical theater.

6400 W. Price Blvd., North Port
866-406-7722 | sarasotacountyschools.net/o/northporthigh/page/north-port-performing-arts-center

Peace River Botanical & Sculpture Gardens

Hosts an international collection of sculptures and a full calendar of events, classes and exhibitions.

5827 Riverside Drive, Punta Gorda
941-621-8299 | peacrivergardens.org

Punta Gorda Symphony

Professional ensemble that presents a season of orchestral repertoire featuring guest artists and educational programs.

Administrative Office: 6210 Scott St., Unit 213,
Punta Gorda
941-205-5996 | pgsymphony.org

Sarasota Jewish Theatre

Celebrates Jewish life, literature and culture through classic and contemporary plays, outreach programs and community conversations.

3501 S. Tamiami Trail, Sarasota
941-253-0252 | sarasotajewishtheatre.org

Sarasota Opera

A professional opera company committed to presenting high-quality productions, educational outreach and artist development programs.

61 N. Pineapple Ave., Sarasota
561-746-3101 | lighthousearts.org

Sarasota Orchestra

Dedicated to exquisite performance and first-class musical education.

709 N. Tamiami Trail, Sarasota
941-953-3434 | sarasotaorchestra.org

The Sarasota Players

Delivers quality productions and engages the community with the arts.

3501 S. Tamiami Trail, Suite 1130, Sarasota
941-365-2494 | theplayers.org

Symphonic Winds Of Charlotte County

Composed of volunteers who entertain audiences each concert season.

P.O. Box 51058, Punta Gorda
941-218-0022 | symphonicwindsc.org

Urbanite Theatre

Inclusive, artist-focused organization that produces daring theater productions.

1487 2nd St., Sarasota
941-321-1397 | urbanitetheatre.com

Van Wezel Performing Arts Hall

Presents a wide range of Broadway musicals, top national and international performers, popular comedians, world-class symphony orchestras and classical, modern and ethnic dance.

777 N. Tamiami Trail, Sarasota
941-263-6799 | vanwezel.org

The Venice Symphony

Inspires and transforms lives through exceptional musical experiences.

700 U.S. Highway 41 Bypass N., Suite 4, Venice
941-207.8822 | thevenicesymphony.org

Venice Theatre

Presents a diverse selection of performances, including musicals, dramas and comedies and offers educational opportunities for all ages.

140 Tampa Ave. W., Venice
941-488-1115 | venicetheatre.org

Visual Arts Center

Features galleries, studios, classes, exhibitions and events.

210 Maud St., Punta Gorda
941-639-8810 | visualartcenter.org

West Coast Black Theatre Troupe

Professional theater company dedicated to celebrating African American arts and culture.

1012 N. Orange Ave., Sarasota
941-366-1505 | westcoastblacktheatre.org

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The Keyes Company

The Keys to Success: A Candid Conversation with Shane Spring

NATURE OF BUSINESS:

Full Service Real Estate Brokerage

COMPANY PRESIDENT & CEO:

Christina Pappas and Mike Pappas

NUMBER OF EMPLOYEES:

350 employees and
3,000 sales agents

NUMBER OF LOCATIONS: 50

YEARS IN SOUTHWEST FLORIDA

Founded in 1926

YEARS IN BUSINESS: 99

What were the best decisions that made your business succeed in the last year?

One of the best decisions I made in my real estate career last year was to get back to the basics. I stopped over complicating things and refocused on the core habits that built my success in the first place—consistent prospecting, truly listening to my clients, nurturing relationships, and staying disciplined with follow-up. By simplifying and returning to these fundamentals, I found not only more business, but also more joy and clarity in my work.

What customer feedback has positively influenced or improved your business in 2025?

One of the most memorable transactions I had this year was working with a client from start to finish—navigating inspections, coordinating repairs, and even helping after closing. It was incredibly rewarding to see them settled in their new home. At the same time, I also received some constructive feedback about a few minor issues that arose during the process. While no one likes to hear criticism, it gave me the chance to reflect, learn, and refine my approach so I can provide an even better experience for my future clients. Every deal is a chance to grow, and this one reminded



COURTESY PHOTO
Shane Spring is an Assistant District Sales Manager at The Keyes Company.

me that success is built on both our wins and our lessons.

Can you share an example of a challenge your business faced this year and how you overcame it?

Over the past year, our market has faced its share of challenges—from rising insurance costs and interest rates to the uncertainty brought by hurricanes. Yet, we met each obstacle with resilience, adaptability, and a commitment to keeping our message positive. By focusing on solutions instead of setbacks, we not only weathered the storms but strengthened the trust and relationships that make this business so rewarding.

How are you using new technology to help your business grow?

One of the best decisions I made last year was to get back to the basics—focusing on the fundamentals that have always built success in real estate: consistent prospecting, truly listening to clients, nurturing

relationships, and staying disciplined with follow-up. At the same time, I've embraced AI and new technology to enhance those core skills—using it to create targeted marketing campaigns, write compelling property descriptions, analyze market data, and streamline communication. By pairing timeless principles with cutting-edge tools, I've been able to work smarter, connect deeper, and deliver a smoother, more personalized experience for my clients

In what ways have you engaged with the local community this year?

This past year, I've stayed deeply engaged in our Southwest Florida community—not only through my work in real estate, but by giving my time, resources, and heart to causes that matter. I've been proud to support organizations like Community Cooperative, Pace Center for Girls, Special Equestrians, the Children's Advocacy Center, and many other local charities making a real difference. I've also stayed involved in our local political landscape, advocating for policies and initiatives that strengthen our neighborhoods, protect our way of life, and ensure a thriving future for our region. Community is at the core of everything I do, and I believe that giving back is just as important as doing business.

How have you used social media and digital marketing to boost your business in 2025?

Social media has become one of the most powerful tools in both my real estate business and my community involvement. I use it to showcase listings with high-quality photos, videos, and virtual tours, share market insights, and highlight success stories that help educate and inspire buyers and sellers. It's also a platform for connection—I regularly post updates about local events, charitable initiatives, and the organizations I support, such as Community Cooperative, Pace Center for Girls, and the Children's Advocacy Center. By blending business and community content, I'm able to not only market properties but also build trust, foster relationships, and keep our Southwest Florida community informed, engaged, and connected.

What are you doing to keep employees pleased and how has that helped your business's success?

Retention in the real estate industry is never easy, but we achieve it by equipping our agents with top-of-the-class products, cutting-edge tools, and exceptional support. Our focus is on creating an environment where agents have everything they need to succeed—from innovative technology and training to personalized guidance and a culture that celebrates their wins. When our agents thrive, our entire organization thrives

Looking ahead, what are your top three priorities for ensuring continued growth and success in the next year?

My three priorities in real estate to retain and build my clientele are simple but powerful: exceptional service, consistent communication, and lasting relationships. I strive to deliver an outstanding experience at every stage of the transaction, keep my clients informed with honesty and clarity, and stay connected long after the closing. By focusing on these fundamentals, I not only earn repeat business but also build a network of trusted referrals that fuels long-term success.

What makes your business stand out from your competitors?

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As we approach our 100th year, The Keyes Company stands proud as a beacon of trust, innovation, and enduring relationships in the real estate industry. For a century, we've dedicated ourselves to providing exceptional service, adapting to changing times, and embracing cutting-edge technology to serve our clients better.

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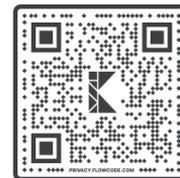
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HISTORIC DISTRICTS

Downtown Naples

Since the 1950s, Fifth Avenue South and Third Street South have been the center of Naples' identity — a blend of seaside elegance and small-town charm. Early visitors arrived by boat at the Naples Pier, trading with the Seminole long before boutique storefronts and fine restaurants lined the sidewalks. The district's architecture preserves that legacy of understated luxury, where history meets high style.

In recent years, the city's cultural core has expanded to include the Naples Design District. This creative corridor, known for its artisan studios, galleries and modern dining spots, captures Naples' evolution from a quiet fishing village to one of the Gulf Coast's most sophisticated destinations.

Downtown Bonita Springs

Old 41 Road has been the center of Bonita Springs for years and has never been afraid of transformation. In the 1930s, visitors flocked to the Everglades Wonder Gardens, where flamingos and alligators basked in lush greenery. Almost a century later, the reimagined Wonder Gardens remains a centerpiece of the town — honoring the past while serving as a modern botanical and wildlife attraction.

Nearby, the historic Shangri-La Hotel still evokes Bonita's early reputation for health and hospitality. Around it, a new era of vitality thrives in the preserved buildings, which have been transformed into niche restaurants, breweries and cocktail lounges. Riverside Park is home to concerts, festivals and community groups, while new ventures, such as Sug-

arshack Downtown, feature live music, craft beer and a welcoming, hometown vibe.

Everglades City

Known as the "Gateway to the Ten Thousand Islands," Everglades City remains a historic fishing village surrounded by mangroves and unspoiled wilderness. Once the Collier County seat, it retains its Old Florida flavor with airboat tours, stone crab shacks and stilted cottages along the Barron River. The town proudly hosts the annual Everglades Seafood Festival each February, celebrating local heritage and the start of stone crab season. With nearby access to Everglades National Park and Big Cypress National Preserve, it remains a rare link between Florida's past and its wild, natural heart.

CHELLE KOSTER WALTON / COURTESY PHOTO



The Shangri-La Hotel is a beloved landmark in Bonita Springs, representing the area's rich hospitality heritage and charm.

HISTORIC DISTRICTS

Downtown Fort Myers features a captivating mix of historic architecture, vibrant nightlife and a thriving arts scene.



LEE COUNTY VISITOR & CONVENTION BUREAU / COURTESY PHOTO

Fort Myers Historic River District

Fort Myers' Historic River District reflects a rare success story — a downtown saved from decline through preservation and pride. Once overshadowed by suburban growth, its century-old buildings have become home to restaurants, galleries and festivals.

The Edison & Ford Winter Estates helped spark that revival — the 1915 vaudeville house transformed into The Florida Repertory Theatre, the old federal building became an art center, and restaurants like The Veranda tell a story of endurance and reinvention. Today, the River District features rooftop lounges, outdoor markets and places like Bay Street Yard.

Downtown Punta Gorda

Founded in the 1800s, Punta Gorda preserves its harbor-town roots with colorful murals depicting settlers, fishermen and the lives of early residents. Marion Avenue's lineup of eclectic shops and restaurants — including longtime favor-

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HISTORIC DISTRICTS

ites like The Perfect Caper and Celtic Ray Public House — echoes both history and evolution.

Across the river, Sunseeker Resort Charlotte Harbor draws new energy to the waterfront while honoring the town’s maritime legacy. Rooftop lounges at the Wyvern Hotel and the lively TT’s Tiki Bar at Four Points by Sheraton embrace life on the water. At the same time, Laishley Park and the surrounding trails provide opportunities to enjoy nature.

Boca Grande

Boca Grande began as the home of tarpon fishing, grand hotels and railroad tycoons escaping northern winters. The Gasparilla Inn, built in 1913, still conveys refined sophistication, and the old rail line now doubles as a scenic bike and golf cart path.

Today, the downtown area features shops, pastel architecture and canopy-lined streets. The Johann Fust Library, century-old churches and the Port Boca Grande Lighthouse & Museum reflect the rich history of Boca Grande. Today, visitors enjoy a timeless mix of elegance and unhurried charm. ■



Marion Street is part of the scenic downtown neighborhood of Punta Gorda.

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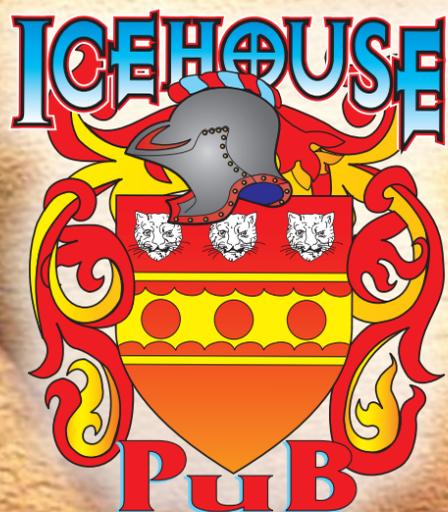
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CAST AWAY

SOUTHWEST FLORIDA'S YEAR-ROUND FISHING ATTRACTS ANGLERS LOOKING FOR INSHORE ACTION AND DEEP-SEA ADVENTURE

BY CASEY SHEPHERD

Florida Weekly Correspondent

Over the decades, Florida has rightly earned its title of “Fishing Capital of the World” amongst visitors and residents. From coast to coast, South Florida offers anglers a wealth of options and expert advice for fishing enthusiasts of all skill levels.

LEE COUNTY

Estero River

The Estero River is a six-and-a-half-mile waterway that is both tidal and spring-fed, creating freshwater conditions at its headwaters and flowing into Estero Bay. Fishermen can rent a kayak to fish the river starting at \$17.50 for the first two hours from Estero River Outfitters.

While navigating the river, experts suggest casting towards the mangroves on the banks where fish seek shelter. Live shrimp for the saltwater side of the river, or live shiners for the freshwater side, make the best bait. Anglers can find a wide variety of fish, from peacock and largemouth bass, snook, redfish, snapper and even barracuda, that have been caught on the river.

Lakes Park

Lakes Park is a 279-acre park featuring a sprawling man-made lake. The park offers fantastic fishing opportunities for those looking to scratch the freshwater itch in Lee County. Because the lake was carved from a quarry operation, there are spots that are exceptionally deep, which provide fish with pockets of cool water during the hot Florida summers. Anglers can expect to catch largemouth bass, snook, and even

the occasional tarpon. The park has multiple ramps throughout the premises to launch small paddle craft. Parking is \$1 per hour with a max of \$5 for the whole day.

Matlatcha

While most anglers approach Matlatcha by watercraft, it's not impossible to fish from solid ground. Matlatcha Outfitters offers kayak rentals and bait-and-tackle services. For those looking to fish Matlatcha shoreside, the Matlatcha draw bridge is a good place to start.

COLLIER COUNTY

Golden Gate Community Park

Golden Gate Community Park is an access point to Collier County's freshwater canal system. The park features a boat



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/ COURTESY PHOTO

ramp for launching both paddle craft and boats. In the canals, anglers can look forward to encountering peacock and largemouth bass. Locals suggest using live bait, such as shiners. Parking at Golden Gate Community Park is free.

Delnor-Wiggins Pass State Park

Delnor-Wiggins Pass State Park is an inlet in North Collier County where strong currents bring food for predatory fish in and out of the Gulf. There is ample beach room for anglers to target the spe-

cies of their choice. Delnor-Wiggins hosts a wide variety of fish, including snook, redfish, jack crevalle and sharks. Parking is \$6 per vehicle.

Picayune Strand State Forest

Right on the edge of the Everglades, Picayune Strand State Forest offers anglers a glimpse into the wild side of Collier County. The park offers a boat ramp to launch watercraft to explore and fish the canals. For those without watercraft, fishing is available along roadside canals. Anglers can expect to find largemouth bass, snook and bluegill. Parking costs \$2 per person.

wait to ambush prey.

Ponce De Leon Park

Ponce De Leon Park in Punta Gorda features a small fishing pier where a canal system meets Charlotte Harbor. The Pier overlooks where the Peace River, Charlotte Harbor and the canal meet, which supports a wide variety of fish species, including black drum. Anglers should revive the black drum before release, a process in which an angler holds the fish after it is placed back in the water to give it time to regain the stamina it lost in the fight. Parking and pier access are free.

Englewood Beach

For fishermen wanting to enjoy a day in the sand with the family and get some fishing in, too, need look no further than Englewood Beach. The Gulf water temperatures are cooler and more consistent than the intercoastal waterways, attracting many species of fish. Anglers can find snook, snapper and seatrout at Englewood Beach. Parking is 75 cents per hour. ■

CHARLOTTE COUNTY

Cocoplum Waterway

The Cocoplum waterway is a seven-mile-long canal in Port Charlotte. Local experts recommend that anglers find spillways and culverts where fish stack up and



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INSIDER

FIVE WAYS TO FALL FOR SOUTHWEST FLORIDA

Love Celine Boutique
in Bonita Springs



DAVID WISHTSCHIN / FLORIDA WEEKLY

BY CHELLE KOSTER WALTON

Florida Weekly Correspondent

Whether for a weekend or a season, these regional destinations offer a mix of nature, shopping and Old Florida charm

Down by the Riverside

If you've ever needed an excuse to abandon the bustle of Tamiami Trail, Riverside Park in Bonita Springs has your alibi. The Imperial River runs straight to the heart of old downtown Bonita and its ongoing redevelopment, trickling into the past at the historic riverside Liles Hotel. Dating back to 1926, the old hotel is now the centerpiece of a historic plaza.

Later in its life, the hotel became the Imperial River Court tourist camp, and the six restored circa-1945 fishing shacks next to it survive from that era. (They made a cameo appearance in Sean Connery's 1990 "Just

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INSIDER

Cause.”) They are home to art galleries and a paddlecraft rental operation.

The park’s imposing bandstand makes this a popular spot for community events such as music and art festivals. It’s the perfect place to bring a picnic lunch, walk shaded trails, explore the park’s sculptures or take a leisurely paddle into the past.

Riverside Park makes an excellent jumping-off point for downtown’s burgeoning entertainment scene. Stroll to the neighboring shops, Rooftop at Riverside food truck park, Chartreuse Craft Cocktail Lounge, Sugarshack Downtown music venue, Downtown Coffee & Wine Company and Ceremony Brewing.

Shop ’til you dine

North Naples has been making a name for itself as a youthful, trendy neighborhood where it’s easy to spend an entire day on retail therapy sustained by endless dining and clubbing options.

From Mercato entertainment center on the district’s north end and south to



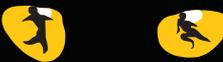
DAVID WISHTISCHIN / FLORIDA WEEKLY

Waterside Shops, Tamiami Trail takes you on a trip along such dining hotspots as Bar Tulia, Joe’s Diner and Bicycleette Cookshop. Interspersed are luxury name boutiques like Louis Vuitton, Gucci and Pottery Barn at Waterside Shops and art galleries, Whole Foods and Sur La Table

outlets at Mercato.

Off Tamiami, Pine Ridge Road leads eastward to the Naples Art District, home to studios of local artists, which offers a shopping experience that is purely Naples. For the family, North Naples holds two side-by-side destinations in North Collier Regional Park:

MAIN THEATRE



CATS

FEB 20 - APR 4

MAIN THEATRE



ALL SHOOK UP

APR 10 - MAY 16

MAIN THEATRE



The Sounds of 1967

MAY 22 - JUN 20

MAIN THEATRE



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INSIDER

Children's Museum of Naples (CMON) and Sun-N-Fun Lagoon waterpark.

To the west, you're bound to end up at the beach. Vanderbilt Beach scores with those who love a long stroll with a lunch stop at the Turtle Club or the Ritz-Carlton Naples' Gumbo Limbo beach bar. Nature-lovers will gravitate to Delnor-Wiggins State Park for an escape from city vibes.

Fishy and old Florida

At the opposite end of Collier County from Naples — physically and fundamentally — Everglades City originally served as the county seat, back in the days when the Tamiami Trail was inching across the wetland wilderness to Miami circa 1923. You can learn more about that formidable feat at the Museum of the Everglades, where developer Barron Collier housed the laundry operation for his roadbuilding camp. Another remnant of the era, the Rod & Gun Club, once Collier's grand home, today serves fried frog legs, alligator tail, stone crab and other 'glades fare.

One of Florida's few remaining working waterfronts, the Barron River is home to a vibrant fishing fleet and a handful of seafood houses like City Seafood, where the fish is same-day fresh. The river also serves as a throughway for airboat tours buzzing like giant mosquitoes into the Everglades' River of Grass for a zippy ride of a lifetime.

As a gateway to the western entrance of Everglades National Park, Everglades City offers the opportunity to spy myriad birds, dolphins, alligators and other rare creatures in their natural habitats. Park tours depart from the visitor center docks. It is also the launch of the 99-mile Wilderness Waterway paddling trail, which runs across the state. You can also set up a shorter adventure to get close to the region's secluded, wildlife-rich Ten Thousand Islands.

Way-back wayfaring

Pine Island is something of a local secret in these parts — known mostly to fishing types — and dates back 2,000 years. That's when the Calusa tribe settled in what is known today as Pineland. The 0.7-mile Calusa Heritage Trail envisions the tribe's social structure, daily life and spirituality. Vivid signage interprets points of interest along the way: the 30-foot-high Brown's Mound visitors climb to reach "the top of the world," with a scenic overlook, the Calusa Canals and the Smith Mound, where the Calusa entombed their departed.

Pineland is one of Pine Island's four communities, and it's the least discovered. Across the road from the Calusa Heritage Trail, another historic complex remembers another bygone era of fisherfolk. In the 1920s, visitors came to sip, sup and sleep at the Tarpon Lodge following a day

in Pine Island Sound pulling in tarpon and other trophy fish. The tradition continues in the historic lodge with its acclaimed restaurant and water-view rooms that take you decidedly away from it all.

Riveting river vibes

Don't let its compact size fool you. Downtown Punta Gorda is a vibrant cultural destination. On the Peace River, on its historic streets, on its walls — roughly half of the city's 30-plus murals pop up around the heart of downtown's main streets of Tamiami Trail, Marion Avenue and Olympia Avenue. They tell the stories behind the historic buildings, some of which now house highly acclaimed restaurants such as The Perfect Caper, River City Grill and Leroy's Southern Kitchen.

Boutique shops intersperse with the restaurants, selling books, art and fashion finery. The best dining and drinking with river views is at the Wyvern Hotel and Four Points by Sheraton. Head up to the rooftop at the Wyvern for tapas and cocktails at Perch 360. TT's Tiki Bar fronts the Four Points along the 2.5-mile Harborwalk. Go for a relaxed lunch and local craft beer, followed by a scenic stroll.

Stop for ice cream at Harborwalk Scoops and Bites, part of the marina, restaurant, interactive fountains, pathways and green space of Lashley Park. ■

Downtown Punta Gorda is located on the Peace River and Charlotte Harbor.

LOCAL FLAVOR

LEE COUNTY

Bay Street Yard (Food Truck Park)

Casual food truck park that features live music, a variety of food vendors and an array of craft cocktails.

2136 Bay St., Fort Myers
239-940-8744 | baystreetyard.com

Blossom & Brie

Farm-to-table experience with memorable dishes straight from the fields.

8250 Nalle Grade Road, Fort Myers
239-385-0415 | blossomandbrie.com

The Bohemian

Small-plate concept with craft cocktails and seasonal menu items.

27975 Old 41 Road, Bonita Springs
239-451-9619 | bohemian.restaurant

The Bubble Room

Whimsical restaurant known for kitschy décor, oversized servings and nostalgic atmosphere.

15001 Captiva Drive, Captiva
239-472-5558 | bubbleroomcaptiva.com

Bruno's of Brooklyn

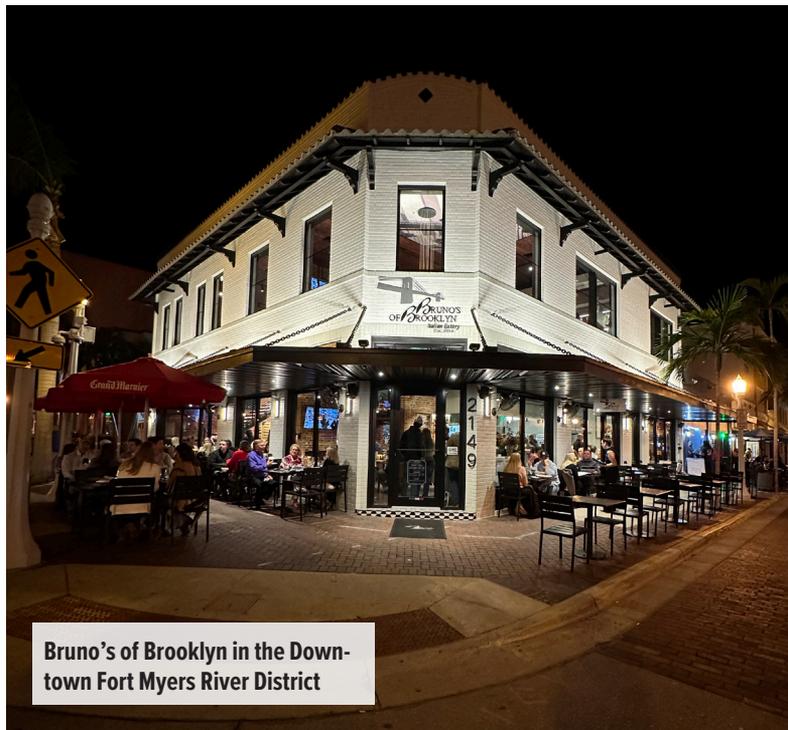
Family-run spot serving old-world Italian flavors with a modern twist.

2149 First St., Fort Myers
239-278-0211 | brunosofbrooklyn.com

Canary Club Pizza & Cocktails

Features a wood-fired oven, creative sourdough pizzas. Outdoor seating, and an inventive menu.

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Bruno's of Brooklyn in the Downtown Fort Myers River District

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239-472-5555 | cielo-sanibel.com

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14040 McGregor Blvd., Fort Myers
239-689-5474 | deeplagoon.com

Doc Ford's Rum Bar & Grill
(Multiple Locations)

Features Caribbean-inspired seafood in a casual atmosphere.
708 Fisherman's Wharf, Fort Myers Beach
239-765-9660 | docfords.com
2500 Island Inn Road, Sanibel
239-472-8311 | docfords.com

Fancy's Southern Café
(Multiple Locations)

Exudes warm hospitality and southern flavors in an upscale atmosphere.
8890 Salrose Lane, Suite 101, Fort Myers
239-561-2988 | fancysoutherncafe.com
2214 Bay St., Fort Myers
239-208-2564 | fancysoutherncafe.com

The Firestone Grill Room

Features a two-story dining room serving top-quality prime steaks, fresh seafood and locally sourced produce.
2224 Bay St., Fort Myers, FL 33901
239-334-3473 | firestoneff.com

The Fish House

Specializes in fresh grouper, fried baskets and local seafood.
7225 Estero Blvd., Fort Myers Beach
239-765-6766 | fishhousefortmyersbeach.com

Gramma Dot's Seaside Saloon

Serves simple and delicious seafood dishes.
634 N. Yachtsman Drive, Sanibel
239-472-8138
sanibelmarina.com/dining



COURTESY PHOTO

The Green Flash

Offers wide views to accompany its seafood platters.
15183 Captiva Drive, Captiva
239-472-3337 | greenflashcaptiva.com

Hana Japanese Steakhouse and Sushi Lounge

Known for sizzling hibachi, fresh sushi and friendly service.
10801 Corkscrew Road, Estero
239-495-9916 | hanasteakhouse.com

Harold's

Features a seasonal menu sourced from local ingredients for an intimate dining experience.
15250 S Tamiami Trail, Fort Myers
239-849-0622 | haroldsfl.com

Keylime Bistro

Offers simple seafood dishes, key lime pie and live music.
11509 Andy Rosse Lane, Captiva
239-472-2121 | keylimebistrocaptiva.com

Lobster Lady Seafood Market & Bistro

Features a market and restaurant, specializing in seafood.
1715 Cape Coral Parkway W., Cape Coral
239-471-0136 | lobsterladyseafood.com

McGregor Café

Known for filling breakfasts, fresh salads and neighborhood charm.

4329 McGregor Blvd., Fort Myers
239-936-1771 | mcgregorcafe.com

The Mucky Duck

Draws crowds for its sunset views and pub-style dishes.
11546 Andy Rosse Lane, Captiva
239-472-3434 | muckyduck.com

MudBugs Cajun Kitchen

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1473 Periwinkle Way, Sanibel
239-472-2221 | mudbugssanibel.com

Nice Guys Pizza

Edgy and playful pizzeria featuring craft pies and cocktails.
1404 Cape Coral Parkway E., Cape Coral
239-549-7542 | niceguypizza.com

Oise Ristorante

Inventive blend of Italian tradition and Japanese artistry celebrating bold flavors, seasonal ingredients and shareable plates.
2262 First St., Fort Myers
239-445-0080 | oiseristorante.com

Point 57 Kitchen & Cocktails

Specializes in craft cocktails and polished comfort food.
3522 Del Prado Blvd. S., Cape Coral
239-471-7785 | point57.com

Prawnbroker Restaurant & Fish Market

Known for quality seafood and steady service.
13451 McGregor Blvd., Fort Myers
239-489-2226 | prawnbroker.com

Seed & Bean Market

Features premium cannabis-infused delights, coffee, unique beers and delicious food.
1520 Broadway, Fort Myers
4720 S.E. 9th Place, Suite 300, Cape Coral
116 W. Venice Ave., Venice
239-342-1300 | seedandbeanmarket.com

Slipaway Food Truck Park & Marina

Food trucks serve tacos, burgers and seafood as boats slip through the water at the adjacent marina.
1811 Cape Coral Parkway E., Cape Coral
239-360-8883 | slipawaycapecoral.com

Sunflower Café

Serves classic American comfort food with Greek-inspired touches for breakfast, brunch and lunch in a welcoming casual environment.
11410 Summerlin Square Drive, Fort Myers Beach
239-415-4262 | sunflowercafeff.com

Survey Café

Blends Southern staples with small-town charm. Offers a French dinner menu on Friday and Saturday evenings.
10530 Wilson St., Bonita Springs
239-992-2233 | surveycafe.com

Tarpon Lodge Restaurant

Features fresh seafood, waterfront and welcoming vibe.
13771 Waterfront Drive, Bokeelia
239-283-3999 | tarponlodge.com

Traders Restaurant

Island-inspired plates and a bustling bar great for a family meal or a night out.
1551 Periwinkle Way, Sanibel
239-472-7242 | traderssanibel.com

The Veranda

Exemplifies Southern grace and refined dining with an elegant courtyard garden and careful service.
2122 Second St., Fort Myers
239-332-2065 | verandarestaurant.com

LOCAL FLAVOR

Woody's Waterside Island Bar & Grill

Offers seafood baskets, outdoor seating and live music most nights of the week.

3051 Stringfellow Road, St. James City
239-283-5555 | woodyswaterside.com

COLLIER COUNTY

The Bay House

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799 Walkerbilt Road, Naples
239-591-3837 | bayousenaples.com

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865 5th Ave. S., Naples
239-594-5557 | bhahapersianbistro.com

Bicyclette Cookshop

Creative seasonal menu that draws inspiration from global cuisine and local ingredients.

819 12th Ave. S., Naples
239-316-2424 | bicyclettecookshop.com

Campielo Ristorante & Bar

Features wood-fired pizzas and modern Italian dishes served in the busy courtyard or indoor dining room.

1177 Third St. S., Naples
239-435-1166 | campielo.damico.com

Celebration Park

Waterfront food truck park offering a wide array of options including tacos, barbecue, seafood and global street fare.

2880 Becca Ave., Naples
239-249-2922 | celebrationparknaples.com

The Dock at Crayton Cove

Features Caribbean-inspired

meals, cocktails and sunset views.

845 12th Ave. S., Naples
239-263-9940 | dockcraytoncove.com

Doreen's Cup of Joe

Serves pancakes, fresh coffee and a full breakfast menu.

267 N. Collier Blvd., Marco Island
239-394-2600 | doreenscupofjoe.com

Everglades City Seafood Depot

Serves fried seafood, oyster platters and seasonal stone crab with rustic charm.

102 Copeland Ave. N., Everglades City
239-695-0071

Everglades Rod & Gun Club

Rustic lodging and dining, featuring fried seafood, hushpuppies and stone crab, in season.

200 W. Broadway, Everglades City
239-695-2101 | rodandguneverglades.com

Harold's Place

Serves burgers, shrimp baskets, and cold beer and features poolside live music.

2555 Tamiami Trail N., Naples
239-263-7254 | haroldsnaples.com

Havana Cafe of the Everglades

Known for breakfast, Cuban sandwiches and café con leche.

191 Smallwood Drive, Chokoloskee
239-695-2214 | thehavanacafe.com

Jane's Cafe on 3rd

Features fresh breakfast and brunch items in the quiet atmosphere of Old Naples.

1209 3rd St. S., Naples
239-261-2253 | janesnaples.com

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239-643-2427 | jimmyscharred.com
25301 S. Tamiami Trail, Suite 2, Bonita Springs
239-390-0301 | jimmyscharred.com

Lee Be Fish

Humble fish market where the fresh catch of the day goes directly from the boat to the plate.

350 Royal Palm Drive, Marco Island
239-389-0580 | leebeefish.com

The Little Bar

Features live bands and a seafood shack that serves up seafood baskets.

205 Harbor Place N., Goodland
239-394-5663 | littlebarrestaurant.com

Oasis The Kitchen Lounge

Offers delicious food, good vibes and an inviting atmosphere that fuses natural and modern design.

5072 Annunciation Circle, Suite 103, Ave Maria
239-658-5938 | oasisavemaria.com

Osteria Tulia

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466 5th Ave. S., Naples
239-213-2073 | osteriatulia.com

The Oyster House

Seafood platters and live music draw patrons to this waterfront relic of Old Florida.

606 Palm Point Drive, Goodland
239-394-2123

The Oyster Society

Features Art Deco decor, excellent service, seafood, sushi and cocktails.

599 S Collier Blvd., Marco Island
239-394-3474 | theoystersociety.com

Panevino Ristorante Naples

Known for impeccable service and thoughtfully crafted Italian fare in a welcoming environment.

8853 Tamiami Trail N., Naples
239-514-8655 | panevinoonaples.com

PJK Neighborhood Chinese Restaurant

A modern Chinese kitchen with a fresh, coastal twist, emphasizing scratch-made sauces, hand-folded dumplings and locally sourced seafood.

835 4th Ave. S., Naples
239-367-0300 | pjkinchinese.com

The Real Macaw

Featuring a menu of Caribbean classics and creative cocktails that celebrate tropical living.

3275 Bayshore Drive, Naples
239-732-1188 | realmacawnaples.com

Ridgeway Bar & Grill

Chef-owned, family-oriented restaurant that delivers locally influenced cuisine from scratch and an award-winning wine list.

1300 3rd St. S., Suite 101, Naples
239-262-5500 | ridgewaybarandgrill.com

Stan's Idle Hour

An unpretentious place where live music on the outdoor stage, water views and libations turn days into big parties.

221 Goodland Drive W., Goodland
239-394-3041 | stansidlehour.net

T-Michaels: Steak & Lobster House

Polished service featuring steak and seafood, offering patrons prime cuts, cold martinis and sunset views.

4050 Gulf Shore Blvd. N., Naples
239-261-0622 | t-michaels.com

CHARLOTTE COUNTY

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LOCAL FLAVOR

PJK Neighborhood Chinese serves standout cocktails, including the bold PJK Old Fashioned, and the refreshing Call Me “Koko.”



COURTESY PHOTO

Celtic Ray Public House

Authentic Irish pub that serves fish and chips and features live music most nights.

145 E. Marion Ave., Punta Gorda
941-916-9115 | celticray.net

Donato's Italian Restaurant

Generous portions of familiar classics provide a sense of old-school charm.

1900 Tamiami Trail, Suite 17, Port Charlotte
941-764-1600 | donatosportcharlotte.com

FM Don's

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201 W. Marion Ave., Punta Gorda
941-639-3720 | fmdons.com

Hometown Grill

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healthy portions.

1931 Tamiami Trail, Suite 10, Port Charlotte
941-629-5898 | thehometowngrill.com

The Grill at 1951

Serves steaks and seafood with white-tablecloth service and live jazz music.

1951 Tamiami Trail, Port Charlotte
941-255-0994 | thegrillat1951.com

The Icehouse Pub

English-style pub with a rotating beer selection and hearty pub fare.

408 S. Tamiami Trail, Suite 111, Punta Gorda
941-575-0866 | theicehousepub.com

Laisley Crab House

Serves seafood towers, sushi and seasonal stone crab as diners watch boats slipping through the calm waters.

150 Laisley Court, Punta Gorda
941-205-5566 | laishleycrabhouse.com



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 42070 Cypress Parkway, Babcock Ranch
 oarandiron.com
 8550 Founders Square Drive, Naples
 239-427-3335 | oarandiron.com
 8485 Dani Drive, Fort Myers
 239-396-4351 | oarandiron.com

Peace River Seafood

Serves buckets of fresh seafood including blue crab, local shrimp and oysters.
 5337 Duncan Road, Punta Gorda
 941-505-8440 | peacerverseafood.com

Perfect Caper

Offers a nationally ranked fine dining experience that combines global technique with local ingredients.
 121 E. Marion Ave., Punta Gorda
 941-505-9009 | theperfectcaper.com

Prime Serious Steak

Generous servings and bold



flavors pair with upscale service.
 10361 Tamiami Trail, Punta Gorda
 941-347-8156 | primeserioussteak.com

Riviera Bar & Grill

Features laid-back vibes, freshly made dishes, a waterfront location with boat access, tiki-

live entertainment.
 2208 El Jobean Road, Port Charlotte
 941-235-3675 | twistedfork.net

side cocktails and live music.
 5500 Deltona Drive, Punta Gorda
 941-639-2633 | rivierabarandgrill
 puntagorda.com

TT's Tiki Bar

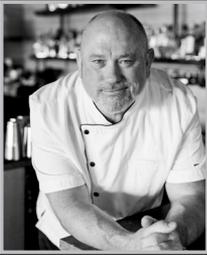
Features standard bar fare with waterfront live music, cold drinks and an authentic island vibe.
 33 Tamiami Trail, Punta Gorda
 941-637-6770 | ttspg.com

The Twisted Fork

Roadhouse vibes, Southern specialties and a busy stage with

COURTESY PHOTO

Harold's



CHEF CREATIVE AMERICAN





15250 South Tamiami Trail
Fort Myers, FL 33908
239.849.0622
Open Tuesday–Saturday

www.haroldscuisine.com














Harold's was founded in 2015 by Harold Balink, one of the most well-known chefs in Southwest Florida. This upscale restaurant features a rotating weekly menu which features dishes that show the Chef's sensibilities. All dishes are made from scratch and farm-sourced.

The restaurant space has a modern, but intimate atmosphere with a friendly staff. Featuring a full bar, semi-open kitchen, and new dining room, Harold's is a sleek, comfortable, nuanced dining experience for all ages.

SIGNATURE EVENTS

Events may be rescheduled or canceled, so please check official websites for the latest updates.

LEE COUNTY

Downtown Fort Myers Art Walk

First Friday of every month, 5 to 9 p.m.

Art galleries stay open late, and outdoor art exhibits, street musicians and vendors fill the River District each month in this celebration of Fort Myers' robust arts scene.

First St. and Hendry St., Fort Myers
239-313-5129 | myriverdistrict.com

Downtown Fort Myers Music Walk

Third Friday of every month, 6 to 10 p.m.

This free public event features live performances from local and regional musicians throughout the bars, restaurants and art galleries in downtown Fort Myers.

T.G.I.M.

First Monday of every month through March

T.G.I.M. evenings provide a blend of thought-provoking films, lively discussions with special guests, music and interviews, all for an entry fee of \$10 for adults and \$8 for students and seniors.

2301 First St., Fort Myers
239-333-1933 | sbdac.com

MARCH

Alva Strawberry Festival and Plant Sale

March 14

Highlights include homemade strawberry shortcake, hundreds of plants for sale, a bake sale, book sale, craft vendors, fresh produce, non-profit vendors and food trucks.

21441 Pearl St., Alva
615-403-3058 | fmlcgardencouncil.com/council-directory/alva-garden-club

Bonita Springs National Art Festivals

March 14 and 15 (Each year in January, February and March)

One of the top-ranked juried art festivals in the country, presented by Arts Bonita, Bonita Springs National Art Festival attracts more than 200 artists and packed



CHRIS TILLEY PHOTOGRAPHY AND LEE COUNTY VISITOR & CONVENTION BUREAU

crowds. Art lovers can browse and purchase work from award-winning artists and sample treats from local food vendors.

10450 Reynolds St., Bonita Springs
239-495-8989 | artsbonita.org

Cape Coral Music & Arts Fusion Walk

March 14

The Cape Coral Music & Arts Fusion Walk, organized by the Cape Coral Parks and Recreation Department, promotes local businesses is a family-friendly event that features pop-up shops by local arts, live music and an array of vendors showcasing handmade, original work.

S.E. 47th Terrace, Cape Coral
239-574-0401 | capecoral.gov

ECHO's Global Food & Farm Festival

March. 15 to 21

Attendees can tour a 57-acre global farm and experience a tropical rainforest demonstration, learn about alternative energy sources and discover ways to make an impact on world hunger.

17391 Durrance Road, North Fort Myers
239-543-3246 | echonet.org

Sanibel Shell Show & Festival

March 5

Sanibel's world-famous shelling festival, organized by the Sanibel-Captiva Shell Club, celebrates the treasures of the sea with exhibits, shell art and educational displays.

2173 Periwinkle Way, Sanibel
239-472-2155 | sanibelcommunityhouse.net

Sounds of Jazz & Blues

March 28

Cape Coral Parks and Recreation Department brings some of the area's best jazz and blues musicians together for the city's foremost musical festival, featuring live entertainment, food and fun.

1800 N.W. 28th Ave., Cape Coral
239-573-3128 | capeconcerts.com

Southwest Florida Reading Festival

March 7

Authors from every genre gather to share their creative process with fans of all ages in this free celebration of literature. Attendees can meet the authors, buy autographed books and enjoy reading-related activities with members of the Florida Writers Association, Gulf Coast Writers Association and Southwest Florida Fiction Writers.

2450 First St., Fort Myers
239-533-4832 | readfest.org

SIGNATURE EVENTS

MAY

Fort Myers Film Festival

May 20 to 24

The 16th annual film festival brings film enthusiasts together to celebrate the art of cinema. An important platform for independent filmmakers, the festival showcases independent films from a wide array of genres at venues throughout Fort Myers, including the Sidney & Berne Davis Art Center and the Calusa Planetarium.

239-810-6323 | fortmyersfilmfestival.com

JULY

Cape Coral Red, White & Boom

July 4

Cape Coral celebrates Independence Day along the riverfront each July with fireworks, food vendors and live entertainment.

Cape Coral Bridge area, Cape Coral
239-573-3128 | capeboom.com

SEPTEMBER

Island Hopper Songwriter Festival

Sept. 18 to 27

This 10-day music festival in Southwest Florida features performances by BMI singer-songwriters and local performers. Hosted in venues throughout Lee County, the festival travels from Captiva Island, Cape Coral, downtown Fort Myers and ends on Fort Myers Beach. Most of the shows are free, with some featured ticketed events.

Multiple venues, Lee County
800-237-6444 | island-hopperfest.visitfortmyers.com

OCTOBER

Cape Coral Oktoberfest

Each year in October

Cape Coral hosts one of Florida's largest Oktoberfest celebrations complete with beer gardens, German food and live Bavarian music.

2101 S.W. Pine Island Road, Cape Coral
239-283-1400 | capecoraloktoberfest.com

NOVEMBER

American Sand Sculpting Championship

Nov. 19 to 23

The Annual American Sand Sculpting

Championship attracts enthusiastic crowds to experience the awe-inspiring work of Master Sculptors and Advanced Amateur Sculptors from around the world, each showcasing their extraordinary talents in sand sculpture.

DiamondHead Beach Resort, 2000 Estero Blvd., Fort
Myers Beach
239-454-7500 | fmsandsculpting.com

DECEMBER

Festival of Trees

Each year in early December

The Annual Festival of Trees celebrates the holiday season with a showcase of beautiful trees decorated by local businesses to raise money for Goodwill of Southwest Florida and SBDAC.

Sidney & Berne Davis Art Center, 2301 First St, Fort
Myers
239-333-1933 | fortmyersfestivaloftrees.com

COLLIER COUNTY

Evening on Fifth

Second Thursday of every month, year-round

Visitors can enjoy exceptional dining, shopping and an array of vibrant musical performances lining the sidewalks of Fifth Avenue South on the second Thursday of every month throughout the year.

Fifth Ave. S., Naples
239-692-8436 | naplesgov.com**Third Street South Farmers Market**

All year on Saturdays

Featuring over 60 local vendors, this long-standing artisan market in Old Naples sells produce, baked goods, flowers, seafood, jams and prepared foods every Saturday in downtown Naples.

Third Street South between Broad Ave. S. and 13th
Ave. S., Naples

thirdstreetsouth.com 239-262-6517 | naplesart.org

MARCH

Collier Fair & Exposition

March 19 to 29

Offering entertainment, agricultural exhibitions, carnival rides, games and live music, Collier Fair Exposition celebrates its 50th year. Featuring activities like 4-H competitions, animal exhibits and displays of Collier County's farming heritage, this event is popular with the whole family.

751 39th Ave., N.E., Naples
239-455-1444 | collierfair.com**Downtown Art Fair**

March 21 and 22

This prestigious outdoor art fair features original works by local, national and international artists. The two-day festival showcases many artistic styles and mediums. Attendees can interact with artists as they support the arts community in Naples.

755 8th Ave. S., Naples
239-262-6517 | naplesart.org

SIGNATURE EVENTS

Festival Under the Stars

Through March 14

The Festival Under the Stars is an annual outdoor opera festival produced by Opera Naples. Known as the only outdoor winter opera festival in the United States, it features fully staged operas, concerts, ballet performances and a family day with various arts and activities.

50 Riverside Circle, Naples
239-963-9050 | operanaples.org

Gulf Coast Orchid Alliance's Orchid Show and Sale

March 22 to 24

Hundreds of exotic orchids in full bloom fill North Collier Regional Park with color as workshops and sales from specialty growers delight plant lovers and collectors alike.

15000 Livingston Road, Naples
239-269-6389 | gulfcoastorchidalliance.org

HUGS Ukulele Festival and Concert

March 14

This all-day celebration of music, fun and community will feature performances by the nationally known ukulele players and a full lineup of workshops, lessons and social events designed to bring people together through the joy of the ukulele.

6200 Autumn Oaks Ln, Naples
813-380-9009 | ukulelenationusa.com

Jewish Book Festival

December to April

The Greater Naples Jewish Book Festival brings a showcase of Jewish authors and books of Jewish content to enrich, entertain and engage the members of the community.

4720 Pine Ridge Road, Naples
239-263-4205 | jewishnaples.org

Marco Island Center for the Arts' Art and Craft Fair

March 23 and 24

Juried artists display fine art, photography, jewelry and crafts in a relaxed island setting. Each show features live music and local food, allowing attendees an opportunity to shop and enjoy Marco Island's vibrant artistic community.

1010 Winterberry Drive, Marco Island
239-394-4221 | marcoislandart.org

Naples Artcrafters

March 7 and April 11

These monthly juried art and craft shows feature local artisans working in clay, glass, fiber and wood. The series showcases handmade craftsmanship and the creative spirit of the community.

755 Eighth Ave. S., Naples
jordanoska_g@yahoo.com | naplesartcrafters.com

Naples Craft Beer Festival

March 7

Rotary's signature fundraiser showcases over 100 craft beers, chef pairings, live music and People's Choice tastings. Proceeds benefit the North Naples Rotary Club Foundation.

436 Bayfront Place, Naples
naplescraftbeerfest.com

Naples Downtown Art Fair

March 21 and 22

This juried outdoor showcase features fine art, sculpture, glass and photography from artists across the country. Live demonstrations and performances bring a festive mood to the weekend.

755 8th Ave. S., Naples
naplesart.org

Naples St. Patrick's Day Parade

March 16

Complete with marching bands, Irish dancers and decorated floats, the parade forms a wave of green down Fifth Avenue in celebration of Naples' Irish heritage and community pride.

Starts at intersection of Third St. S. and 10th Ave. S., Naples

info@naplesparade.com | naplesparade.com

APRIL**Art In The Park**

April 4

Art In The Park is a series of juried outdoor fairs that feature exhibitions from artists across the state in a wide array of mediums, including ceramics, glass, painting and sculpture.

755 Eighth Ave. S., Naples
239-262-6517 | naplesart.org

Cars as Art

April 6

Classic, vintage and exotic automobiles are displayed as art alongside sculpture and paintings in this event, judged by professional artists rather than car experts, that

Murder Mystery Dinner Train

Solve the Crime While You Dine

semgulf.com

Fort Myers Hotel Packages Avail.

SIGNATURE EVENTS

merges automotive design with fine art.
1010 Winterberry Drive, Marco Island
239-394-4221 | marcoislandart.org/our-events/cars-as-art

Minto U.S. Open Pickleball Championships

April 11 to 18
Naples is known as “The Pickleball Capital of the World,” and fans and players from all over the world come to the USOP National Pickleball Center in Naples each year for a week of competition and celebration of America’s fastest-growing sport.
3520 Thomasson Drive, Naples
239-778-9629 | usopenpickleball.com

Naples Flower Show & Garden Market

April 5 and 6
This is the largest juried flower show in Southwest Florida. The Naples Garden Club and Naples Botanical Garden present dazzling floral designs, horticultural exhibits and a market of plants and garden accessories.
4820 Bayshore Drive, Naples
239-262-1272 | naplesgardenclub.org

Naples International Dance Festival

April 15 to 19
This festival features performances by the world’s best dance companies, dance and wellness conversations, student classes and workshops for all ages, including adult classes.
340 Tamiami Trail N., Suite 201, Naples
239-254-8242 | unitedartscollier.org

Naples Pridefest

April 18
Naples Pridefest is a lively celebration of equality and diversity with performances, vendors and community groups. The event supports and benefits the Naples Pride Center.
239-304-9407 | naplespride.org

Swamp Buggy Races

April 4
The World Famous Swamp Buggy Races feature custom-built vehicles that speed through water-filled tracks. At the conclusion of the races, tradition calls for the crowning of a Swamp Buggy Queen.
8520 Rattlesnake Hammock Road, Naples
239-774-2701 | swampbuggy.com

Terra Cotta Invitational

April 16 to 18
This prestigious amateur event at Naples National Golf Club draws top junior, collegiate and mid-amateur players from across the country. With its strong World Amateur Golf Ranking status, it’s one of Naples’s premier golf weeks.
9325 Collier Blvd., Naples
239-775-8911 | terracottainvitational.com

MAY

The Great Canoe Races of Naples

May 26

This event features local paddlers competing along coastal or river routes. Spectators gather at launch points for timed heats and awards presentations. Attendees can enjoy a vendor fair, live Entertainment and a beer garden while cheering on the racers.
50 Riverside Circle, Naples
info@naplescanoeraces.com | naplescanoeraces.com

OCTOBER

Naples International Film Festival

Oct. 22 to 25
Artis—Naples Film hosts a series of independent film screenings, panel discussions and events. An awards ceremony at the end of the festival recognizes the best featured independent films and filmmakers.
5833 Pelican Bay Blvd., Naples
239-597-1900 | artisnaples.org

Stone Crab Festival

Oct. 23 to 25
Naples’ celebrates the start of stone crab



Naples’ waterfront celebrates the start of stone crab season with the Stone Crab Festival.

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Punta Gorda FL, 33950
(941) 621-9898
puntagordaseniorliving.com

1906 Skyline Blvd,
Cape Coral, FL 33991
(239) 360-8985
hamptonmanorcapecoral.com



SIGNATURE EVENTS

season with live music, seafood vendors, arts and crafts booths, and family activities. The “Cracking of the Claw” ceremony typically opens the weekend, and local restaurants along Tin City and Bayfront offer food and refreshments for attendees.

1200 5th Ave. S., Naples
stonecrabfestival.com

NOVEMBER

Farm City BBQ

Each year in November

This celebration features farm exhibits, produce displays, live music and community booths honoring Naples’ farming heritage and food systems. Volunteers and local elected officials prepare and serve a steak lunch to patrons. The event supports local youth programs, including 4H and Youth Leadership Collier.

751 39th Ave. N.E., Naples
farmcitybbq.com

Florida International Air Show

Each year in November

Featuring aeronautical performances and displays of aircraft and vehicles, this popular event offers attendees the opportunity to learn more about aviation, space and military services.

28000 Airport Road, Punta Gorda
floridaairshow.com

Rockabillaque Florida

Nov. 14

This free, all-ages festival celebrates mid-century Americana with a modern twist, featuring live rockabilly music, a classic car and vintage motorcycle show, a vendor market and contests like pin-up, tattoo and beard and mustache. Created by producer Simon Cantlon, it has become one of the largest festivals of its kind in Florida.

506 S. First St., Immokalee
rockabillaqueflorida.com

Uptown Naples Fine Art Festival

Each year at the end of November

The festival is held in the Pelican Bay community, one of Naples’ wealthiest areas and is conveniently located near Waterside Shops, Naples’ premier open-air shopping and dining destination.

800 Laurel Oak Drive, Naples
561-746-6615 | artfestival.com



STEPHEN MITSKAVICH / FLORIDA WEEKLY

DECEMBER

Christmas Boat Parade

Each year in December

Boats decked out with holiday lights and decorations journey through the local waterways in this festive annual event. Attendees can purchase tickets to view the parade from Naples City Doc or watch from Pinchers Tin City, Riverwalk Restaurant, Naples Landing, Kelly’s Fish House, The Boat House.

239-682-0900 | miacc.org

Festivals of Speed

Each year in December

This event features the world’s most exotic cars, motorcycles, and luxury brands at Mercato, including both vintage and modern vehicles from top makers like Lamborghini, Porsche, Ferrari, Rolls-Royce, Aston-Martin, Bentley, BMW, Mercedes and McLaren.

9110 Strada Place, Naples
239-254-1080 | experiencemercato.com

Live Fest

Each year in December

This evening concert experience fea-

tures major country and pop artists hosted outdoors at The Ritz-Carlton, Tiburón. Attendees can enjoy quality live music and take in the panoramic views of Naples at twilight.

2600 Tiburon Drive, Naples
239-254-9770 | livefest.com

Naples Christmas Parade

Each year in December

Naples ushers in the holidays with a sparkling nighttime parade of decorated floats, marching bands, dance troupes and costumed performers along Fifth Avenue South.

Fifth Ave. S., Naples
239-213-7120 | naplesgov.com

CHARLOTTE COUNTY

Babcock Ranch Showcase Saturdays

Rekurs monthly (seasonal)

This lively festival series features local musicians, food trucks and artisan vendors at Founder’s Square at the center of Babcock Ranch.

42850 Crescent Loop, Punta Gorda
941-206-3457 | babcockranch.com

SIGNATURE EVENTS

MARCH

Peace River National Art Festival

TBD

Artists showcase their skills in diverse media, including art glass, fiber arts, jewelry, leather goods, metalwork, oil painting, photography, pottery, stone sculpture and watercolor.

120 Lashley Court, Punta Gorda
boulderbrook.net

Sanibel Music Festival

March 7, 10, 14, 22 and 24

The festival presents a recital and six concerts by internationally renowned artists.

2050 Periwinkle Way, Sanibel
239-344-7025 | sanibelmusicfestival.org

Taste of Punta Gorda & Beyond

March 8

This one-day food fest features over 60 restaurants, dessert, drink, art and craft vendors with live music and a children's area. Proceeds benefit local nonprofits and

student scholarships through the Punta Gorda Rotary Club.

100 Nesbit St., Punta Gorda
taste@puntagordarotary.org | tasteofpuntagorda.org

APRIL

Punta Gorda Seafood & Music Festival

April 17 to 19

This outdoor seafood and music festival includes food, live music and festive activities. In addition to the music and food, a marketplace will offer a variety of arts and crafts.

100 Nesbit St., Punta Gorda
941-487-8061 | paragonfestivals.com

MAY

Punta Gorda Hibiscus Festival

May 1 to 3

Punta Gorda's signature floral event features plant sales, art, music and family fun, celebrating the unique history and charm of the town.

400 W. Retta Esplanade, Punta Gorda
thehibiscusfestival.com

World's Richest Tarpon Tournament

May 13 and 14

Anglers from around the world converge on Boca Grande Pass to compete for record tarpon and top prizes. The event celebrates the island's legendary sportfishing heritage.

Boca Grande Pass, Boca Grande
941-964-0568 | bocagrandechamber.com

JULY

MangoMania

July 11

The Greater Pine Island Chamber of Commerce hosts this annual celebration of mango season that features local growers, live music and tropical-themed food and crafts.

9940 Stringfellow Road, St. James City
239-283-0888 | pineislandchamber.org



LoKey Hat Co.
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Founded in 2023, LoKey Hat Co.'s flagship store in Bonita Springs is your destination for stylish, custom hats. Our collection brings versatile designs perfect for the ranch, the beach, and everywhere in between. LoKey Hat Co. is proudly led by certified hat masters Candy Nanke, Amanda Boge, and Jess Delfs, whose passion for unique fashion inspires every piece! LoKey Hat Co. is more than a brand; it's a legacy. Rooted in the history of LoKey Ranch, which spans more than 1,500 acres in Tennessee, the company carries a tradition of authenticity and quality. Whether you're seeking a private appointment, hosting a special event, or an on-site custom hat bar, LoKey Hat Co. is where everyone can find the perfect hat and boots that will tell their story!

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28292 Industrial Rd, Suite 7, Bonita Springs, FL 34135
(239) 961-2634 | www.lokeyhatco.com

SWFL HEALTH CARE



LEE COUNTY

Lee Health

Cape Coral Hospital

636 Del Prado Blvd. S., Cape Coral
239-424-2000 | leehealth.org

Gulf Coast Medical Center

13681 Doctors Way, Fort Myers
239-343-1000 | leehealth.org

HealthPark Medical Center

9981 S. HealthPark Drive, Fort Myers
239-343-5000 | leehealth.org

Golisano Children's Hospital of Southwest Florida

9981 S. HealthPark Drive, Fort Myers
239-343-5437 | leehealth.org

Lee Memorial Hospital

2776 Cleveland Ave., Fort Myers
239-343-2000 | leehealth.org

Lee Health Coconut Point

23450 Via Coconut Point, Estero
239-468-0000 | leehealth.org

NCH Bonita Springs Hospital

24040 South Tamiami Trail, Suite 201
Bonita Springs

239-624-6900 | nchmd.org

HCA Florida Lehigh Hospital

1500 Lee Blvd., Lehigh Acres
239-369-2101 | hcafloridahealthcare.com

Park Royal Hospital

9241 Park Royal Drive, Fort Myers
888-458-1956
parkroyalhospital.com

Lee County VA Clinic in Cape Coral

2489 Diplomat Parkway E., Cape Coral
239-652-1800 | va.gov/bay-pines-health-care/locations/lee-county-va-clinic

COLLIER COUNTY

NCH Healthcare System

NCH Baker Hospital Downtown

350 7th St. N., Naples
239-624-5000 | nchmd.org

NCH North Hospital

11190 Health Park Blvd., Naples
239-624-5000 | nchmd.org

Nicklaus Children's Hospital at NCH

11190 Health Park Blvd., Naples

239-624-5000 | nicklauschildrens.org

NCH Bonita Springs Hospital

24040 South Tamiami Trail, Suite 201 |
Bonita Springs
239-624-6900 | nchmd.org

Physicians Regional Healthcare System

Physicians Regional Pine Ridge

6101 Pine Ridge Road, Naples
239-348-4000 | physiciansregional.com

Physicians Regional North

1285 Creekside Blvd., Naples
239-260-6631 | physiciansregional.com

Physicians Regional Collier Boulevard

8300 Collier Blvd., Naples
239-354-6000 | physiciansregional.com

David Lawrence Centers for Behavioral Health

6075 Bathey Lane, Naples
239-455-8500 | davidlawrencecenters.org

Naples VA Clinic

800 Goodlette Road N., Suite 120, Naples
239-659-9188 | va.gov/bay-pines-health-care/locations/naples

CHARLOTTE COUNTY

HCA Florida Fawcett Hospital

21298 Olean Blvd., Port Charlotte
941-629-1181 | hcafloridahealthcare.com/locations/fawcett

AdventHealth Port Charlotte

2500 Harbor Blvd., Port Charlotte
941-766-4122 | adventhealth.com/hospital/adventhealth-port-charlotte

Port Charlotte VA Clinic

4161 Tamiami Trail, Suite 401, Port Charlotte
941-235-2710 | va.gov/bay-pines-health-care/locations/port-charlotte-va-clinic

At a Glance

Emergency: Dial 911

Poison Control: 1-800-222-1222

Lee Health TeleHealth: 239-343-2222

NCH Virtual Care: 239-624-5000

Hope Hospice: 239-482-4673 ■

Experience live theatre that locals love and visitors can't forget.



MAR 11 - APR 12, 2026



MAY 06 - MAY 24, 2026



JUN 24 - JUL 26, 2026



OCT 07 - OCT 25, 2026



NOV 18 - DEC 20, 2026



JAN 13 - FEB 14, 2027



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701 FIFTH AVENUE SOUTH | NAPLES, FL

239.263.7990
NAPLESPLAYERS.ORG

SHOWTIMES:
WED.-SAT. - 7:30 P.M. | SUN. - 2 P.M.

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SWFL SHOPPING

LEE COUNTY

Bell Tower

Groceries, everyday essentials, custom-made jewelry, boutique apparel, books, home décor, food and entertainment.

U.S. 41 at Daniels Parkway, Fort Myers
239-489-1221 | belltowerfl.com

Coconut Point

Outdoor mall featuring over 140 stores and a variety of fine restaurants to cater to every taste.

23106 Fashion Drive, Estero
239-992-4259 | simon.com/mall/coconut-point

Edison Mall

Indoor mall anchored by Macy's, JCPenney and Dillard's.

4125 Cleveland Avenue, Fort Myers
239-939-1933 | shopedisonmall.com

Fleamasters Flea Market

Multi-vendor market featuring hundreds of booths, food stands and frequent special events. Shops are open Friday through Sunday most of the year.

4135 Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Blvd., Fort Myers
239-334-7001 | fleamastersfleamarket.com

Gulf Coast Town Center

Outdoor mall featuring Bass Pro Shops, Belk, Best Buy, Costco, Dick's Sporting Goods, Target and a variety of dining options.

9903 Gulf Coast Main Street, Fort Myers
239-267-5107 | gulfcoasttowncenter.com

The Forum

Outdoor shopping center with major retail stores and everyday services.

9350 Dynasty Drive, Fort Myers
630-570-0700

Miromar Outlets

More than 140 brand-name retailers, including Saks Fifth Avenue OFF 5TH, Adidas, Lucky Brand, Brooks Brothers, Ecco Shoes, Coach, Columbia, Norman Love Confections chocolate salon and many dining options.

10801 Corkscrew Road, Estero
239-948-3766 | miromaroutlets.com

Periwinkle Place

Sanibel's top shopping destination



Coconut Point in Estero

DAVID WISHTISCHIN / FLORIDA WEEKLY

featuring Chico's, Sanibel Day Spa and Tiki Tim's.

2075 Periwinkle Way, Sanibel
239-395-1914 | periwinkleplace.com

Promenade at Bonita Bay

Open-air center featuring shopping, dining, entertainment, a gourmet market and a Saturday farmer's market.

26811 South Bay Drive, Bonita Springs
239-949-1573 | promenadeshops.com

COLLIER COUNTY

Coastland Center

Indoor mall featuring more than 130 places to shop and dine.

1900 Tamiami Trail N., Naples
239-262-2323 | coastlandcenter.com

Esplanade Shoppes at Marco Island

Coastal Italian-style waterfront village offering an array of boutiques, galleries and dining.

760 N. Collier Blvd., Marco Island
703-772-0008 | esplanadeshoppesatmarcoisland.com

Fifth Avenue South

A timeless blend of glamour and laid-back ease for shopping, dining and entertainment.

Fifth Avenue South, Naples
239-692-8436 | fifthavenuesouth.com

Galleria Shoppes at Vanderbilt

Open-air shopping plaza featuring restaurants, boutiques, salons and a busy weekend farmer's market.

2343 Vanderbilt Beach Road, Naples
239-594-5000 | shopvanderbilt.com

Marco Walk Plaza

Popular shopping and dining area near the beach hotels, featuring restaurants, boutiques and services.

599 S. Collier Blvd., Marco Island
954-232-5831 | marcowalkplaza.com

Mercato

Outdoor hub featuring upscale retailers, restaurants, luxury condominiums and a year-round event calendar with live music, festivals and fairs.

9132 Strada Place, North Naples
239-254-1080 | mercatoshops.com

Third Street South

Numerous shopping and dining options, set amidst courtyards, antique European fountains and vibrant, cascading flowers.

Concierge kiosk at Camargo Park
(opposite Fleischmann Fountain)
239-434-6533 | thirdstreetsouth.com

Tin City Waterfront Shops

Local boutiques, casual dining and sightseeing cruises right on the Gordon River.

1200 5th Ave. S., Naples
239-262-4200 | tincityofnaples.com

The Village on Venetian Bay

Set on the waterfront of Venetian Bay, featuring 50 shops and restaurants.

4200 Gulf Shore Boulevard North, Naples
239-261-6100 | venetianvillage.com

Waterside Shops

Outdoor collection of luxury retailers and dining options featuring over 60 stores, including Saks Fifth Avenue, Gucci, Johnny Was, Lilly Pulitzer, Lululemon, Tiffany & Co., Tory Burch, Van Cleef & Arpels, St. John and Tesla.

5415 Tamiami Trail N., Naples
239-598-1605 | watersideshops.com

CHARLOTTE COUNTY

Fishermen's Village

Offers waterfront shopping and dining and features a marina, resort suites and frequent special events throughout the year.

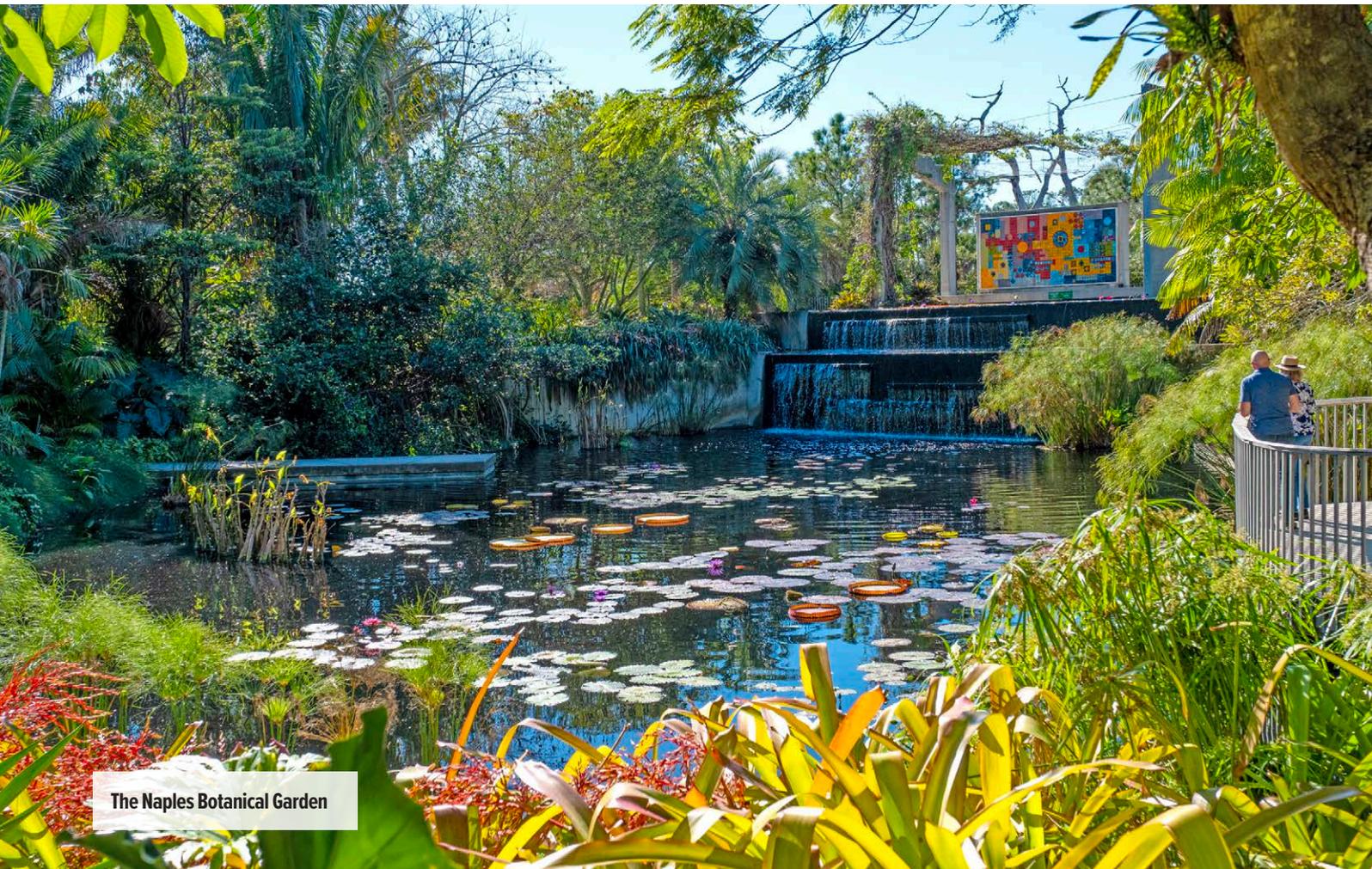
1200 W. Retta Esplanade, Punta Gorda
800-639-0020 | fishermenstvillage.com

Port Charlotte Town Center

Featuring over 60 retailers, including Dillard's, JCPenney and Regal Cinemas.

1441 Tamiami Trail, Port Charlotte
941-624-4833 | portcharlottetowncenter.com

FOCUS ON SWFL



The Naples Botanical Garden

DAVID WISHTISCHIN / FLORIDA WEEKLY

SATISFY MULTIPLE APPETITES WHEN VISITING THESE FLORIDA ATTRACTIONS

BY KAREN FELDMAN

It's not just armies that travel on empty stomachs — intrepid individuals and families seeking Florida fun appreciate easy access to food while they're on the go. Here are some Southwest Florida attractions that deliver the fun and the fuel to keep going.

LEE COUNTY

Blossom & Brie

FUN: Blossom & Brie is a working farm, complete with pigs, heritage chickens, ducks, majestic longhorn cattle and outgoing miniature donkeys. Most are

eager to greet visitors from within their fenced pastures and pens, especially visitors who stopped first at the restaurant cashier to pick up a \$5 bunch of carrots.

Blossom & Brie also grows vegetables in elevated beds and a Freight Farm — a hydroponic farm built within a shipping container — allowing for a controlled environment year-round.

This working farm with its farm-to-table restaurant is worth the trip simply for the food — whether it's brunch (Saturdays and Sundays), lunch (Wednesday through Friday) or dinner (Wednesday through Saturday).

Seafood gumbo, house-made bread and cinnamon rolls (worth the calories), smoked Red Wattle pulled pork sand-

wiches, jerk chicken, mushroom risotto and smashburgers are among the many well-executed dishes crafted with food raised or grown on the 86-acre farm.

Go during the day, at least the first time — as the property is tucked into a rural area of North Fort Myers — when the farm animals are awake. What the donkeys lack in stature, they more than make up for with their vocalizations.

Blossom, the matriarch donkey, and her offspring, Humphrey and Margaret, serve as guardians for the livestock, sounding a noisy alarm at the presence of predators. They are especially receptive to carrots.

Children are welcome; pets are not, for obvious reasons. It's always wise to make

FOCUS ON SWFL

a reservation. Check the website for special events, farm market days and wine dinners.

8250 Nalle Grade Road, North Fort Myers
239-385-0415 | blossomandbrie.com

Edison and Ford Winter Estates/ The Banyan Café

FUN: The men to whom these two historic homes belonged need little introduction. Suffice it to say that prodigious inventor Thomas Edison built his Seminole Lodge between McGregor Boulevard and the Caloosahatchee. His botanical garden and museum, along with the home of his next-door neighbor and friend, automaker and industrialist Henry Ford, occupy 21 choice acres on both sides of palm-lined McGregor Boulevard, just blocks from downtown. Lovers of history, architecture, botany and chemistry — as well as the just-plain-curious — flock to this site, which Mr. Edison occupied every winter from 1886 until his death in 1931. Ford purchased the adjoining property, known as The Mangoes, in 1916.

Guides provide comprehensive information on both homes as well as the Edison Ford Museum, botanical laboratory and the botanical gardens, which include more than 1,750 plants from around the world.

FOOD: Feeling hungry after a tour? The Banyan Café is on the grounds (admission fee not required). It operates out of a vintage teardrop camper under the sprawling banyan trees, serving serious coffee and treats. Open 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. Tuesday through Saturday, from October through April.

2350 McGregor Blvd., Fort Myers
239-334-7419 | edisonfordwinterestates.org

COLLIER COUNTY

Naples Botanical Garden/Fogg Café

FUN: Whether it's a simple stroll, a guided tour or an in-depth workshop that seems appealing, visitors to the **Naples Botanical Garden** will find lush, tropical gardens to enjoy. There are special activities for birders, the family-friendly W.O.N.D.E.R. programs with fun lessons and activities, a guided one-mile walk



DAVID WISHTISCHIN / FLORIDA WEEKLY

with some light stretches and a lesson on how Florida's natural ecosystems contribute to the planet's health. Through April, the garden is open late (from 5 to 8 p.m.) on Wednesdays so visitors can enjoy the sunset.

FOOD: Like the botanical gardens, the **Fogg Café** is intentionally designed. Open daily (November through May), it has indoor and outdoor seating, both of which offer expansive views of the garden. The fast-casual café offers breakfast and lunch with a menu of fresh, contemporary fare. Breakfast features include avocado smash toast, banana bread, Belgian waffles and fresh fruit cups, along with a variety of coffees. For lunch, choose from fresh salads, including mango chicken salad and Fuji apple walnut salad, Caribbean shrimp tacos, burgers, brats, hand-cut fries and sweets for dessert.

4820 Bayshore Drive
239-643-7275 | naplesgarden.org

CHARLOTTE COUNTY

Babcock Ranch Eco Tours/Gator Shack Restaurant

FUN: Amid all the development taking place in southeastern Punta Gorda and northeastern Lee County — most notably the solar community of Babcock Ranch — a 14,000-acre working cattle ranch gives visitors a first-hand look at this region's history and wildlife.

Take a 90-minute swamp buggy eco-tour of the Crescent B Ranch. The swamp buggy travels through multiple Florida ecosystems that are home to spotted owls, wild turkeys, wild boars, alligators and other native flora and fauna. A knowledgeable guide provides the narrative. There are walking trails to explore on your own, a photography tour at

7:30 a.m. on the first Saturday of the month and a night tour at 5:30 p.m. on the last Saturday of the month.

FOOD: The **Gator Shack Restaurant** offers a rotating selection of hearty Southern-style fare and barbecue. Its signature dish is gator bites served with homemade sauce. Other dishes include cheeseburgers, fried shrimp, chili, quesadillas, pulled pork and cornbread. The restaurant is open 11 a.m. to 2 p.m. daily.

8502 State Road 31, Punta Gorda
800-500-5583 | babcockranchecotours.com

WORTH THE TRIP

Solomon's Castle/Boat in the Moat

FUN: The Castle Doctrine declares that "A man's house is his castle." New York transplant Howard Solomon — sculptor, painter, author and dreamer — took that literally, building an actual castle on a swampy 40-acre property in Ona, population 199, between Wauchula and Arcadia. Starting in the early '70s, King Howard built his 12,000-square-foot structure without formal blueprints or plans, incorporating a lot of found objects.

Solomon's Castle's shiny exterior comes from discarded aluminum offset printing plates he bought from a local newspaper. A lion sculpture starts with a discarded oil drum. Everything — from the soaring three-story building to the 90 stained-glass windows to the two sentries (Knight Day and Knight Night) at the castle entrance, hundreds of artworks inside and the (landlocked) Boat in the Moat outside — was hand done by Mr. Solomon. He died a decade ago at 81, but his castle remains, as do the punny scripts still used by guides. His daughter, Alane, manages castle operations.

FOOD: **Boat in the Moat** is a 60-foot replica of a 16th-century Portuguese galleon situated in the manmade moat. It's the castle's restaurant, built after years of requests by busloads of hungry tourists. Malted and milkshakes, sandwiches, homemade chicken pot pie, meatloaf, salads and desserts (chocolate cherry cake, apple crisp) can be found on the menu.

4533 Solomon Road, Ona
863-494-6077 | solomonscastle.com

SWFL ATTRACTIONS

LEE COUNTY

Bailey-Matthews National Shell Museum

This is the only accredited museum in the United States devoted solely to shells and mollusks. Visitors can explore living aquariums, learn about local ecosystems and participate in family-oriented shelling events and citizen-science programs.

3075 Sanibel-Captiva Road, Sanibel
239-395-2233 | shellmuseum.org

Calusa Nature Center & Planetarium

For over 50 years, this community center has inspired people to connect with nature through holistic environmental education programs covering astronomy, ecology and zoology.

3450 Ortiz Ave., Fort Myers
239-275-3435 | calusanature.org



Wonder Gardens

COURTESY PHOTO

ECHO Global Farm

Visitors can explore this world-renowned demonstration farm where sustainable agriculture meets hands-on education. The farm features small-scale

farming models used worldwide to combat hunger, tropical gardens a friendly petting zoo for kids.

17391 Durrance Road, North Fort Myers
239-543-3246 | echonet.org

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SWFL ATTRACTIONS

Edison & Ford Winter Estates

The restored winter homes of Thomas Edison and Henry Ford overlook the Caloosahatchee River, offering a glimpse into the lives of these inventors. Visitors can tour their homes, gardens, museum and working laboratory. New exhibits highlight Edison's environmental experiments and Ford's early automotive designs.

2350 McGregor Blvd., Fort Myers
239-334-7419 | edisonfordwinterestates.org

Food Forest at Florida Gulf Coast University

A living laboratory on the FGCU campus, this student-managed permaculture project demonstrates sustainable gardening and edible landscaping. Open to visitors by appointment or during community workdays, the Food Forest showcases tropical fruit trees, native plants regenerative agriculture practices that inspire future environmental leaders.

10501 FGCU Blvd. S., Fort Myers
239-590-1000 | fgcu.edu

Gator Mike's Family Fun Park

Cape Coral's adventure park features multi-level go-kart tracks, mini golf, zip lines and a 6,000-square-foot arcade. The park frequently hosts birthday parties, family nights and local fundraising events, making it a popular spot for people of all ages.

35 N.E. Pine Island Road, Cape Coral

IMAG History & Science Center

An interactive space where science and imagination meet, IMAG offers aquariums, animal encounters STEM-inspired exhibits, such as the Google Earth Wall and Nano Lab.

2000 Cranford Ave., Fort Myers
239-243-0043 | theimag.org

J.N. "Ding" Darling National Wildlife Refuge

Nature lovers can immerse themselves in this renowned wildlife refuge, known for its rich mangrove ecosystem and diverse

birdlife. Visitors can drive, bike or kayak through scenic trails teeming with native species. The sanctuary provides educational exhibits at the visitor center that highlight the importance of conservation and the legacy of cartoonist and environmentalist Jay Norwood "Ding" Darling.

1 Wildlife Drive, Sanibel Island
239-472-1100 | fws.gov

Southern Fresh Farms

This nonprofit farm is dedicated to sustainable agriculture and community education, offering visitors a taste of local life through seasonal produce, honey, flowers and farm events. It's a family-friendly spot with food trucks, live music and volunteer opportunities.

8500 Penzance Blvd., Fort Myers
239-768-0309 | southernfreshfarms.com

Sun Splash Family Water Park

This top-notch water park features a variety of thrilling slides and relaxing attractions, catering to adventure seekers

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SWFL ATTRACTIONS

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500 W. Lake Kennedy Drive, Cape Coral
239-574-0558 | sunsplashwaterpark.com

Wonder Gardens

The gardens are a lively, safe space for many rescued animals, including Florida alligators, flamingos, macaws, pythons, turtles and tortoises. They also feature a beautiful variety of plants.

27180 Old 41 Road, Bonita Springs
239-992-2591 | wondergardens.org

COLLIER COUNTY

Audubon Corkscrew Swamp Sanctuary

A 13,000-acre haven for wildlife and bird enthusiasts, this sanctuary is famous for its ancient bald cypress forest and the serene 2.25-mile boardwalk that winds through wetlands and pine flatwoods. Volunteers help guide tours and maintain habitats while visitors marvel at rare wood storks, painted buntings barred owls.

375 Sanctuary Road W., Naples
239-348-9151 | corkscrew.audubon.org

CMON Golisano Children's Museum of Naples

This hands-on museum celebrates curiosity and creativity by inviting children to explore through play and imagination. New rotating exhibits and community programs continue to make it a favorite destination for education and discovery.

15080 Livingston Road, Naples
239-514-0084 | cmon.org

Collier Museum at Government Center

Showcasing the region's unique heritage, this free museum traces Collier County's journey from early pioneers and Calusa culture to modern development. Visitors enjoy artifacts, photographs and outdoor exhibits, including a restored locomotive and historic cottages.

3331 Tamiami Trail E., Naples
239-252-8476 | colliermuseums.com

Great Wolf Lodge

Experience year-round excitement at the expansive indoor water park, featuring attractions for all ages, from thrilling slides



DAVID WISHTISCHIN / FLORIDA WEEKLY

to relaxing lazy rivers. Families can play together in the interactive water playground, enjoy the wave pool, or unwind in the hot tub after a day of adventure.

3900 City Gate Blvd. N., Naples
866.462.9653 | greatwolf.com/naples

Holocaust Museum & Cohen Education Center

The Holocaust Museum & Cohen Education Center presents a chronological narrative of Holocaust history from before World War II through the Nuremberg trials, featuring artifacts, photographs and personal stories. Visitors can take docent-led or self-guided tours and explore rotating exhibits and educational programs. The museum also offers student and private group tours and hosts lectures, film screenings and special events.

975 Imperial Golf Course Blvd., Suite 108, Naples
(239) 261-1777 | hmcec.org

Naples Botanical Garden

This tropical paradise spans 170 acres and features plants from around the world and native Florida habitats. Seasonal exhibitions, yoga in the garden and sustainability workshops highlight the garden's mission to connect people and nature.

4820 Bayshore Drive, Naples
239-643-7275 | naplesgarden.org

Naples Depot Museum

Set in a beautifully restored 1927 Seaboard Air Line Railway station, this museum brings the golden age of rail travel to life. Exhibits explore Southwest Florida's transportation history, including the early

days of travel, trade and tourism.

1051 5th Ave. S., Naples
239-252-8476 | colliermuseums.com

Naples Princess Cruises

The newly renovated Naples Princess offers daily public cruises, private charters, weddings and more.

550 Port O Call Way, Naples
239.649.2275 | naplesprincesscruises.com

Naples Train Museum

Located inside the historic depot, the museum features operating model railroads and railroad memorabilia. Children and train enthusiasts alike enjoy the detailed displays and interactive exhibits capturing the magic of railroading.

1051 5th Ave. S., Naples
239-262-1776 | naplestrainmuseum.org

Naples Zoo at Caribbean Gardens

Naples Zoo at Caribbean Gardens is a nationally accredited zoo that offers wildlife encounters in a lush tropical garden planted in 1919. Visitors can meet lions, monkeys, giraffes and learn about global conservation efforts through interactive talks and feeding experiences.

1590 Goodlette-Frank Road, Naples
239-315-7626 | napleszoo.org

Paradise Coast Sports Complex

Paradise Coast Sports Complex features professional-level synthetic turf fields, on-site recreation and entertainment options with high-quality food and beverage.

3940 City Gate Blvd. N., Naples
239-252-4386 | playparadisecoast.com

SWFL ATTRACTIONS

Port-O-Call Marina

Port-O-Call Marina is a Naples hub for water-sport activities and much more, including charter fishing, public and private cruises and boat rentals.

550 Port-O-Call Way, Naples
239.774.0479 | portofnaplesmarina.com

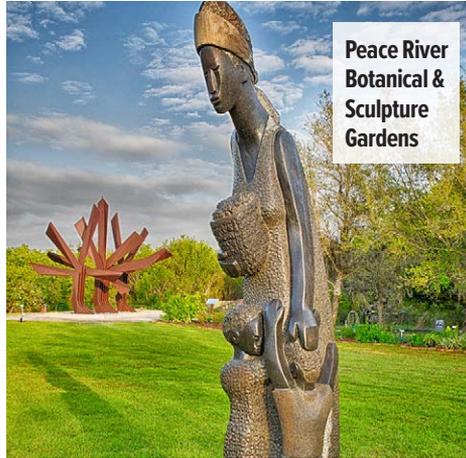
REVS Institute

Among the world's top automotive museums, REVS showcases a remarkable collection of historically significant cars, of which many are still operational. The institute also serves as a research center dedicated to the study and preservation of automotive history.

2500 Horseshoe Drive S., Naples
239-687-7387 | revsinstitute.org

Rookery Bay Environmental Learning Center

Discover engaging, hands-on activities suitable for all ages at the Nature Center, which features interactive exhibits, an art gallery, scenic trails and picnic spots. Rookery



Peace River Botanical & Sculpture Gardens

COURTESY PHOTO

Bay invites guests to explore its vast 110,000 acres along the Southwest Florida coastline.

300 Tower Road, Naples
239-530-5972 | rookerybay.org

Shy Wolf Sanctuary Education & Experience Center

This nonprofit, home to rescued wolves, wolfdogs other exotic animals, offers guid-

ed tours and volunteer opportunities that teach compassion through connection. Every visit helps fund care and awareness for misunderstood species and educational programs reach schools across Southwest Florida.

1161 27th St. S.W., Naples
239-775-5696 | shywolfsanctuary.org

CHARLOTTE COUNTY

Babcock Ranch Eco-Tours

Guided swamp buggy tours take guests through four unique ecosystems to spot alligators, birds and other wildlife. Naturalists share stories of Florida's ranching and conservation heritage, offering a glimpse of the state's untamed side.

8502 State Road 31, Punta Gorda
800-500-5583 | babcockranchecotours.com

Blanchard House Museum

Dedicated to preserving African American history in Southwest Florida, this museum offers exhibits, historical education

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SWFL ATTRACTIONS

and cultural events. Although temporarily closed for repairs after Hurricane Ian, it remains a vital educational resource.

406 Martin Luther King Jr. Blvd., Punta Gorda
941-575-7518 | blanchardhousemuseum.org

Charlotte Harbor Environmental Center

Situated on 46,000 acres of preserved land, this center features hiking trails, kayak tours and hands-on ecology programs. It's a favorite among birdwatchers and school field trip groups, promoting conservation through outdoor learning.

10941 Burnt Store Road, Punta Gorda
941-575-5435 | checfloida.org

Iguanaland

Founded by conservationist Ty Park, Iguanaland houses one of the largest reptile collections in the world. Visitors can meet rare iguanas and other reptiles while learning about global conservation and responsible pet ownership.

33900 Bermont Road, Punta Gorda
941-844-5350 | iguanaland.com

The James and Barbara Moore Observatory

Located at Florida SouthWestern State College, this observatory invites guests to view planets, galaxies and nebulae through high-powered telescopes. Star parties and public viewing nights make astronomy accessible and inspiring.

26300 Airport Road, Punta Gorda
941-637-3518 | fsw.edu/charlotte/observatory

The Military Heritage Museum

Operated by veterans, the museum honors military service through immersive exhibits, flight simulators and a virtual reality room. Visitors can explore three floors of history and participate in lectures and community events.

900 W. Marion Ave., Punta Gorda
941-575-9002 | militaryheritagemuseum.org

Octagon Wildlife Sanctuary

This nonprofit sanctuary rescues and rehabilitates exotic animals, including tigers, lions, bears and primates. Open to visitors

on weekends, it also offers volunteer programs for animal care and education.

41660 Horseshoe Road, Punta Gorda
239-543-1130 | octagonwildlife.org

Peace River Botanical & Sculpture Gardens

The sanctuary spans 30 acres and features five distinct ecosystems and vibrant gardens interconnected by over 15,000 square feet of boardwalks showcasing impressive sculptures.

5827 Riverside Drive, Punta Gorda
941-621-8299 | peacrivergardens.org

Redneck Mud Park

The largest off-road mud camping destination in Florida includes an oval race-track, mudding trails, camping facilities, RV parking and numerous mud holes for visitors to explore. It is open to the public during the first three weekends of each month, from November to April.

4570 Bermont Road, Punta Gorda
239-600-4783 | redneckmudpark.com

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STEP OUTSIDE

HIKING TRAILS ACROSS SOUTHWEST FLORIDA OFFER EASY ESCAPES INTO NATURE

BY GLENN MILLER

“The best way to experience nature is on foot.” – John Muir

One foot in front of another. One step at a time. That’s the ticket to good health and enjoying the serenity of nature. Southwest Florida offers bustling cities and charming towns, beaches and golf courses and vibrant theater and art. And one of the best ways to explore this sub-tropical paradise is to venture on foot into nature.

“Walking is the most perfect form of motion for a person who wants to discover the true life.” – Henry David Thoreau

There are no mountains in Florida. In fact, the highest elevation in Florida is likely barely high enough to qualify as a hill. The state’s highest elevation is Britton Hill, located in the Panhandle near the Alabama state line, which rises a mere 345 feet above sea level — making it the lowest high point of any state.

But high points of a different, lower-elevation kind can be found far from the Panhandle or any mountains.

“Look deep into nature, and you will understand everything better.” – Albert Einstein

This sampling of Southwest Florida’s natural hiking marvels will steer visitors to the roads less traveled — seemingly miles away from the theme parks, shopping centers and golf courses, yet close enough for a short drive.

Black Island Trail at Lovers Key State Park

What could be better than a walk on the beach at Lovers Key? Try Black Island Trail for a completely different experience and habitat. Lovers Key State Park is a series of small barrier islands on the Lee County coast. Park visitors may see bald eagles or alligators. Hikes along Black Island Trail provide views of estuaries teeming with wildlife. The main loop is five miles, but



MIKE FERNANDEZ / COURTESY PHOTO

shortcuts can trim it to 1.2, 1.8, or 2.2 miles.

Corkscrew Swamp Sanctuary

This Southwest Florida treasure boasts the world’s largest collection of virgin bald cypress trees. Some of the trees are 600 years old. The swamp is a sanctuary for Florida wildlife and a gateway site for the Great Florida Birding Trail. The sanctuary features a 1.9-mile boardwalk.

Highlands Hammock State Park

Highlands Hammock State Park opened in 1931 when Herbert Hoover was president and Florida’s population was 1,680,000, or so, according to the 1930 U.S. Census. The state’s population is now around 24 million. The 9,000-acre park is in Highlands County, about four miles west of Sebring.

Myakka River State Park

Thousands of motorists a day roar up and down I-75 through Sarasota County and likely have no clue that nine miles to the east is this gem of the Florida State Parks system. The park includes hiking trails and a boardwalk, far from the mad roar of I-75.

Jonathan Dickinson State Park

Florida’s largest state park is in Martin County, a short drive across the peninsula from Fort Myers, Naples and Punta Gorda. It’s just north of the Palm Beach County line and about nine miles north of Jupiter. The park is named after a Quaker merchant from Jamaica who was shipwrecked

on the coast in 1696. During World War II, the U.S. Army built Camp Murphy in the park to serve as a top-secret radar school. The land became a state park in 1950.

Rotary Park Environmental Center

Burrowing owls, butterflies and wading birds are three good reasons to hike the often rugged, sometimes soggy trails at Cape Coral’s Rotary Park. Part of the Great Florida Birding & Wildlife Trail, it earns its reputation as a spectacular place to see animals in their natural habitat.

Besides the iconic, pint-sized owl, look for gopher tortoises, alligators and wetland creatures. For wheelchair access and easier, dry hiking, the Glover Bight Trail has a boardwalk surface. Both trails lead to observation towers for the best wildlife-viewing vantage. The Glover Bight Trail is three-tenths of a mile and is wheelchair accessible, although running, biking and dogs are not permitted.

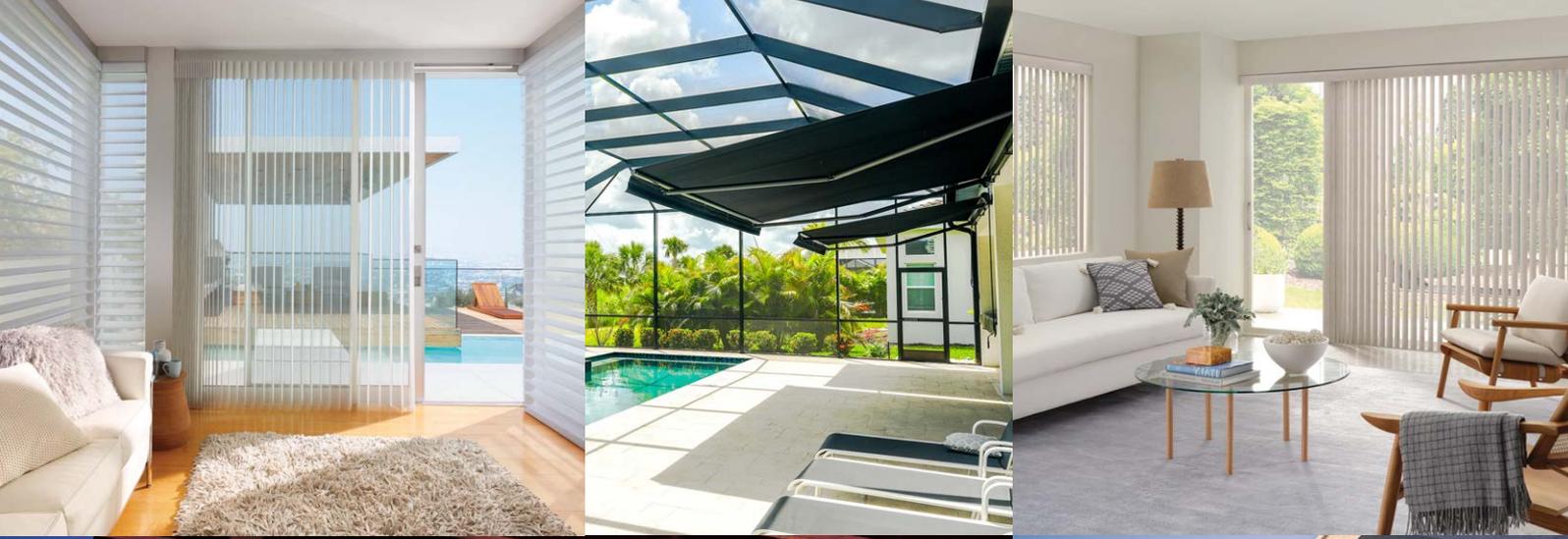
Corkscrew Regional Ecosystem Watershed (CREW)

If you’re looking to hike for miles and immerse yourself in nature, CREW, in south Lee County, offers trails for hikers and equestrians. In the Flint Pen Strand, a handful of different trails travel a total of more than 15 miles into wetland and pinewoods habitats, where birds of many feathers flock together.

Mindfulness Trail at Ding Darling

Specifically designed for holistic wellness, the Mindfulness Trail at Bailey Tract is part of the J.N. “Ding” Darling National Wildlife Refuge on Sanibel Island. The short trail winds around the pond and uplands of Bailey Tract with five stations where hikers can scan QR codes to listen to podcasts that guide their mindfulness practices. Wellness Week features guided walks along the trail, plus a calendar of ranger-led bike tours, sunrise yoga on the beach and expert speakers and presenters.

As Thoreau said, “An early morning walk is a blessing for the whole day.” ■



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- **At Home** (Monthly, First Thursday): A complete guide to home living in Charlotte County.
- **Healthy Body** (Monthly, Third Thursday): Your go-to resource for health and wellness in Charlotte County.
- **Health Trends** (January): An in-depth guide to the best doctors and medical services in Southwest Florida.
- **Destination SWFL** (March): The ultimate guide to the region’s communities, attractions, shopping and insider tips for visitors and new residents.
- **Arts Preview** (November & February): A comprehensive look at upcoming theater, music, festivals and cultural events in the area.
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BY GLENN MILLER

Florida Weekly Correspondent

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612-659-3400 | twinsbaseball.com

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10501 FGCU Blvd. S., Fort Myers
239-590-7145 | fgc.edu

Florida SouthWestern State College (FSW)

FSW is the region's only junior college athletics program with national titles and rankings in sports such as volleyball, softball and baseball.

8099 College Parkway, Fort Myers
239-489-9300 | fswbucs.com

Ave Maria University

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4810 Kelleher St., Ave Maria
239-280-2500 | avemariagyrenes.com

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BEACHES & PARKS

Barefoot Beach Preserve

Barefoot Beach attracts shell collectors, birds and nesting sea turtles. Visitors can paddle through estuaries lined by mangroves or relax on the beach.

505 Barefoot Beach Blvd., Naples
239-252-4000

complimentary tram service, educational nature walks, life jackets, parking booth, onsite dining and restroom facilities.

465 Seagate Drive, Naples
239-252-4000

Big Cypress National Preserve

Home to panthers, herons, cypress glens, sawgrass plains and the elusive ghost orchid, Big Cypress features twelve campgrounds and hiking opportunities along the preserve and offers ranger-led excursions including swamp walks, kayaking, hiking and a Night-Sky program. In 2016, Big Cypress National Preserve was designated as the first International Dark Sky Park.

33100 Tamiami Trail E., Ochopee
239-695-2000

Collier-Seminole State Park

The park preserves 7,271 acres of mangroves, cypress swamps and rare royal palm hammocks. Visitors can enjoy activities including camping, canoeing, hiking and educational programs.

20200 Tamiami Trail E., Naples
239-394-3397



Big Cypress Bend Boardwalk

EVERGLADES CONVENTION & VISITORS BUREAU / COURTESY PHOTO

wheelchairs, shuttle service and an accessible boat launch area into Turkey Bay.

11135 Gulfshore Drive, Naples
239-597-6196

Clam Pass Park

Clam Pass Park features a wide, unspoiled beach and many amenities, including wheelchairs, bike racks, showers, a

Delnor-Wiggins Pass State Park

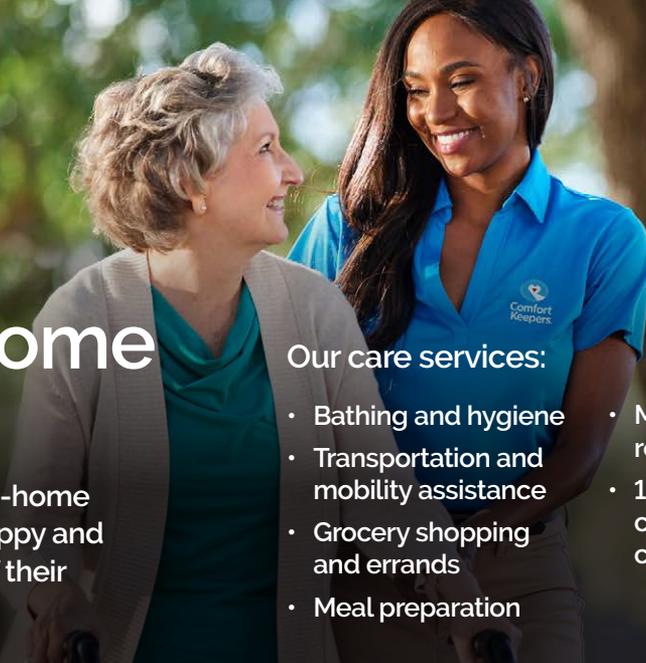
The park is a favorite spot for swimmers, shell collectors, fishermen and bird watchers. Amenities include beach

Everglades National Park (Gulf Coast Visitor Center)

Everglades National Park protects



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BEACHES & PARKS

more than 1.5 million acres of Florida's subtropical ecosystem that is unique to any other in the world. Endangered species, such as the Florida panther, American crocodile and manatee, make the park their home. Boat tours of Ten Thousand Islands depart from Everglades City.

815 Oyster Bar Lane, Everglades City
239-695-3311

Florida Panther National Wildlife Refuge

The refuge protects nearly 27,000 acres of the endangered Florida panther habitat and features two scenic hiking trails that offer a glimpse into a wilderness of cypress domes, pine flatwoods and hardwood hammocks.

12085 State Road 29 S., Immokalee
239-657-8001

Rookery Bay National Estuarine Research Reserve

Rookery Bay National Estuarine Research Reserve is a living laboratory spanning 110,000 acres, sheltering dolphins,

manatees, sea turtles and hundreds of species of birds. Visitors can kayak through calm backwaters and explore interactive exhibits at the Environmental Learning Center or guided eco-tours.

300 Tower Road, Naples
239-530-5972

Fred W. Coyle Freedom Park

Freedom Park is a features boardwalks that wind through wetlands full of wildlife and native landscaping. The Freedom Memorial, located in the center of the park, honors those who have served and sacrificed for the country.

1515 Golden Gate Parkway, Naples
239-252-4062

Big Corkscrew Island Regional Park

The park offers expansive sports fields, walking trails, an aquatic center with slides and a lazy river and a busy community center.

810 39th Ave. N.E., Naples
239-252-4900

North Collier Regional Park

The park offers a wide range of recreational activities for all ages, including a fossil dig area, playgrounds, Sun-N-Fun Lagoon water park, fitness trails, athletic fields and a community and fitness center. The Golisano Children's Museum of Naples is located inside the park, offering educational opportunities for families with young children.

15000 Livingston Road, Naples
239-252-4000

Sugden Regional Park

Sugden Regional Park is the only freshwater beachfront park in the county. Visitors come to kayak, sail, paddleboard, or walk around the 60-acre Lake Avalon, located at the center of the park. Amenities include picnic pavilions, a playground and an amphitheater that regularly hosts concerts and community events.

4284 Avalon Drive, Naples
239-252-4052



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BEACHES & PARKS

Lowdermilk Park

Lowdermilk Park features soft sand, shaded picnic areas, sand volleyball courts and a beachfront pavilion. Visitors arrive early to claim a tiki hut and watch dolphins from the shore.

301 Gulf Shore Blvd. N., Naples
239-213-3029

Tigertail Beach Park

Tigertail Beach on Marco Island begins as a calm lagoon and opens to a wide, white-sand beach along the Gulf that is accessible by crossing a shallow tidal inlet. Visitors can catch glimpses of sand dollars, fiddler crabs and birds before revealing a wide expanse of beach that boasts some of the best shelling and birdwatching in Southwest Florida.

480 Hernando Drive, Marco Island
239-252-4000

Vanderbilt Beach

Located near upscale hotels, shopping and dining, “Vandy” entices visitors with its white, sandy beaches and amenities,

including beach wheelchairs, bike racks and a covered parking garage. During the busy tourist season, it’s advisable to arrive before 10 a.m. to grab a parking spot.

100 Vanderbilt Beach Road, Naples
239-252-4000

South Marco Beach

Wide, sugary white sand meets the Gulf waters and luxury resorts frame the scene. Seashells hide in the dunes and pelicans skim the surface of the Gulf. Nearby parking, restrooms and easy access from Collier Boulevard make South Marco Beach a convenient stop for visitors.

930 S. Collier Blvd., Marco Island
239-252-4000

LEE COUNTY

Bunche Beach Preserve

This quiet preserve unfolds across tidal flats, salt marsh and mangrove shoreline. It’s a favorite among birders, photographers and paddlers who glide

across calm shallows at sunrise, when the tide retreats, revealing acres of exposed sand that showcase a living gallery of wading birds and marine life.

18201 John Morris Road, Fort Myers
239-533-7275

Estero Bay Preserve State Park

Spanning over 10,000 acres of estuary and upland, this preserve protects the delicate ecosystems surrounding Estero Bay. Visitors explore rustic trails, kayak along winding creeks and observe herons and egrets in an untouched mangrove forest.

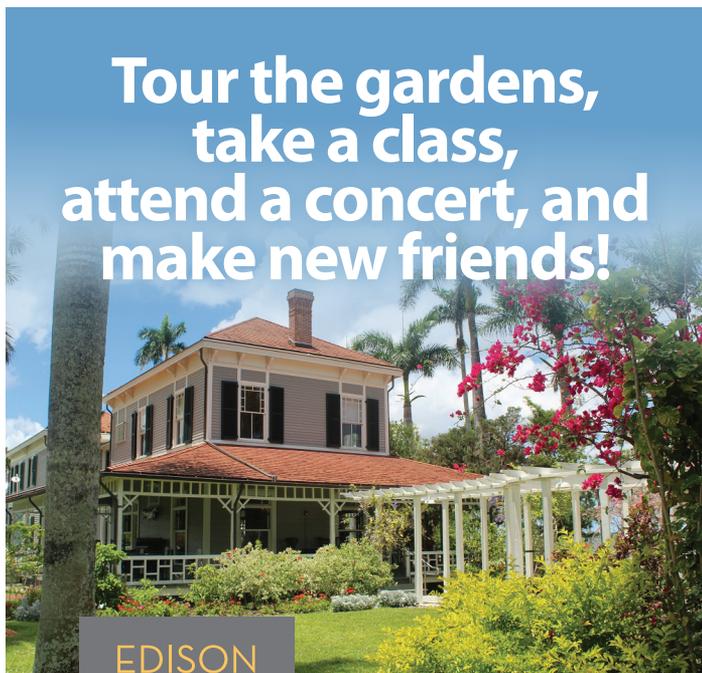
4940 Broadway W., Estero
239-992-0311

Fort Myers Beach (Central/North)

Stretching along the island’s lively northern shoreline, this area blends natural beauty with classic beach-town charm. Families gather at Lynn Hall for picnics and fishing, while Bowditch Point’s trails reveal quiet dunes and panoramic Gulf views.

950 Estero Blvd., Fort Myers Beach
239-533-7275

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BEACHES & PARKS

John Yarbrough Linear Park

This 6-mile paved trail is ideal for walking, jogging or casual bike rides in a semi-urban natural corridor.

Starts at Six Mile Cypress Parkway, Fort Myers
239-533-7275

Koreshan State Park

Once home to a utopian pioneer community, Koreshan offers both history and nature as visitors explore restored 19th-century structures and rent kayaks or paddleboards.

3800 Corkscrew Road, Estero
239-992-0311

Lakes Regional Park

The park blends recreation and nature across a network of trails and freshwater lakes. Rent a pedal boat, stroll the Fragrance Garden or visit the miniature train museum that delights visitors of all ages.

7330 Gladiolus Drive, Fort Myers
239-533-7575



Koreshan State Park
Planetary Court House

DAVID WISHTISCHIN / FLORIDA WEEKLY

Lovers Key State Park

Two miles of white sand beach meet mangrove estuaries teeming with dolphins, manatees and wading birds. Visitors can hike, paddle or take the tram to one of Florida's most romantic stretches of shoreline.

8700 Estero Blvd., Bonita Springs
239-463-4588

Manatee Park

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BEACHES & PARKS

the gentle mammals' habits and conservation needs. The park's picnic spots and kayak launch make it a serene riverside retreat.

10901 State Road 80, Fort Myers
239-690-5030

Sanibel Lighthouse Beach Park

This historic park allows visitors to stroll beneath the iron lighthouse, cast lines from the pier, or wade through calm surf dotted with shells.

110 Periwinkle Way, Sanibel
239-472-3700

Six Mile Cypress Slough Preserve

A 1.2-mile boardwalk weaves through cypress swamp, upland hammock and marsh. The preserve features interpretive displays, wildlife viewing areas (alligators, birds, turtles) and a nature center deepen the experience.

7751 Penzance Blvd., Fort Myers
239-533-7550



Alligator in Six Mile Cypress

DAVID WISHTISCHIN / FLORIDA WEEKLY

Charlotte Harbor Environmental Center (CHEC / Cedar Point Environmental Park)

CHEC encompasses six miles of marked trails through pine flatwoods, coastal hammocks, wetlands and marshes with picnic areas, interpretive displays and birding opportunities, educational programming, guided hikes and seasonal events.

10941 Burnt Store Road, Punta Gorda
941-575-5435

CHARLOTTE COUNTY

Cape Haze Pioneer Trail

This multi-use trail connects Port Charlotte south to Placida, passing through wooded sections and open terrain. Popular with cyclists, runners and walkers, it also links to the Boca Grande Bike Path.

Pinedale Drive near Boca Grande Causeway,
Port Charlotte
941-625-7529

Don Pedro Island State Park

Reachable only by water, this barrier island feels worlds away from the mainland. Visitors find unspoiled beach, winding nature trails and sweeping Gulf views framed by sea oats and mangroves.

8450 Placida Road (ferry access), Cape Haze
941-964-0375

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BEACHES & PARKS

Englewood Beach

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2100 N. Beach Road, Englewood
941-681-3742

Four Mile Cove Ecological Preserve

Bordered by canals and mangrove fringe, Four Mile Cove offers boardwalks, kayak launches, hammock trails and a quiet mangrove-lined loop ideal for birding and nature strolls.

2500 S.E. 24th St., Cape Coral
239-574-0806

Gasparilla Island State Park

This park offers brilliant turquoise water, sweeping sands and the restored 1890 lighthouse museum. Anglers cast from the pier while beachcombers hunt for shells along the shoreline.

880 Belcher Road, Boca Grande
941-964-0375

Port Charlotte Beach Park

The park combines waterfront leisure with panoramic sunset views. Locals gather for weekend barbecues or to cast lines from the long pier.

4500 Harbor Blvd.,
Port Charlotte
941-627-1628

Stump Pass Beach State Park

This park mixes beach access, dunes and a 1.3-mile nature trail through coastal scrub and mangrove edge. Ranger-led turtle walks and interpretive



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