



NEWS RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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What's new from The Beaches of Fort Myers & Sanibel

LEE COUNTY, Fla. (U.S.A.) – April on The Beaches of Fort Myers & Sanibel means that spring has arrived and there is lots of news as visitors begin planning long-awaited vacations.

Sanibel Island is featured on the **April cover of Southern Living** and earned recognition as one of The South's Best Beach Towns from the magazine's editors.

Set your DVR for the **April 24 episode of "Samantha Brown's Places to Love"** and follow along as the travel show host visits Fort Myers, Sanibel, Matlacha, goes island hopping to Cayo Costa and so much more.

There is also a **renovation for the historic Gasparilla Inn** on Boca Grande. Visitors will enjoy the **Sun Saver Passport**, packed full of savings for places to dine, play, shop and sip.

There are exciting **new dining experiences** throughout the destination.

In addition to offering plenty of space for social distancing, great year-round weather, shell-drenched beaches, wildlife and the sparkling Gulf of Mexico, the destination offers lots of new experiences for return guests and first-time visitors. For the latest vacation information, visit FortMyers-Sanibel.com

The Beaches of Fort Myers & Sanibel in the news

Southern Living picks Sanibel Island as one of The South's Best Beach Towns

The editors of Southern Living magazine featured Sanibel in its fifth annual The South's Best issue, selecting the island as one of its Beach Towns of 2021. And Sanibel is featured on the cover of Southern Living's April edition. The island "kept the heart of the South beating during some of the toughest times of 2020 and 2021," says the magazine.

The recent accolade was noted within the magazine's double issue, which also includes Cabbage Key as one of the The South's Best Places to Stay in 2021. The magazine is on newsstands and is currently available at www.southernliving.com

Sanibel & Captiva Islands Fort Myers Beach Fort Myers Bonita Springs Estero Cape Coral Pine Island Boca Grande & Outer Islands North Fort Myers Lehigh Acres

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The article also describes Sanibel as “a brand of utopia built on the understanding that what Sanibel has to offer – in terms of community, town pride, and natural assets – is special.”

The cover features fashion model, Hoda El-koussa and Allie, a Fort Myers rescue dog adopted from Dog House Rescue Academy. The photo was taken at Sundial Beach Resort & Spa.

Many other local businesses are featured in the article, including Tween Waters Island Resort & Spa, J.N. “Ding” Darling National Wildlife Refuge, Bailey-Matthews National Shell Museum, Bailey’s General Store, Adventures in Paradise, Doc Ford’s Rum Bar & Grille, 400 Rabbits, Sweet Melissa’s Café, Joey’s Custard, Periwinkle Place, Billy’s Bike Shop, Sanibel Sea School, Island Style Galleries, Gene’s Books and Trader Rick’s.

Fort Myers, Sanibel and Matlacha on “Samantha Brown’s Places to Love” April 24

Samantha Brown’s “Places to Love” returns for season 4 this month on PBS. Fort Myers, Sanibel and Matlacha are featured on April 24 on your local PBS station. Visit <https://samantha-brown.com/episodes/season-4/>

Watch a virtual premiere screening of the show at 4:30 p.m. on April 23. For details and to register, visit

<https://wgcu.org/events-calendar/premiere-screening-places-to-love>

Town & Country magazine features Boca Grande’s newly renovated Gasparilla Inn

The classic, “old Florida” resort has undergone a refresh that is detailed in Town & Country magazine. The article begins with “Because sipping on Boca Punch and playing a game of backgammon sounds good right about now, doesn't it?”

It goes on to say “Since its 1913 remodel, the Gasparilla Inn & Club has been a power hub in the sleepy village of Boca Grande, located on a barrier island between Naples and Sarasota. Titans of industry like J.P. Morgan and Henry Ford vacationed there, as did Hollywood elite like Katharine Hepburn. But after a century of vacationers, the shabby-chic transomed rooms (sans air conditioning), peanut butter and bacon canapes at cocktail hour, and a strict, clubby dress code, were in need of a refresh.”

Check out the result and beautiful renovation photos at

www.townandcountrymag.com/leisure/travel-guide/a35589148/boca-raton-gasparilla-inn-photos

Have fun and save with Fort Myers Sun Saver Passport

Sunshine is just one of many reasons to visit Southwest Florida. Use your mobile phone to access exclusive deals and savings on experiences and find yourself exploring everything under the sun here. The Lee County Visitor & Convention Bureau (VCB) has launched a free mobile savings passport that is available to Lee County locals and visitors. Users have access to exclusive deals on attractions, restaurants and experiences throughout the destination.

To participate:

- Sign up at

- The passport will be delivered to your mobile phone via text
- Redeem it on your mobile phone at participating businesses

Visit the website for a complete list of attractions, restaurants and experiences.

Dining news

The Oxbow Bar & Grill has opened at the **Luminary Hotel & Co.** Located in what was once known as the City Pier Building in the Downtown Fort Myers River District, it offers a mix of casual dockside dining and shopping. Open daily for lunch and dinner it serves brunch on weekends.

With panoramic riverfront views on the Caloosahatchee River, Oxbow features an upbeat nautical vibe that will appeal to the area's boaters. The restaurant's warm interior features the stylish use of modern brass lamping, Edison-style light bulbs, stained oak with copper metal finishes, and antique oars adorning the ceilings. Creamy white walls, subway tiles and floors of large format porcelain tile keep the feel fresh and modern.

Inspired by its unique location, the 150-seat restaurant offers both indoor and outdoor seating. Menu selections include fresh oysters and other signature favorites, including fresh seafood, craft sandwiches, burgers, and steaks. The second floor will offer 2,400 square feet of event space featuring a patio with private access and a catering kitchen for private celebrations or meetings for up to approximately 150 guests.

Oxbow also offers a retail store for sportswear, gear, accessories and destination souvenirs. A watersports outfitter with kayak and paddleboard rentals plans to open in time for summer. www.oxbowfortmyers.com

Cru Wine Club has opened in **Bonita Springs**. The intimate, 650-square-foot wine tasting room, which features seating inside and outside, may be booked on a for a maximum of 12 guests to learn about California wines and discover new varieties to buy for enjoyment at home. Light bites and wine tastings will be featured during the day and chef-prepared small plates with host-led wine pairings will be featured during happy hour. The room will also be available for small private events www.cruwineclub.com

400 Rabbits on Sanibel Island. The new (and only) Mexican restaurant on Sanibel, 400 Rabbits gets its name from the 400 drunken rabbit gods, an Aztec myth involving the infinite ways people could get tipsy. Restaurant co-owners Debra and Jeramie Campana brought in Chef Don Yamauchi, a James Beard nominee, named one of the top five rising star chefs in 1993. He is also a 400 Rabbits co-owner. The restaurant is known for hand-crafted margaritas, dedicated guacamole station, burritos and street tacos. www.400rabbitssanibel.com

Coming soon to downtown Bonita Springs...

Chartreuse Craft and Cocktail Lounge is under construction in the Bonita Springs Historic District. Scheduled to open this spring, the lounge offers classic and craft cocktails and a variety of desserts with a 1930s, old Florida, swanky vibe. www.chartreuselounge.com

Ceremony Brewing is completing final renovations in preparation for a spring opening. The brewery will make and sell its own beers as well as supplies and equipment for home brewers. Its tap room plans to also serve drinks from other area brewers, offering patrons a variety. Local restaurants will supply food. www.facebook.com/CeremonyBrewing

The Bohemian plans a summer opening as the owners of the popular Downtown Coffee and Wine Company are branching into the restaurant scene with a new, upscale and intimate restaurant with a menu filled with eclectic cuisine. Patrons will be able to watch chefs at work in the restaurant's unique layout that includes seating for 44 inside and 33 on an outdoor deck. www.thebohemianbonita.com

Be inspired: Road Trips for Families

Travel writer Cheryl Rodewig says that a road trip from Fort Myers to Marco Island is the “best Southwest Florida trip itinerary.” In her article for Road Trips for Families, a travel website for families planning their next trip, her mentions include visits to Edison and Ford Winter Estates, IMAG History & Science Center, Calusa Nature Center & Planetarium, Bailey-Matthews National Shell Museum, the River District, Ella Mae's Diner, Luminary Hotel & Co., Everglades Wonder Gardens and more. Check out the article and you may be inspired to follow in her footsteps for a fun road trip close to home. www.roadtripsforfamilies.com/fort-myers-to-marco-island-best-southwest-florida-road-trip-itinerary

Plan ahead and save the dates

7th annual Island Hopper Songwriter Fest

The countdown has started! Returning Sept. 17-26, 2021, the award-winning event will include new artists and events along with favorites from previous shows. The festival takes place over 10 days and offers a range of star-studded performances by some of country music's greatest singer-songwriters from Nashville and beyond. It kicks off on Captiva Island Sept. 17-19; moves to downtown Fort Myers Sept. 20-23; and closes at Fort Myers Beach Sept. 24-26.

Visitors will enjoy more than 80 artists, 100 shows, most of which are free and in small, intimate venues. The event is presented by iHeart Media, Cat Country 107.1, BMI, and The Beaches of Fort Myers & Sanibel. Check out the latest details and begin making plans at island-hopper.fortmyers-sanibel.com

Meanwhile, tune into our live virtual concert series, **Songs from the Sofa** and **Songs from the Sand**. At 8 p.m. on the third Thursday of each month, enjoy a BMI songwriter performing live from the comfort of their sofa (or from one of our beautiful beaches). www.instagram.com/islandhopperfest

Accommodations news

Luminary Hotel & Co. opens in downtown Fort Myers

Reaching 12 stories above downtown Fort Myers, the new, waterfront Luminary Hotel & Co. is the area's first hotel in the prestigious Autograph Collection® of Marriott International. The 243-room boutique hotel is home to the signature Silver King Ocean Brasserie and Lobby Bar; Beacon Social Drinkery rooftop lounge; Ella Mae's Diner; Dean Street Coffee Roaster & Retail; The Workshop culinary theater; an indoor and outdoor fitness facility; and a spacious pool area

on the fourth floor featuring an event deck overlooking the Caloosahatchee River. Luminary offers 10,000 square feet of adaptable indoor and outdoor function space ideal for a variety of events and meetings and is adjacent to the neighboring Caloosa Sound Convention Center. The hotel also offers convenient access to the riverfront Oxbow Bar & Grill, which opened March 22. Oxbow Retail & Rentals, and Caloosa Sound Amphitheater located on the Caloosahatchee and scheduled to open in 2021. LuminaryHotel.com

Hotel Indigo in downtown Fort Myers

Plans are underway for a renovation and a brand name change at the 67-room, eight-story hotel. Once renovation is completed, the hotel will have 72 rooms and it will become part of the Tapestry Collection by Hilton, an upscale brand. www.ihg.com/hotelindigo

Westin Cape Coral Resort at Marina Village

The \$15 million room renovation at Westin Cape Coral Resort at Marina Village is planned for completion this spring. It includes increased room inventory and a new design taking inspiration from the concept of biophilia, a belief that people have an innate need to connect with nature. Each room includes natural materials locally sourced from Florida with soothing fluid patterns related to water and vibrant accents evoking a peaceful ambiance, complementing waterfront views from each guest room. marriott.com/hotels/travel/rswwi-the-westin-cape-coral-resort-at-marina-village

More new accommodations

The opening of the 243-room Luminary Hotel & Co. in the River District led the way for a resurgence in area lodging. Other new hotels include a 100-room SpringHill Suites Fort Myers Estero, a 118-suite Home2 Suites by Hilton Fort Myers, an 80-room Holiday Inn Express & Suites Fort Myers Beach-Sanibel Gateway and the 101-room Holiday Inn Express & Suites Fort Myers Airport.

Give our new podcast – Shellcast – a listen

Think of Shellcast as a beach break for your ears. The Beaches of Fort Myers & Sanibel's new podcast gives listeners a chance to soak up some virtual sun and learn more about our slice of paradise. Listeners from around in the world tune in to experience the sounds of the destination's beaches, nature and interviews with local experts. The Shellcast catalog includes:

- **Episode 1:** Sanibel beach time
- **Episode 2:** On the water with Capt. Brian Holaway
- **Episode 3:** Cape Coral's Burrowing Owl Festival
- **Episode 4:** What would Thomas Edison think about podcasts?
- **Episode 5:** Pretty in pink birdwatching with Ranger Toni
- **Episode 6:** Talking scat on the Indigo Trail
- **Episode 7:** All about the WoW & when nature calls
- **Episode 8:** Everglades Wonder Gardens, an original Florida roadside attraction
- **Episode 9:** When I get older, I want to be a manatee
- Plus four bonus episodes

Shellcast is available on fortmyers-sanibel.com, Apple Podcasts, Spotify, iHeartRadio, Google Podcasts and wherever fine podcasts are downloaded. Follow Shellcast on Instagram [@shellcastthepodcast](https://www.instagram.com/shellcastthepodcast).

Attractions

Free guided refuge tours at J.N. “Ding” Darling National Wildlife Refuge

Free tours through the refuge are available through April 11, 2021. The refuge posts its offerings weekly at www.dingdarling.eventbrite.com where participants must pre-register.

Tours include a birding the refuge car caravan tour, Bailey Tract tour, Indigo Trail walk, bike tour, beach walk, birds of the refuge walk, endangered species car caravan tour, mindfulness walk and art journal walk. Participants need to wear face masks and bring their own binoculars and scopes.

Explore Lakes Regional Park in Fort Myers

One of Lee County’s most visited parks for both locals and visitors, Lakes Regional Park is showcased in a new public service announcement that includes aerial footage of the park’s 300 acres of lakes, preserve areas, gardens and recreational features.

Amenities for families to enjoy include the new Children’s Garden, playgrounds, water features, nature trails, botanic gardens and lakeside picnic areas. Wheel Fun offers all types of bike rentals to travel the park. Kayak and paddle boat rentals are available to explore the lakes and get a close-up view of the abundant bird population. The Train Museum and its popular miniature train ride takes all ages on a 15-minute ride. For outside exercise, a series of fitness stations complement the 3.5 miles of walking/running trails throughout the park. Watch “Explore Lakes Park” on YouTube at <http://bit.ly/LPEF30psa>. More information is available at LakesPark.org

Lee County Historic Places

Known for our year-round sunshine and outdoor activities, it’s easy to overlook the rich history of Lee County. To date, there are 57 places that have been named to the National Register of Historic Places. In addition to the well-known Edison and Ford Winter Estates, a few others that are included: Boca Grande Lighthouse, Captiva School and Chapel-by-the-Sea Historic District, Dean Park Historic Residential District in Fort Myers, Paul Lawrence Dunbar School (also known as Dunbar Community School) in Fort Myers, Sanibel Lighthouse and Keepers Cottage, the Mound House on Fort Myers Beach, Pineland Archeological District in Pineland, Useppa Island Site, Koreshan Unity Settlement Historic Site in Estero. Check them all out at [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/National_Register_of_Historic_Places_listings_in_Lee_County, Florida](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/National_Register_of_Historic_Places_listings_in_Lee_County,_Florida)

Working waterfront tours, Fort Myers Beach

The Ostego Bay Foundation offers three-hour guided, working waterfront tours each Wednesday with a look at the shrimp industry of San Carlos Island, Florida’s oldest and largest pink shrimp fishing fleet. The Ostego Bay Foundation has earned the 2020 Trip Advisor’s Travelers’ Choice Award, representing the top 10% of attractions worldwide. Learn about Florida’s “Pink Gold” the oldest and largest pink shrimp fishing fleet in Florida. The tour includes a 90-minute guided visit at the foundation’s Marine Science Center Museum which contains numerous hands-on exhibits, touch tank, beach exhibit and estuarine aquariums. ostegobay.org/waterfront-tours

Bailey-Matthews National Shell Museum opens ‘Beyond Shells’ on Sanibel Island

Bailey-Matthews National Shell Museum’s new \$6 million expansion, “Beyond Shells: The Mysterious World of Mollusks,” transforms the visitor’s experience. It connects them to the little-known live animals that contribute to the ocean’s stunning shells and educates visitors about the important role these animals play in our ecosystem.

The bright new space gives visitors the chance to rediscover the museum with 11 aquariums that showcase cold and warm water species, like octopuses, squid and nautilus. Visitors duck into a pop-up bubble for a 360-degree look at mollusks and fish, and immerse their hands in two engaging 15-foot touch-pool experiences.

The expansion occurred as the museum celebrated its 25th anniversary Nov. 18, 2020, having welcomed more than 1 million visitors to date. The museum is an integral part of Sanibel Island, which is home to more than 400 species of shells.

To learn more about the shells from our beaches, download the Bailey-Matthews National Shell Museum app (\$1.99). Snap a photo of your shell and learn what kind it is and all the details about it. shellmuseum.org

Snack House nostalgia at IMAG History and Science Center in Fort Myers

The Snack House, an iconic downtown Fort Myers diner from 1949 to 1993, is back with a nostalgic twist at IMAG History and Science Center in Fort Myers, formerly known as the Imaginarium.

In an effort to recapture the nostalgia, mystique, and excitement of the Snack House, the IMAG, working with [@CarbonPress](#) of Fort Myers, refurbished the original 1950s Snack House sign (which is on permanent display in the museum) and also developed a larger-than-life mural of the Snack House diner counter from an original 1960s photograph of its interior. Bringing back the history of this golden age of dining, the IMAG also features an exhibit of Snack House memorabilia including original menus, news clippings, matchbooks and photographs for our appreciation and reminiscence. theimag.org

Take a ride on a 1927 carousel in North Fort Myers

After a total refurbishment, this 1927 beauty has found a new home and popularity at the **Shell Factory and Nature Park in North Fort Myers**. For \$1 per person, take a ride and enjoy a nostalgic trip, then go for a bite at Capt’n Fishbone’s. shellfactory.com

The Bubble Room Emporium on Captiva Island

Antique exhibits at the Emporium include a working, cast iron shooting gallery from the Oceanside Pier in California from the early 20th century, plus a wooden carousel board hanging above. Visitors to the shop will discover a 1919 fortune teller machine that still works. Highlight: the gas-powered, tether racing car originally purchased for Shirley Temple for her birthday. She drove the vehicle around 20th Century Fox’s lot, which a book on display explains. bubbleroomrestaurant.com

Lovers Key State Park

Scheduled to open this month: A Welcome and Discovery Center includes an exhibit hall, picnic area and outdoor discovery areas. Set on the banks of an inland waterway, the design pays homage to this beautiful backdrop, with columns designed to model mangrove roots and glass walls that open to large observation decks. It is the perfect setting for listening to music, attending a lecture or to just enjoy the natural beauty of Lovers Key State Park.

www.floridastateparks.org/parks-and-trails/lovers-key-state-park

Coming in 2021: Topgolf plans to bring its technology-enabled entertainment experience to Fort Myers in late 2021. The seventh venue to be located in Florida, the complex will include 70 climate-controlled hitting bays, full-service restaurant and bars, 200 HDTV's, rooftop terrace, private event space and meeting rooms. www.topgolf.com/us/fort-myers

Awards

Golden Spoon awards include five area restaurants

We are pleased to see that Florida Trend magazine's best places to dine include six from our area: Angelina's Ristorante in Bonita Springs (Italian), Azure in Fort Myers (French), BLANC in Fort Myers (Contemporary), Ember Korean Steakhouse in Fort Myers (Korean), Harold's Restaurant in Fort Myers, (Continental) and Sweet Melissa's Café on Sanibel Island (Seafood and American).

The Golden Spoon recognizes outstanding fine dining restaurants that have demonstrated consistency in high standards and longevity, usually earned after three years in business or more.

www.floridatrend.com/golden-spoons

Island Hopper and ArtFest named winners

Two Lee County events were named winners in the Florida Festivals & Events Association (FFEA) 2020 SUNsational Awards. The organization recognizes Florida's best and brightest for innovation, individuality and creative collaboration for event production.

Island Hopper Songwriter Fest, received four awards, including first place awards for banners, mobile app and radio coverage. It earned second place for its volunteer program that utilizes hundreds of locals to support this mostly free event each fall. The event returns Sept. 17-26, 2021 on Captiva Island, downtown Fort Myers and Fort Myers Beach. Check out all of the exciting details at island-hopper.fortmyers-sanibel.com

ArtFest Fort Myers won three awards that included crisis communication plan, green program and social media advertising campaign. In its 21st year, ArtFest Fort Myers is one of the area's most popular art events with made-in-the-USA originals, including ceramics, jewelry, glass, unique paintings, wearable art and more by 170 artists. ArtFestFortMyers.com

Wine Spectator recognizes 11 area restaurants

Wine Spectator's Restaurant Awards recognize restaurants whose wine lists offer interesting selections, are appropriate to their cuisine and appeal to a wide range of wine lovers. A total of 11 restaurants have been recognized in two prestigious categories.

Award of Excellence went to Charley's Boat House Grill & Wine Bar, Fort Myers Beach; Ruth's Chris Steak House, Estero; Sunshine Seafood Café & Wine Bar, Captiva Island; Sweet Melissa's Café, Sanibel; A Table Apart, Bonita Springs; The Temptation Restaurant, Boca Grande; Terra Nostra Ristorante, Fort Myers; The Pink Elephant, Boca Grande; and Twisted Vine Bistro, Fort Myers. These wine lists offer at least 90 selections, feature a well-chosen assortment of quality producers, along with a thematic match to the menu in both price and style. Whether compact or extensive, focused or diverse, these lists deliver sufficient choice to satisfy discerning wine lovers.

Best of Award of Excellence went to Angelina's Ristorante, Bonita Springs; and The Gasparilla Inn Main Dining Room, Boca Grande. These wine lists display excellent breadth across multiple winegrowing regions and/or significant vertical depth of top producers, along with superior presentation. Typically offering 350 or more selections, the restaurants are destinations for serious wine lovers, showing a deep commitment to wine, both in the cellar and through their service team. winespectator.com

Accolades

Colorful Matlacha named best small town

Tripsavvy.com gave Matlacha top billing in its list of 10 best small towns in Florida: "An artsy island community, Matlacha (pronounced "matt-la-shay") is quirky and colorful. Funky art overflows outside the bright-hued buildings off Pine Island Road, the town's single thoroughfare." www.tripsavvy.com/best-small-towns-in-florida-5084355

Travel Pulse Short vacations

The Beaches of Fort Myers & Sanibel was included in a Travel Pulse list of 15 short vacation ideas for every region of the United States. "Southwest Florida's Sanibel Island is only a few hours from Tampa, Orlando and Miami and has something for everyone, from families with small children to couples seeking romance on the Gulf Coast. The island's famous sunsets and shells are far from the only draw as visitors will discover inviting beachfront resorts, mouthwatering restaurants, art galleries and an array of boutique shops." www.travelpulse.com/gallery/destinations/short-trip-vacation-ideas-for-every-region-of-the-us.html

Downtown Fort Myers properties recognized by ConventionSouth magazine

The new Luminary Hotel & Co. and the adjoining Caloosa Sound Convention Center in downtown Fort Myers each recently received a prestigious 2021 Top New or Renovated Meeting Site Award from the publishers and editors of ConventionSouth magazine, a national multimedia resource for planning events in the South. As winners, the two properties are among a list of 59 meeting facilities located across the South to receive the recognition.

The publication says that after a lengthy review of what the two properties have to offer meeting planners and attendees, they felt the properties displayed a superior commitment to providing groups with the top-of-the-line amenities and service that they require. www.luminaryhotel.com

Most romantic places in Florida

Recent recognition of Lovers Key is from Southern Living's "10 most romantic places in Florida." southernliving.com/travel/florida/most-romantic-destinations-fl

Travel + Leisure

The publication named its “10 Hidden Attractions in Florida that won’t be too crowded.” On the list: Southwest Florida Ale Trail.

The publication says: “Oregon and Vermont receive a lot of praise as the country’s best destinations for beer lovers, but did you know that there’s a brewery trail in Florida? The Southwest Florida Ale Trail connects breweries across four Florida counties, and it even offers a passport you can have stamped at the 19 participating breweries to win prizes. Many of these breweries are just a short distance from the coast, too, making for a great day of beach and beer.” travandleisure.com/attractions/top-florida-attractions

National Geographic, 10 books that whisk you away to paradise

“Gift from the Sea,” by Anne Morrow Lindbergh, 1955.

“Shells plucked from the beach on Florida’s Captiva Island inspired Lindbergh’s poetic musings on marriage, motherhood, and the simpler living the seaside brings. “I must remember to see with island eyes,” writes the author/aviator (and wife of Charles Lindbergh) while packing her bags to return to real life. This book, celebrating its 65th anniversary this year, is short enough to breeze through in an afternoon. This slim book will transport you to Captiva and island life. nationalgeographic.com/travel/lists/10-island-adventure-books

Martha Stewart Living

In listing popular dog beaches from all over the U.S., the publication mentions our Dog Beach Park, a Lee County Parks & Recreation site located in Fort Myers Beach. The article says: “Pups can run free from 7 a.m. to dusk at Fort Myers’ Dog Beach, in Florida, where you can wash off sandy paws at the doggy showers.” marthastewart.com/7972217/dog-friendly-beaches-in-united-states

The arts

Art In Flight at Southwest Florida International Airport (RSW)

For the last 15 years, the Alliance for the Arts, a nonprofit visual and performing arts center in the heart of Fort Myers, and the Lee County Port Authority have partnered on *Art In Flight*, which brings art to the public spaces and the millions of travelers at Southwest Florida International Airport.

The current exhibit, Pop of Color, features a diverse collection of 29 artworks that use line, shape, texture and color to amaze the senses. With a varied collection of styles and media, artists on display demonstrate the wide possibilities of abstract art from clean and crisp edges to wild and energetic strokes of paint. Various materials and their textures are explored as well with everything from found objects to sculptural, low relief mixed media. Pop of Color will exhibit now through May 2021. artinlee.org/experience/exhibits/art-in-flight

Alliance ArtsPark, Fort Myers

Alliance for the Arts ArtsPark offers a community hub for discovery and creativity, education and a place where people, art and imagination meet. The project connects neighbors with a new sidewalk, regenerates the land with a beautiful thriving pocket of Florida flowers and at the

center of it all, stands a recently installed towering piece of public art, the Caloosahatchee Water Wall, by internationally acclaimed artist Michael Singer.

A depiction of the Caloosahatchee River, the 25-foot sculpture illuminates blooming native vines that climb the Water Wall's textured, gray lattice. With the Caloosahatchee River just ¼ mile away, it's only fitting that art and nature harmoniously coincide. As an outdoor classroom, the Alliance ArtsPark and Water Wall are free and open to the public to explore. The project champions the course of Florida's unique, ecological memoir while celebrating the warmth and energy of the local neighborhood. artinlee.org/experience/artspark

Florida Green Lodging commitment to conservation

The Florida Department of Environmental Protection designates and recognizes lodging facilities that make a commitment to conserve and protect Florida's natural resources through the Florida *Green Lodging* Program. The program's environmental guidelines allow the hospitality industry to evaluate its operations, set goals and take specific actions to continuously improve environmental performance.

The 13 Lee County properties in the program include: Homewood Suites Fort Myers Airport-FGCU, Westin Cape Coral Resort at Marina Village, Holiday Inn Fort Myers Airport at Town Center, Homewood Suites Fort Myers Bell Tower Shops, Mango Street Inn, Cayo Costa State Park, Diamondhead Beach Resort, Ocean's Reach Condominiums, Sanibel Harbour Marriott Resort and Spa, Hyatt Regency Coconut Point Resort and Spa and Hyatt Residence Club, Pink Shell Beach Resort & Marina, Crown Plaza Fort Myers at Bell Tower Shops.

floridadep.gov/osi/green-lodging

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Editor's note: The Beaches of Fort Myers & Sanibel in Southwest Florida includes Sanibel Island, Captiva Island, Fort Myers Beach, Fort Myers, Bonita Springs, Estero, Cape Coral, Pine Island, Boca Grande & Outer Islands, North Fort Myers and Lehigh Acres. For media assistance, visit www.fortmyers-sanibel.com/media-central