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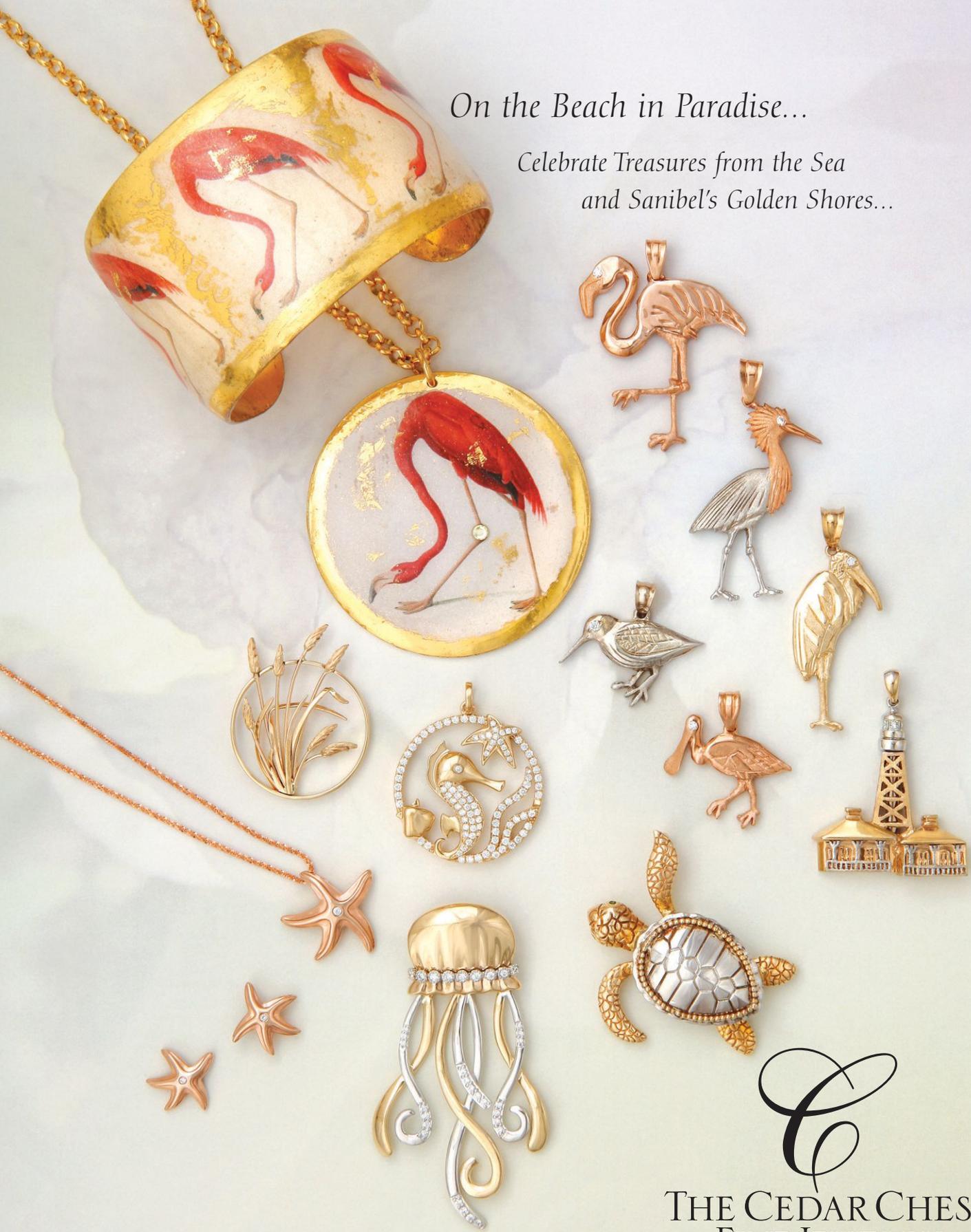
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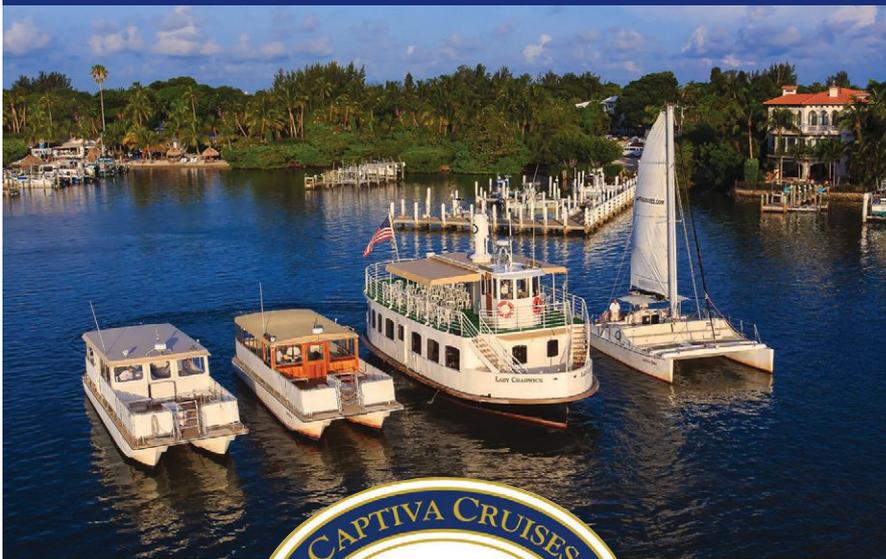
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Welcome...

From the Chamber Board

We invite you to begin your island adventure in this guide, through the words and images of the people who live here and love it. Let islanders take you to their secret spots and cherished memories within the captivating realm of Sanibel and Captiva Islands.

Here, Mother Nature has created a masterpiece of soft white sand, soothing gulf breezes and natural beauty. Enjoy miles of scenic bike paths that meander along the gulf and wind through wildlife habitat and quiet neighborhoods. Canoe or kayak unspoiled waterways, home to the endangered manatee and hundreds of varieties of birds. Splash and swim in the sun-kissed Gulf, gather shells along the beach, or simply stretch out under a cabana.

The best way to experience this paradise, of course, is to stay here on the islands. Choose among seaside cottages, luxurious resorts, beachfront villas and condos, comfortable hotel rooms—and then unpack and enjoy the natural beauty!

On behalf of the entire Board of Directors of the Sanibel & Captiva Islands Chamber of Commerce, thank you for exploring our island sanctuary.

Donna Puma

Chair, Board of Directors

From the City of Sanibel

On behalf of the entire team of elected and appointed city officials and employees who work each day to protect and maintain the quality of life in our community, we welcome you to Sanibel.

The City of Sanibel is a unique and special town. It was incorporated in 1974, and residents chose the council-manager form of government. Five island residents are elected to the legislative governing body, City Council, on staggered terms. The city's mayor is elected annually by fellow council members. City Council hires a city manager to oversee city operations.

Sanibel is a barrier island sanctuary where over 67 percent of the lands on the island are protected through federal or municipal government or private foundation ownership. Our municipal government is committed to preserving an environment where our diverse population lives in harmony with the island's wildlife and natural habitats. To this end, Sanibel has adopted laws and ordinances that we enforce to maintain our community.

Due to the island's delicate ecosystem, each of us has a responsibility to enjoy but not destroy Sanibel. The laws and codes that protect Sanibel apply equally to visitors as well as residents. If you have any questions about the city's regulations while you are here, you are invited to call the Sanibel Police Department at (239) 472-3111.

If you would like more information about the municipal government on Sanibel, you are welcome to visit City Hall at 800 Dunlop Roads or visit our Web site at www.mysanibel.com.

Best wishes for a rewarding, safe and pleasant stay.

Sincerely,

Kevin Ruane

Mayor

Stop...

and see us at the Visitor Center

As soon as you begin to cross the Sanibel Causeway, pelicans, gulls and terns herald your arrival with a wave of the wing, right alongside your car. Drive slowly to protect them and watch the water for a dolphin welcome. Then look for the Sanibel & Captiva Islands Chamber of Commerce Francis P. Bailey Visitor center on your right as you drive onto the island. It's a colorful island-style building. Stop in to say "hi." Our staff can answer all of your questions 365 days a year and will make you feel right at home. Even after office hours, we serve you with an outdoor phone for local calls and information packs. When you can't visit in person, call (239) 472-1080 or explore our Web site (www.sanibel-captiva.org).

The Francis P. Bailey, Jr. Visitor Center on Sanibel has been named one of only thirteen official Florida Certified Tourism Information Centers in association with a new VISIT FLORIDA program.

The VISIT FLORIDA Certified Tourism Information Centers (CTICs) Program brings VISIT FLORIDA recognition to Visitor Services facilities around the state, providing these facilities and their staff with benefits that enable successful promotion of travel to and throughout Florida.

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Island FAQs

WE HAVE ALL THE ANSWERS!



Instagram
Alert

Your first Sanibel-Captiva Island selfie? On the Sanibel Causeway, of course. Especially at sunset #wherethesunsleeps. Look for suggestions for Instagram shots and selfie spots throughout this visitor guide that are bound to get you “hearted.” Tag @ sancapchamber so we can like your photos.

Photo Credit Lee County VCB/Fort Myers-Sanibel.com

How big are the islands? The driving distance from one end of Sanibel Island to the other is roughly 12 miles long. It measures less than 3 miles across at its widest point. Captiva Island is smaller at under 5 miles long and almost a 1/2-mile at its widest.

Where is the Chamber Visitor Center? The Sanibel Causeway bridges (which carry a toll for vehicles coming onto the islands only) leads to Causeway Road on Sanibel Island. The Sanibel and Captiva Islands Chamber of Commerce and Francis P. Bailey Visitor Center is located at the

second driveway on the right. The center is open daily 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. every day of the year.

How do I find my way around the islands? It's easy! At the four-way stop after the Chamber, **Causeway Road** intersects with **Periwinkle Way**, one of two main Sanibel Island roads that roughly parallel each other. Periwinkle is the main business route. In either direction, it leads to shopping and dining. Follow it east (left off Causeway Road) and you will enter the quiet Olde Sanibel neighborhood, ending

up at the Sanibel Lighthouse and its beach park. To the west of Causeway Road lies the main commercial district. From the four-way stop go straight ahead to reach Gulf Drive.

Another major route, **Gulf Drive** wanders past resorts, beaches and homes near water's edge. It is segmented into East, Middle and West Gulf Drive, the latter of which dead-ends. (Take Rabbit Road off of it to get to **Sanibel-Captiva Road**, a.k.a. San-Cap Road), Sanibel's third major thoroughfare. Periwinkle Way links via Palm Ridge Road or Tarpon Bay

Road, to San-Cap Road, which continues to Captiva Island.

San-Cap Road, Sanibel's "conservation corridor," passes The Bailey-Matthews National Shell Museum, Sanibel-Captiva Conservation Foundation Center (SCCF), J.N. "Ding" Darling National Wildlife Refuge, Clinic for Rehabilitation of Wildlife (CROW), other small preserves and the turn-off to Bowman's Beach.

Once you cross the short bridge to Captiva Island at scenic Blind Pass, the road becomes **Captiva Drive**. Follow it north and you will find two public beach accesses plus resorts, restaurants and shops.

Where's the Beach? Find public beach accesses at the following locations:

- **Causeway Islands Beach Park** – both sides of Causeway Road
- **Lighthouse Beach** - east end of Periwinkle Way
- **Gulfside City Park** - on Algiers Lane off Casa Ybel Road
- **Tarpon Bay Beach** - south end of Tarpon Bay Road at West Gulf Drive; parking lot to the north on Tarpon Bay Road

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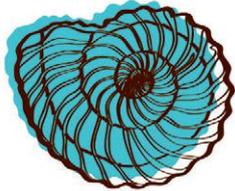


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Sanibel Island, FL 33957**



- **Bowman's Beach** - off Sanibel-Captiva Road on Bowman's Beach Road
- **Blind Pass Beach** - (Sanibel) - on the left before crossing the short bridge to Captiva
- **Turner Beach** - on Captiva Drive at Blind Pass (Captiva)
- **Alison Hagerup Beach Park** (Captiva Beach) - end of Captiva Drive



Island Secret

The toll for driving onto the Sanibel Causeway is \$6 round trip. Visitors planning to stay an extended period of time, or who will be making frequent trips across, can purchase an inexpensive transponder that will save money on each trip. It also works on other Florida toll roads. For more information visit www.leewayinfo.com.

What should I pack to wear? Keep it casual. Our easy-going, outdoor lifestyle translates into comfortable and informal attire. Shorts and flip-flops are the accepted "island uniform." Restaurants range from simple outdoor cafés to elegant candlelit dining rooms; none requires jackets or ties. Retail establishments generally request shirts and shoes.

What else should I pack? Bring swimsuits, cover-ups, sunglasses, a sundress or two, lightweight collared shirts, T-shirts, tank tops, and hats to shade your face and head. In winter, slacks and a light wrap will complete your vacation wardrobe. If you plan on boating, bring something warmer and wind-breaking. Don't forget your favorite beach and water toys—snorkel and mask, skim board, body board, sand bucket and shovel, Frisbee® and inflatables. If you'd rather not lug all that, don't worry—a number of stores can supply them.

How's the weather? Our winters are mild (average daytime temperatures in the 70s and low 80s) and dry (just enough rain to keep our islands lush). Summer temperatures, ranging from the 80s to mid-90s, are tempered by cooling sea breezes and brief showers, followed by

more sunshine and glorious sunsets. See the Weather Report (page 14) for a year-round meteorological snapshot. Or visit our Web site (www.sanibel-captiva.org) for current conditions.

Is lightning a problem? Thunderstorms and lightning are common summer occurrences in Florida. They are lovely to watch—from inside. At the first rumbles of thunder, seek shelter; lightning strikes far beyond the center of a storm. Never stay in the water if you hear thunder.

How about tropical storms? The good news is that tropical storms and hurricanes come with enough advance notice to change your plans or safely evacuate if necessary. Hurricane season is June through November, with August and September usually being the most active months in Florida. The islands have experienced only two major hurricanes in the past 60-plus years.

How do I prevent getting burned by the sun? Begin your sun days with a high sunscreen-protection factor (SPF) lotion or ultraviolet-protection factor (UPF) clothing. For children and fair skin, use no less than waterproof 30 SPF. Re-apply sunscreen after swimming and at regular intervals throughout the day. Hats and sunglasses provide additional protection for the face. Use zinc ointment for noses and other sensitive and highly exposed areas.

The sun is strongest between 10 a.m. and 3 p.m. Don't be fooled by clouds and haze; they intensify rather than soften the sun's effect. Being in and around the water also increases the burning potential of the sun's rays. Cool minor burns with an aloe vera product. If immediate blistering occurs, seek medical attention.

Any other advice for weathering the sun and heat? Staying hydrated is crucial in semitropical climates. If you plan on biking, golfing, playing tennis or pursuing other outdoor activities, drink at least 12 ounces of water before you step out the door. Carry a water bottle with you at all times, even if you are only walking or lying on the beach. After coming in from the sun, drink beyond satiation, and continue to do so throughout the day. Avoid alcohol, which is dehydrating. Juice and soda are okay, but water or sports drinks work best.

A car in Florida can become fatally hot. It is unlawful to leave small children and pets in cars in Florida for that reason. Never leave a child or pet in a car alone, even with

the windows cracked, even if you're "just running in quickly" to the convenience store.

Are there medical facilities on the islands? Sanibel Medical Inc., at 2499 Palm Ridge Road, (239) 395-2005, sanibelmedical.com accepts appointments and walk-ins. HealthPark Medical Center (239) 343-5000, www.leehealth.org, a full-service facility with its own children's hospital, lies about 15 minutes from Sanibel Island on the mainland. The emergency room stays open 24 hours.

Where can I get a cash advance? The following Sanibel banks offer cash advances against credit cards and have ATM machines:

- Bank of America, 2450 Periwinkle Way; (239) 472-2800, (800) 432-1000; www.bankofamerica.com
- Bank of the Islands, 1699 Periwinkle Way; (239) 472-7211, (800) 359-9034; www.bankoftheislands.com
- Sanibel Captiva Community Bank, 2475 Library Way, (239) 472-6100; www.sancapbank.com; branch at 1037 Periwinkle Way, (239) 472-6150. (ATMs at Bailey's Shopping Center and the branch office).
- Wells Fargo, 2407 Palm Ridge Road; (239) 472-7100, (800) 869-3557; www.wellsfargo.com

Where can I send and receive money by cable? Western Union locations on Sanibel Island include Bailey's General Store, 2477 Periwinkle Way at Tarpon Bay Road, (239) 472-1516. To reach Western Union directly: (800) 325-6000; www.westernunion.com.

Where can I find Federal Express stations? Drop boxes/services are located at:

- 1101 Periwinkle Way (Treetop Center)
- 1456 Periwinkle Way (Qwik Pack & Ship, 239-472-0288)
- 1648 Periwinkle Way (Island Medical & Business Center)
- 2422 Palm Ridge Road (SanCap Pak 'N' Ship, 239-395-1220).

To contact Federal Express directly: Federal Express: (800) 238-5355; www.fedex.com.

Where can I get free wireless Internet access? Many island accommodations now have wi-fi access, so check with your hotel first. Other known locations for free access include:

- Cantina Captiva – 14970 Captiva Drive
- Captiva Memorial Library – 11560 Chapin Lane

continued on page 14

continued from page 12

- Coffee Bar @ Bailey's – 2477 Periwinkle Way
- Green Flash Restaurant – 15183 Captiva Drive
- Jerry's Foods – 1700 Periwinkle Way
- MacIntosh Books & Paper – 2330 Palm Ridge Road
- Sanibel & Captiva Islands Chamber of Commerce – 1159 Causeway Road
- Sanibel Café – 2007 Periwinkle Way
- Sanibel Deli & Coffee Factory – 2330 Palm Ridge Road #2
- Sanibel Public Library – 770 Dunlop Road
- Timbers Restaurant/Sanibel Grill – 703 Tarpon Bay Road.

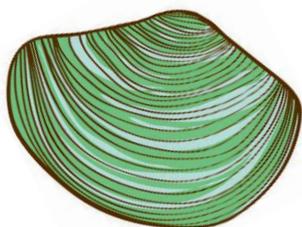
Where is the post office? You can find postal services at three locations on the islands:

- Main Sanibel Post Office: 650 Tarpon Bay Road; (239) 472-1573 or (800) 275-8777. Hours: 9 a.m.-5 p.m. Monday-Friday; 10 a.m.-noon Saturday
- Captiva Post Office: 14812 Captiva Drive; (239) 472-1674. Hours: 10 a.m.-2 p.m. Monday-Friday
- A contract Post Office is located inside Jerry's Foods, 1700 Periwinkle Way, Sanibel; (239) 472-9300. Post Office hours: 8 a.m.-3 p.m. Monday-Friday; 8-10:30 a.m. Saturdays

Where are there libraries? The islands boast two modern libraries with full services:

- Captiva Memorial Library, 11560 Chapin Lane; (239) 472-2133
- Sanibel Public Library, 770 Dunlop Road, Sanibel; (239) 472-2483

Who do I call in case of emergency? Police, fire, medical emergencies: Dial 911
TDD: Dial 911



Island Secret

Avoid traveling on and off island at peak travel times, especially during the winter season. To look at live video feed of island traffic conditions, visit sanibel-captiva.org/sanibel-island-webcams or download the free SanibelBound app.



Weather REPORT

Source: www.weather.com

AVERAGE MONTHLY AIR TEMPERATURES

(Degrees Fahrenheit)

Month	High	Low
January	75	54
February	77	56
March	80	59
April	85	63
May	89	69
June	92	74
July	92	75
August	92	75
September	91	74
October	87	69
November	81	62
December	77	56

AVERAGE AIR TEMPERATURES

(Degrees Fahrenheit)

84.9 annual high temperature
65.5 annual low temperature

AVERAGE ANNUAL WATER TEMPERATURES

(Degrees Fahrenheit)

Source: Lee County Visitor & Convention Bureau
78 average annual temperature
71 average fall/winter temperature
84 average spring/summer temperature
66 average winter low temperature
87 average summer high

NORMAL MONTHLY RAINFALL

Month	Inches
January	1.9
February	2.2
March	2.9
April	2.2
May	2.6
June	10.1
July	9.0
August	10.1
September	8.3
October	2.9
November	2.0
December	1.7
Annual	55.9



Photo by Alejandra Bustamante

Rumor has it...



Shelling at Bowman's Beach, Sanibel Island

...the world's rarest shells are found on our beaches. It's true Sanibel and Captiva Islands are among the world's top beaches for shelling. Their unique shape and east-west direction scoop up shells in the Gulf from the Caribbean and southern seas. And while many rare shells like the Junonia are found here, the world's most prized shells like the Glory of India, the Fulton's Cowrie, and the Bull Conch are not. When you're top-rated, you don't need to exaggerate. Truth is, like our beaches, we're top-rated, too.

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H-2-O_{hhh!}

*Our waterside
welcome goes
to great depths.*



Sandwiched between the Gulf of Mexico and San Carlos Bay with the Sanibel River running through them, the islands literally wallow in water—water that sparkles at times like blue and green gemstones. For visitors, that means practically unlimited opportunities to play in, on and around our liquid assets.

Sanibel counts among a select few barrier islands in Florida with a freshwater river, which is why it attracts more wildlife—particularly alligators, river otters and bobcats—than others. The river, which flows through Sanibel-Captiva Conservation Foundation (SCCF) property, is a hidden secret among local paddlers looking for quiet, fish and birds.

Fertile estuaries, where salt and fresh water mingle, make rich breeding grounds and nurseries for myriad wildlife species. At J.N. “Ding” Darling National Wildlife Refuge, in fact, the brackish mangrove waters underlie a worldwide reputation among coastal birders.

Rookery islands punctuate the Refuge’s Tarpon Bay, where the official Refuge concession rents paddlecraft and offers kayaking, stand-up paddleboarding and nature boat tours. Sunset time is best,

when the birds come home to roost for the night. Commodore Creek Trail winds from the bay into the mangroves for rare views of Refuge back waters.

The islands’ calm bay waters make them a much-lauded destination for paddling and fishing. Anglers cast from Sanibel Causeway Island Parks, the Blind Pass bridge between Sanibel and Captiva and the Lighthouse Beach Park fishing pier.



Island Secret

Across Roosevelt Channel on Captiva Island’s leeward side, all-natural Buck Key and its lovely half-mile canopy paddling trail are home to green herons, gators and even an occasional bobcat.



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- **Backwater Fishing Cruise**







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The beach at the latter, Sanibel's easternmost point, wraps from bay to the island's warm and irresistible Gulf of Mexico front, home to leaping dolphins, gliding rays and shorebirds by the flock. The mildly breaking Gulf—a playground for all types of water sports enthusiasts—laps more than 15 miles of white-sand, award-winning beaches known for their shelling, natural beauty and romance.

Beach Banquet

Most people begin their island love affair at the seashore. It is seductive without working at it—in a quiet, natural, come-hither way. At the wrack line, muddles of seaweed and shells make beachcombing a game of seek-and-find. Great blue herons strut the beach as if they own it. Sea oats stand wispy sentinel. Kids clump wet mounds of sand to fashion into visions of happily-ever-after dreams. Bright umbrellas prop against striped beach chairs. Float toys bob on gentle waves. A stretch of white tapers off into the distance—as far as the eye can see, blurred like a watercolor painting bordered by blues and greens.

Sanibel and Captiva Islands create the quintessential beach experience. Warm climes, mellow waves, near-shore sandbars, Instagram sunsets and a bounty of shells endear families and travelers to our beaches—some of Florida's most visually pristine and highly rated.

The islands maintain a low-impact philosophy at their beaches. Restrooms are located at most public accesses. Some parks have picnic tables tucked away off the sand, so as not to interfere with sea turtle nesting. Parking at most beach accesses costs \$5 an hour for visitors without resident stickers on their vehicles. Beach parks stay open 24 hours, but no overnight parking is allowed.

Here is the honor roll of Sanibel and Captiva's splendid beaches listed alphabetically.

Alison Hagerup Beach Park (a.k.a. Captiva Beach) A favorite spot for sunset, its main access lies close to restaurants and watersports rentals. *The limited parking lot is located at the end of Captiva Drive.*

Blind Pass/Turner Beach It straddles the pass between Sanibel and Captiva Islands and is popular with shellers, fishermen, sunset-gazers and, when the waves whip up, surfers. Signs warn against swimming around the pass because of swift currents. Public parking is limited. *Located off Sanibel-Captiva Road/Captiva Drive at Blind Pass*

Bowman's Beach Known for its wildlife and seclusion, it is especially popular with shellers, nesting birds and sea turtles. It also has a playground and



Island Secret

More than four live-feed cameras are trained on different beaches throughout the island. Check out what's happening at your favorite or get an "island beach fix" from home by visiting www.sanibel-captiva.org/sanibel-island-webcams.



Instagram Alert

You've gotta do it, right? Have someone take that picture that looks like you're holding the Sanibel Lighthouse in your palm. #handfulofhistory

Photo by Nick Adams Photography

picnic area for families. To reach the beach from the capacious parking lot, you must hike through a wooded area and over an estuary bridge. *Located off Sanibel-Captiva Road on Bowman's Beach Road*

Causeway Islands Park Terrific for swimming, fishing, windsurfing and kite-surfing, it's also handy for picnicking: Pull your vehicle right to water's edge, free of charge (other than Causeway tolls for oncoming vehicles). *Located along both sides of Causeway Road on two separate islands*

Gulfside City Park Picnic tables, shady trees, safe waters and an interpretive loop nature trail make this beach inviting to families. Parking fees apply to all vehicles, including those with resident stickers. In the summer, this is a popular beach for loggerhead turtles, whose nests volunteers stake off. *Located on Algiers Lane off Casa Ybel Road*

Lighthouse Beach Park Site of a functioning historic lighthouse, it wraps around Gulf to bay at the eastern tip of Sanibel Island. A newly restored T-dock on the bay side attracts fisherfolk; a boardwalk nature trail offers glimpses of beach and coastal habitat. *Located at the east end of Periwinkle Way*

Resident Beaches Signs along the Gulf Drives on Sanibel Island mark small parking lots and beach accesses reserved only for residents with permit stickers or beachgoers arriving by foot or bike. These are the islands' least visited, most secluded beaches because they lack restrooms and, for the most part, run past residential homes rather than resorts.

Tarpon Bay Beach Popular and easily accessible, it offers parking for recreational vehicles and cars. The lot is a short hike to the beach; travel lightly or drop off at the entrance before parking. *Located at the south end of Tarpon Bay Road at West Gulf Drive; parking on Tarpon Bay Road*



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Shellicious ISLANDS



Island identity and seashells are inextricably intertwined and have been since the dawn of man. In prehistoric days, Calusa tribesmen came to collect shells, which they used for food, tools and structural foundations.

Nearly 80 years ago, Granny Matthews (namesake of the Bailey-Matthews National Shell Museum) organized the earliest Shell Fairs in the lobby of her hotel, today's Island Inn. She initiated a tradition of islanders helping visitors appreciate their shells, a tradition that continues today in our wash of shell shops, shelling tours, shelling organizations and annual Shell Festival (see "Celebrate," page 60).

The islands rank number one on the continent for their beach shelling simply because of geography. You see, Sanibel Island itself bends, a lot like those doubled-over shellers striking the classic island stances known as the Sanibel Stoop and Captiva Crouch. Rather than running parallel to mainland, like the more orderly islands in their offshore parade, Sanibel breaks rank.

The east-west torque of its south end acts like a roadblock for all the shells that the Gulf drives from the Caribbean and other southern seas. The abundance and variety of shells have made the islands shell-crazed. People come from all over the world, drawn by the song of the seashell.

Throughout the year, shell shops sell seashells by the thousands. Shells are the dominant motif in island décor and boutique gifts. You will find everything from intricately crafted Sailor's Valentines to toilet seats lacquered with seashells. (No home should be without one!)



One of the early benefactors to help build the Bailey-Matthews National Shell Museum on Sanibel Island, Raymond Burr, the late actor of *Perry Mason* and *Ironsides* fame, was an avid sheller. An exhibit inside the museum commemorates his generosity.



Photo by Nick Adams Photography



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Photo by Nick Adams Photography

ISLAND Shout-Outs

In 2017, the Travel Channel named Sanibel Island as number 1 among its Fun Florida Beaches. Lofty laud from such well-respected media came as no surprise. These islands' waters, beaches, birds and shells have been fielding awards and accolades for as long as anyone can remember.

Here are more honors bestowed upon Sanibel and Captiva Islands in the past 10 years:

Coastal Living magazine applauded Sanibel Island for its Best Beaches for Shelling, in 2017. To quote the web article: "this sweet island is known (and much-loved) for the wide variety of seashells that wash up on its shores."

In 2016, *Travel + Leisure* magazine readers handed Sanibel Island number 4 in a poll of American's Favorite Beach Towns.

In May 2016, *Conde Nast Traveler* magazine named Sanibel Island among the "30+ Places to Visit This Summer."

Sanibel and Captiva Islands placed on *USA TODAY's* list of "10 best beachcombing beaches around the USA" in 2016. *Smithsonian.com* ranked Sanibel among the top 5 in its best beachcombing list.

In January 2016, Sanibel Island was one of six "Best US Cities to Escape the Snow," according to *FoxNews.com*.

In 2015, *NBC's Today Show* announced on air that Sanibel Island rated as the number one Family-Friendly Vacation Spot

in the U.S., according to a poll conducted of *FamilyFun Magazine* readers.

TripAdvisor featured Sanibel Island at number 2 reader-rated in a 2015 article "6 Praiseworthy Florida Vacation Spots To Add To Your Bucketlist."

U.S. News & World Report ranked Sanibel Island number 4 for best family beach vacation in 2015, citing safe waters, multi-generational appeal and overall accessibility.

Also in 2015, *USAToday.com* readers voted Sanibel Island number six for Best Birdwatching destination, attributing J.N. "Ding" Darling National Wildlife Refuge for the island's superiority.

Forbes.com featured Sanibel and

Captiva Islands among Florida's Best Family-Friendly Nature-Loving Escapes in 2015 and also listed both among "America's Most Beautiful Barrier Islands."

Sanibel Island made *Thrillist.com's* list of 14 Best Small Beach Towns in America in 2015.

Examiner.com listed Sanibel and Captiva Islands at number 3 on its "5 Florida Towns Not to Miss" list.

BringFido.com showcases Sanibel Island among 11 Dog-Friendly Vacations in United States.

Coastal Living magazine editors and readers voted Captiva Island at number 2 in its "2014 Happiest Seaside Towns" online contest.

TripAdvisor reviews named Sanibel Island one of the top 20 vacation rental destinations in the United States in 2014.

Also in 2014, *Buzzfeed.com* listed Sanibel Island as number 1 on its "11 Small Florida Towns You Need to Visit" list.

OutsideOnline.com named Sanibel Island one of the "five top Florida beaches" in 2014, and *SmartTravel.com* included it in its "10 Best Places To Go in Florida" rankings in 2013.

U.S. News & World Report ranked Sanibel Island's Bowman's Beach at number 10 on its list of "12 Best Beaches of the World" in 2013.

Sanibel Island landed in the top 10 favorites in the 2013 TripAdvisor Travelers' Choice Islands awards.

Travel + Leisure magazine readers voted Cayo Costa in the top "10 Beaches Best for Seclusion." The magazine published the list of best beaches in six categories for its January 2013 issue.

In 2012, world-famous travel guru Arthur Frommer listed Sanibel Island among his "Top 10 Favorite Places to Travel," attributing the beaches and wildlife for his high regard.

In 2012, Sanibel Island made *USA TODAY'S* list of "10 great places for families to escape the snow" and "best beach towns in Florida."

As the Best Shelling Beach, Sanibel Island was voted one of the Top 6 Favorite Beaches by fans of The Weather Channel on Facebook in May 2012.

Conde Nast Traveler magazine in 2011 named Sanibel Island for Best Kayaking in an article titled "Your Own Private(ish) Islands."

In December 2011, *ShermansTravel.com* named Sanibel's Bowman's Beach number 1 in its top 10 list of secluded U.S. beaches.

In July 2011 *Family Vacation Critic* announced Sanibel & Captiva Islands' inclusion on its list of "10 Best Islands in the United States."

Readers of *Family Fun* magazine named Captiva Island as one of the four islands to visit in its May 2011 issue—"a sure bet for families in search of a low-key beach scene."

Readers of *SmarterTravel.com* in January 2010, named Bowman's Beach on Sanibel Island as one of their 15 Favorite Beaches.

In July 2008, *Travel + Leisure* magazine rated Sanibel Island as one of the "Top Shelling Beaches in the World," describing

it as a "shellers' Mecca" where you can "find the best unburied treasures in the U.S."

We love to see praise for our island waterways, beaches and communities in print and online, but the best praise comes from our visitors, who stop by the Chamber Visitor Center every day to share their beach-day glow and on-the-water treasures. Please stop in or go to Facebook, Instagram and Trip Advisor, and tell us your story.



Island Secret

New in 2017, the J.N. "Ding" Darling National Wildlife Refuge erected a hands-on exhibit at Gulfside City Park, near its shoreline Perry Tract. Panels identify shorebirds, recreate a cutaway of a sea turtle nest, and replicate local seashells you can touch and get to know.

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SANIBEL FIT 4 LIFE



Stay On Our Good-Natured Side

The islands' heart and soul



Photo by Dennis Gingerich

Island Secret

Often called “fancy dancer” or “tap dancer,” the snowy egret hops its yellow feet around in the water to trick fish into thinking its “toes” are worms to nibble. BAM! The fish end up becoming food instead.

Many might mentally flash to late-night partying and wild times when thinking “Florida vacation.” On Sanibel and Captiva Islands, it’s wild, all right, but in a raw, natural way.

Islanders have a long history of being a tad overprotective of their environment dating way back to Teddy Roosevelt, who once fished these waters, and a man named “Ding,” who first sounded the alarm about the area’s importance as a wildlife habitat.

The designation of thousands of acres on Sanibel Island in 1945 as a national wildlife refuge—later renamed to honor J. N. “Ding” Darling—ensured the permanent preservation of more than half the island.

Sanibel incorporated as a city in 1974, enabling residents to write local legislation that restricted development and maintained the island’s sanctuary quality. Visitors to this day appreciate the contrast Sanibel offers when compared to other beachfront communities in Florida.

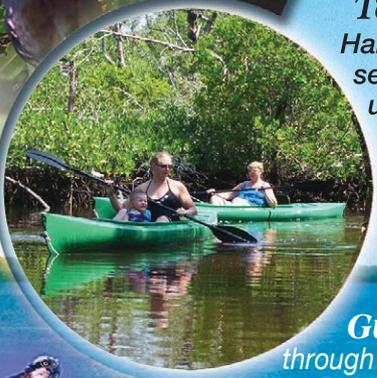
Our shell-rich beaches and waters are often more populated with royal terns, passing dolphins and diving pelicans than they are with people. Island children learn their colors from yellow-crowned night herons, roseate spoonbills and red-shouldered hawks.

Residents have an intrinsic respect and love for nature, and it rubs off easily on our visitors. We put forth constant, concerted efforts to conserve the precious wildlife of Sanibel and Captiva Islands by focusing



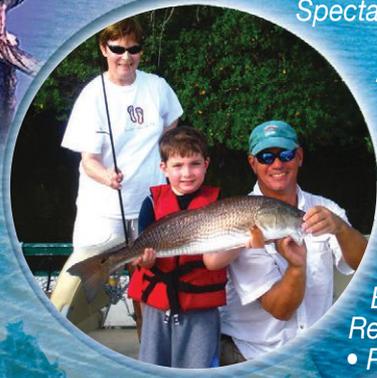
Nature & Sealife Cruise
 Join our Naturalist for a tranquil cruise on Tarpon Bay. We'll observe the Rookery Islands and may spot dolphins and manatees. Cruises available throughout the day including special breakfast and evening tours. All trips include touch tank exploration.

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The Jewel of Sanibel-Captiva



Stand-up Paddleboard Ecotours
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Rentals

Explore Tarpon Bay and the "Ding" Darling Refuge on your own.

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- Stand Up Paddleboards



Explore and Discover the Natural Wonders of Tarpon Bay

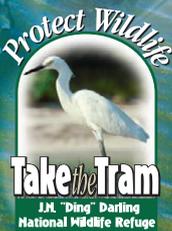
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900 Tarpon Bay Rd.,
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www.tarponbayexplorers.com



on keeping the islands just how our furred, finned and feathered co-residents like them—completely natural.

That’s our nature, and that’s why people in search of a one-of-a-kind vacation experience come to Sanibel and Captiva Islands. Not only can they soak up the sun and bask in Gulf waters, but they can also explore mangrove tunnels by kayak, discover the abundance of wildlife that thrives on our islands and in the waters around them, and learn why Sanibel Island is one of the nation’s premier destinations for bird lovers.

Bird-Brained

Birders have spotted nearly 250 bird species in J.N. “Ding” Darling National Wildlife Refuge; many of them, such as the mangrove cuckoo and black-whiskered vireo, are rare types that lifelist-keepers flock to see for the first time.

It doesn’t take an expert to appreciate them, however. Snowy, great and reddish egrets; blue, tricolor and green herons; pileated and red-bellied woodpeckers; ospreys and bald eagles; cormorants; anhingas; white ibis; willets; and sanderlings are common. You are also likely to spot more unusual or threatened species, including the pretty-in-pink roseate spoonbills, stately wood storks and seasonal white pelicans.

“Ding” Darling Refuge (see page 29 for the Refuge’s full story) is known internationally as a birders’ mecca—one of several regional destinations along the Great Florida Birding & Wildlife Trail (www.floridabirdingtrail.com). The 2,000-mile mapped trail encompasses more than 500 locations in Florida noted as top spots for bird watching or learning about birds.

A second location on Sanibel plotted on the birding trail, Lighthouse Beach Park, at the east end of the island, provides a crucial rest-stop for migrating birds. Fall and spring bring them by the thousands along the flyway over Sanibel and Captiva Islands. Peregrine falcons, indigo buntings, cedar waxwings, warblers and waterfowl join the so-called “fall-out” as they reach land, exhausted and recovering from a long flight over the Gulf.

Human visitors come too to recover and recuperate. Many simply seek serenity: the warmth and sunshine, the shimmering water, the soothing salt-air aromatherapy. Others seek out the islands’ rare eco-experiences.

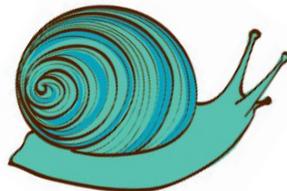
Habitat, Sweet Habitat

Sanibel and Captiva’s broad, pristine beaches are world-renowned, but they count as only one in a treasure trove of thriving island habitats—on land and in fresh and salt water.

Each supports its own dynamic community of plants and animals. River otters frolic in the freshwater wetlands, bobcats and armadillos prowl secretively through highland forests, manatees bobble in the saltwater bay, dolphin leap in the Gulf, and living seashells burrow at beach’s edge, hiding from sandpipers, oystercatchers and other shorebirds. The Bailey-Matthews National Shell Museum on Sanibel Island examines seashells and their habitat in detail and leads daily interpretive Beach Walks.

Those who seek active recreation in the islands’ waters and wilds can take advantage of opportunities to get close to nature by foot, pedal and paddle. Paths and trails mark the way from beachside to deep subtropical woods. Sanibel Sea School offers educational programs that

Island Secret



“Ding” Darling Refuge’s most iconic bird, the roseate spoonbill gets its name from its coloration and the spatula shape of its bill. People often confuse it with the American flamingo, but flamingoes have curved bills and are seen rarely in these parts.



Photo by Dennis Gingerich

take place outdoors on land and water.

“Ding” Darling Refuge’s Commodore Creek Trail is part of the 190-mile Great Calusa Blueway paddling trail (www.calusablueway.com) throughout Lee County’s Intracoastal and inland waters. The Refuge’s Tarpon Bay ranks among the top paddling destinations in the United States.

Four miles of nature trails at Sanibel-Captiva Conservation Foundation (SCCF) explore habitat along the Sanibel River—our alligators’ favorite place to hang out. You will also find SCCF trails through other habitat preserves island-wide. (See page 30 for a map of island trails.) A number of trails at “Ding” Darling Refuge take you into different environments. Calusa Shell Mound Trail, for instance, features hardwood vegetation and cultural displays, while the Bailey Tract trail visits a freshwater community.

“Ding” Darling and SCCF both offer a number of tours ranging from sea turtle walks in the summer to birding tours and boat cruises year-round.

The Refuge’s Wildlife Drive is the best nature biking experience on the island. If

you have a mobile device with a camera and app downloading abilities, check out the iNature Trail, which interprets the environment along the way using QR-code-scanning technology. Or try the free Discover Ding game app that incorporates GPS technology and social media interactions. Cyclists can also encounter wildlife—marsh rabbits, white ibis and an occasional gopher tortoise—along Sanibel Island’s 23 miles of paved shared-use paths.

Look closely, proceed quietly, indulge gloriously in the rare ecology of the islands.



Instagram Alert

One of the island’s rarest and most threatened creatures, the Eastern indigo snake is the longest native species of snakes in the United States. Although you are highly unlikely to encounter one in the wilds on the islands, you can photograph one in captivity at CROW’s animal exhibit. #sssssoocool @crowclinic



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New at Our Nature Attractions

Nothing stays static in the world of Sanibel nature, and that's especially true at our island environmental attractions. Check out these new and forthcoming trails, exhibits, and other exciting additions.

In 2017, CROW enhanced its Visitor Education Center with two new exhibits: the Children's Discovery Area and "If You Care, Leave It There" Re-nesting Tree, which educates about when NOT to interfere when you find a lone baby animal. To its live animal tank exhibits, which compares invasive to native species, it also added a juvenile gator, various anoles, a Florida box turtle and other species. Watch CROW's web site and social media for news about 2018's 50th anniversary celebration.

J.N. "Ding" Darling National Wildlife Refuge added a number of new exhibits and interpretive signage in 2017. The most exciting, its #LearningLav has turned bathroom space into dramatic 3-D underwater murals with educational messaging. At the Refuge's seaside Perry Tract, hands-on exhibits at adjacent Gulfside City Park identify shorebirds and shells and provide other valuable information. New, engaging kiosks and signs along Bailey Tract trails inform visitors about the wildlife in this freshwater habitat.



The best place to catch alligators on camera, the Wildlife Education Boardwalk at J.N. "Ding" Darling National Wildlife Refuge also provides great vantage for nesting birds in the early summer. #adorablebabies @dingdarlingwildlifesociety

SCCF continues to make its Bailey Homestead property an inviting and educational experience for visitors. New demonstration gardens help them identify native plants. In the Nature Center on the main campus, upgrades in 2018 will repair Hurricane Irma damage and introduce technological advances while keeping it kid-friendly.

Sanibel Sea School's newest programming includes weekly bird and shell walks and stand-up paddleboarding eco-tours.

Nature-Centric

A number of island-based organizations provide environmental enrichment, as well as opportunities to get outside and enjoy.

The Bailey-Matthews National Shell Museum

3075 Sanibel-Captiva Road
(239) 395-2233 or (888) 679-6450
www.shellmuseum.org

The only of its kind in the U.S., the museum reinforces Sanibel Island's reputation as a top shell-collecting destination. It uses nature vignettes and artistically arranged displays to demonstrate the role of shells in ecology, history, art, economics, medicine, religion and other disciplines. Shells of the world encircle the museum's centerpiece—a two-story globe. The Children's Science Lab provides games and hands-on learning experiences in colorful reef-motif surroundings. Other exhibits explain mollusk physiology and offer tips for finding your own shells. A memorial is devoted to the late actor Raymond Burr, who helped establish the museum.

Admission is free for children ages 4 and younger, \$7 for children ages 5 to 11, \$9 for youth ages 12 to 17, and \$15 for adults ages 18 and older.

Hours: 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. daily

CROW

3883 Sanibel-Captiva Road
(239) 472-3644
www.crowclinic.org

Turning 50 years old in 2018, the Clinic for the Rehabilitation of Wildlife welcomes the public to its Visitor Education Center. Among its state-of-the-art hands-on exhibits, visitors can watch recovering patients via critter cam, see live invasive and native creatures, and learn what it takes to be a wildlife veterinarian from exhibits such as Peek at a Pelican and Radiographs. The clinic sees more than 4,000 patients each year. CROW offers special presentations and patient tours weekly in season; check out its website for more information.

Admission is \$7 for adults, \$5 for teen, free for ages 12 and younger.

Hours: (Jan. 1 through April 30) 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. Monday through Saturday; (May 1 through Dec. 31) 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. Monday through Friday.

J.N. "Ding" Darling National Wildlife Refuge

1 Wildlife Drive, Sanibel-Captiva Road, Mile Marker 2
(239) 472-1100 for Refuge; (239) 472-8900 for Tarpon Bay Recreation Area

www.fws.gov/refuge/jn_ding_darling or dingdarlingsociety.org

World-famous for its birding, the Refuge encompasses more than 7,600 acres of wild lands and waters, home to nearly 250 species of birds, more than 50 reptile and amphibian species and 30 types of mammals. Your chances of catching a glimpse of a number of these animals along the 4-mile Wildlife Drive or the various hiking, biking and paddling trails are excellent. But before you start down the trail, spend some time in the free Visitor & Education Center, where you will see an impressive collection of exhibits covering everything from manatees to the story of J.N. "Ding" Darling, the Pulitzer-winning cartoonist who blazed the trail to create the Refuge and legislate the Federal Duck Stamp program. Rangers and volunteers host free seasonal interpretative programs for all ages, plus there are narrated tram tours of Wildlife Drive. Nature boat and paddling tours and rentals are available at Tarpon Bay Recreation Area. Please call ahead to plan or launching your paddle craft from Wildlife Drive or Tarpon Bay.

Admission to the Education Center is free; entry to Wildlife Drive costs \$5 per vehicle, \$1 per walker or bicyclist age 15 or older.

Hours: The drive is open from 7 or 7:30 a.m. (refer to web site) to a half-hour before sunset; closed Friday. The Visitor & Education Center is open 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. daily. Tarpon Bay Recreation Area is open (Oct. 1-Feb. 15) 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. daily; (Feb. 16-Sept. 30) 8 a.m. to 6 p.m. daily.

Bailey Tract

Tarpon Bay Road
(239) 472-1100
www.fws.gov/refuge/jn_ding_darling or dingdarlingsociety.org

Part of the "Ding" Darling Refuge, it occupies a separate, 100-acre parcel of land that showcases a different, freshwater side of Sanibel Island. Whereas Wildlife Drive takes you through coastal and estuarine environment, Bailey Tract lays out an easy hike or bike through interior habitats and past freshwater ponds, where you may see ducks, alligators, marsh rabbits and nesting shorebirds. Bobcats frequent the habitat at night.

Admission is free.

Hours: Open from sunrise to sunset.

Sanibel-Captiva Conservation Foundation (SCCF)

Mile Marker 1, 3333 Sanibel-Captiva Road
(239) 472-2329
www.sccf.org

At SCCF's Nature Center, you can walk trails, climb an observation tower, explore a marine touch tank, view videos

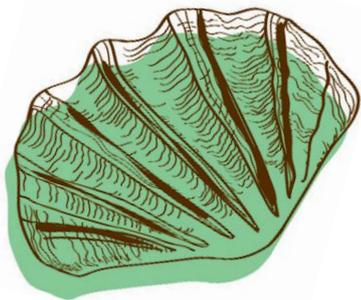
of wildlife and peer into aquariums featuring all sorts of turtles. Throughout the year, special educational programs are available; look for a calendar of events on the web. SCCF's Native Plant Nursery is open to the public at its Bailey Homestead Preserve. The organization is dedicated to the preservation of coastal habitats and aquatic resources throughout the area. Other work includes monitoring, research, preservation and restoration of water and wildlife populations on and around the islands. *Nature Center admission is \$5 for adults, free for children under age 17. Hours: (October through May) 8:30 a.m. to 4 p.m. Monday through Friday; (June through September) 8:30 a.m. to 3 p.m. Monday through Friday.*

Sanibel Sea School

*Two locations on Sanibel Island. Main campus at 414 Lagoon Drive and branch at Sundial Beach Resort & Spa. (Also offers programs at South Seas Island Resort on Captiva Island) (239) 472-8585
www.sanibelseaschool.org*

Sanibel Sea School is a nonprofit foundation whose mission is to improve the ocean's future, one person at a time, by providing field-based marine education programs. With two locations on Sanibel, the school offers day programs and weeklong camps for kids, courses for adults and private land- and boat-based programs for groups. Teachers with an established knowledge of the islands' wildlife and ecology lead all of the experiences. *Program pricing varies, visit the website for details.*

Hours: Sanibel Flagship Campus is open 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. Monday through Friday.



Island Secret

Need a "Ding" Darling fix when you're at home? Check out the Refuge's live cam, which delivers ongoing daylight feeding bird feed. Visit sanibel-captiva.org/sanibel-island-webcams to find the link.

The Islands' Darling

The Refuge provides sanctuary for birds and humans alike.

Paddling along the silent curves of J. N. "Ding" Darling National Wildlife Refuge's **Commodore Creek Trail**—through hunkering, witchy-armed mangroves and placid waterways—is a defining island experience.

Here, where freshwater intermingles with salt to support a natural world somewhere in-between, native Calusa spirits feel close. It's a world primeval where yellow-crowned night herons and snowy egrets calmly populate the mangroves, undisturbed by passing paddlers. Mullet skim beneath the surface and occasionally burst heavenward, landing somewhere between a belly-flop and a nosedive.

Most Refuge visitors drive or take the tram tour along **Wildlife Drive**, stopping to snap pictures of the birds feeding in the brackish impoundments, climbing the observation tower to spy through the scope. The drive makes it easy to view the Refuge's charismatic mega-fauna—its trademark roseate spoonbills; its fall population of white pelicans; its ospreys, bald eagles, pileated woodpeckers, wood storks, reddish egrets and herons; its alligators; its river otters and manatees.

That's the beauty of "Ding" Darling: It gives easy access to wildlife spotting, making it the second-most visited attraction on the island after the beaches. Those who work at it a little harder—leaving the car to hike, bike or paddle the Refuge—come away with more than pictures. They depart with a sense of communion.

By-foot brings you closest to Refuge secrets. It doesn't require a long hike. Following the boardwalk out to the **Mangrove Outlook**, watching the crabs skitter sideways among the mangroves, you reach the muck-fragrant estuary. Roseate spoonbills often hang out here along with egrets, herons and brown pelicans.

A favorite hike goes along the **Calusa Shell Mound Trail**, where ancient spirits undoubtedly lurk. More easily accessible, **Indigo Trail's** head sits right next to the Refuge's Visitor & Education Center. The boardwalk takes you through a hardwood forest where stillness is broken by the occasional act of hidden predation or the thrum of a pileated on a dead tree trunk. The trail leads to the new **Wildlife Education Boardwalk**, which lets you observe freshwater habitat from a two-level deck. Along the boardwalk, re-creations of wildlife tracks and scat help visitors identify clues that Refuge animals leave.

To learn more about what you see on the Refuge's Wildlife Drive, stop in for a free visit at the hands-on **Refuge Visitor & Education Center**, and look at what's been sighted lately via the e-Bird monitor and illustrated Recent Sightings Board.

Interactive exhibits include the **Marvelous Manatees**, which teaches about the sea creature whose articulated skeleton hangs above it; **Living with Dinosaurs**, with hands-on tools to understand alligators and crocodiles; and **Saving Sea Turtles**, focusing on preservation of the loggerhead turtles that nest on local beaches.

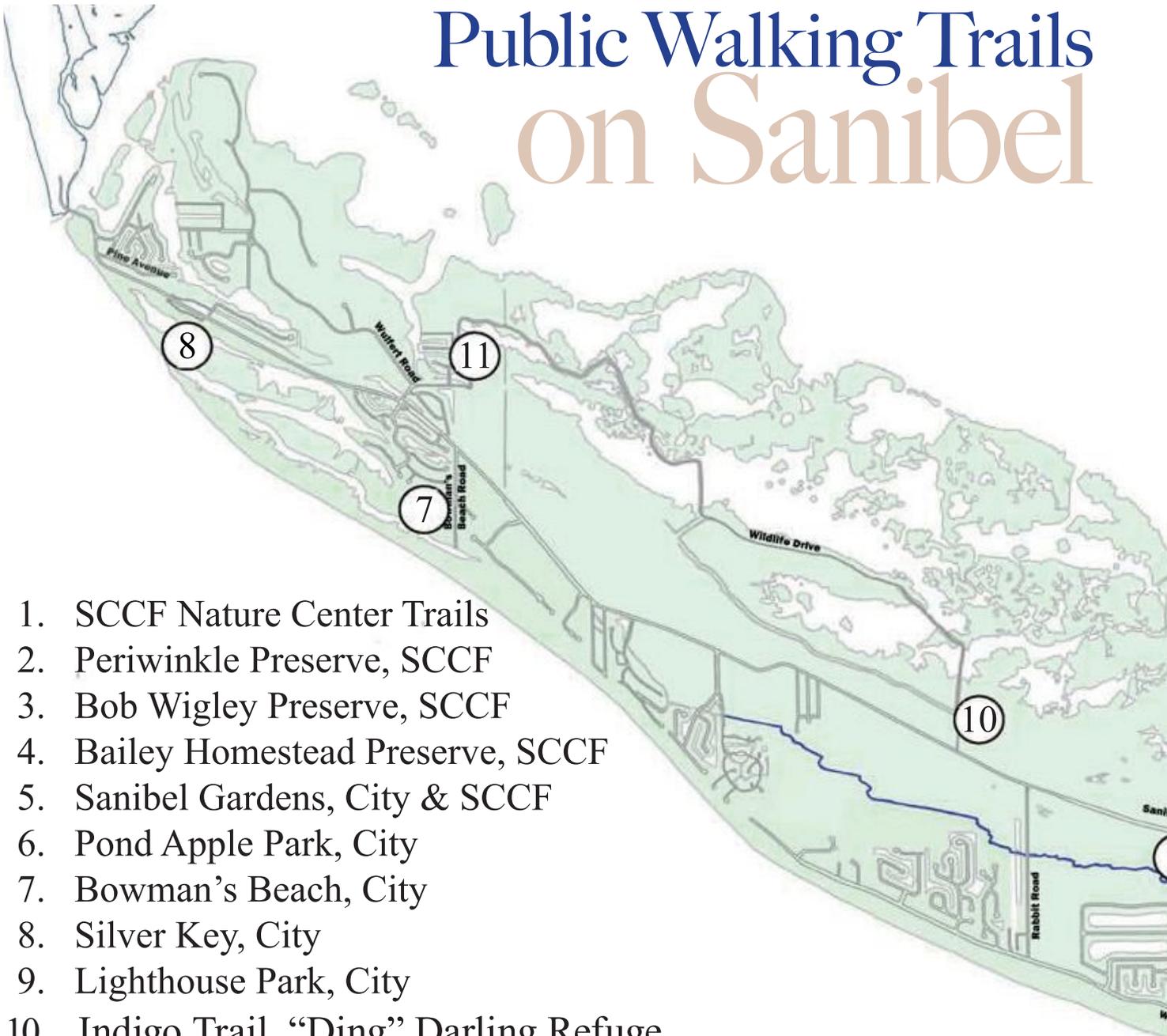
For a more immersive nature experience, "Ding" Darling Refuge and its **Tarpon Bay Recreation Area** schedule a number of tours, programs and rentals throughout the year—including kayaks, stand-up paddleboards, canoes, bicycles and pontoon boats. Visitors can connect with a nature boating cruise and touch tank session, kayak and stand-up paddleboarding tours, and excursions at sunset, when the birds fly in to roost in Tarpon Bay's rookery islands.

Refuge staff lead free bike tours, hikes, beach walks and other educational tours and family programs during the winter and summer seasons. Trained naturalists narrate tram tours along Wildlife Drive.

"Ding" Darling Days (www.DingDarlingDays.com), the Refuge's annual birding and eco-festival, takes education to another level of fun (see page 60) for one weekend in mid-October.

Every way it can, "Ding" Darling Refuge strives to get people outside to engage in nature and learn about wildlife and conservation. Nearly a million people visit each year to learn about the rare ecology that its namesake foresaw as precious some 80 years ago.

Public Walking Trails on Sanibel



1. SCCF Nature Center Trails
2. Periwinkle Preserve, SCCF
3. Bob Wigley Preserve, SCCF
4. Bailey Homestead Preserve, SCCF
5. Sanibel Gardens, City & SCCF
6. Pond Apple Park, City
7. Bowman's Beach, City
8. Silver Key, City
9. Lighthouse Park, City
10. Indigo Trail, "Ding" Darling Refuge
11. Calusa Shell Mound Trail, "Ding" Darling Refuge
12. Bailey Tract, "Ding" Darling Refuge

SCCF Trails

SCCF Nature Center Trails - Walk 1/2 mile to Sanibel River tower and back, or walk all 4.5 miles of trails in Sanibel interior freshwater wetlands. Enter through Nature Center, M-F 8:30 to 4. Cost \$5 per adult.

Periwinkle Preserve - No on-site parking; arrive by bike or foot. Walk a restored migratory bird trail with kiosk. Can park at Jerry's or Mango Bay at corner of Casa Ybel and Periwinkle Rd. Walk 1/10 mile west on Periwinkle bike path to trailhead.

Bob Wigley Preserve - No parking; bike or walk to trailhead. Can park at bank at corner of Casa Ybel and Periwinkle Rd. then walk Casa Ybel bike path .5 mile to short trail with kiosk.

Bailey Homestead Preserve - The 28.3 acre Bailey Family Homestead includes the family house and the Shipley Trail.

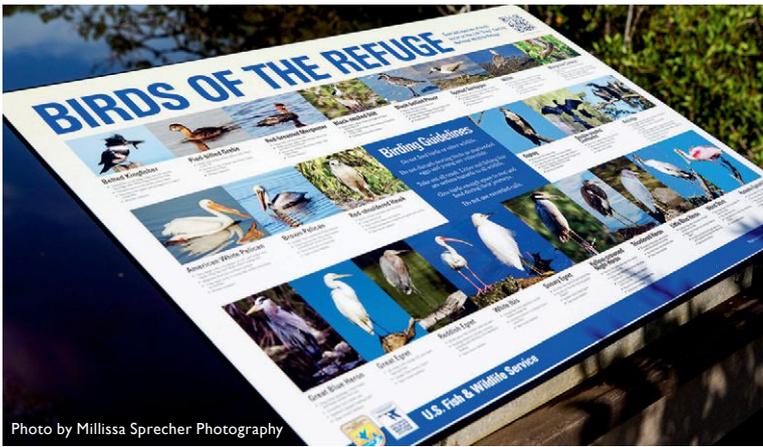
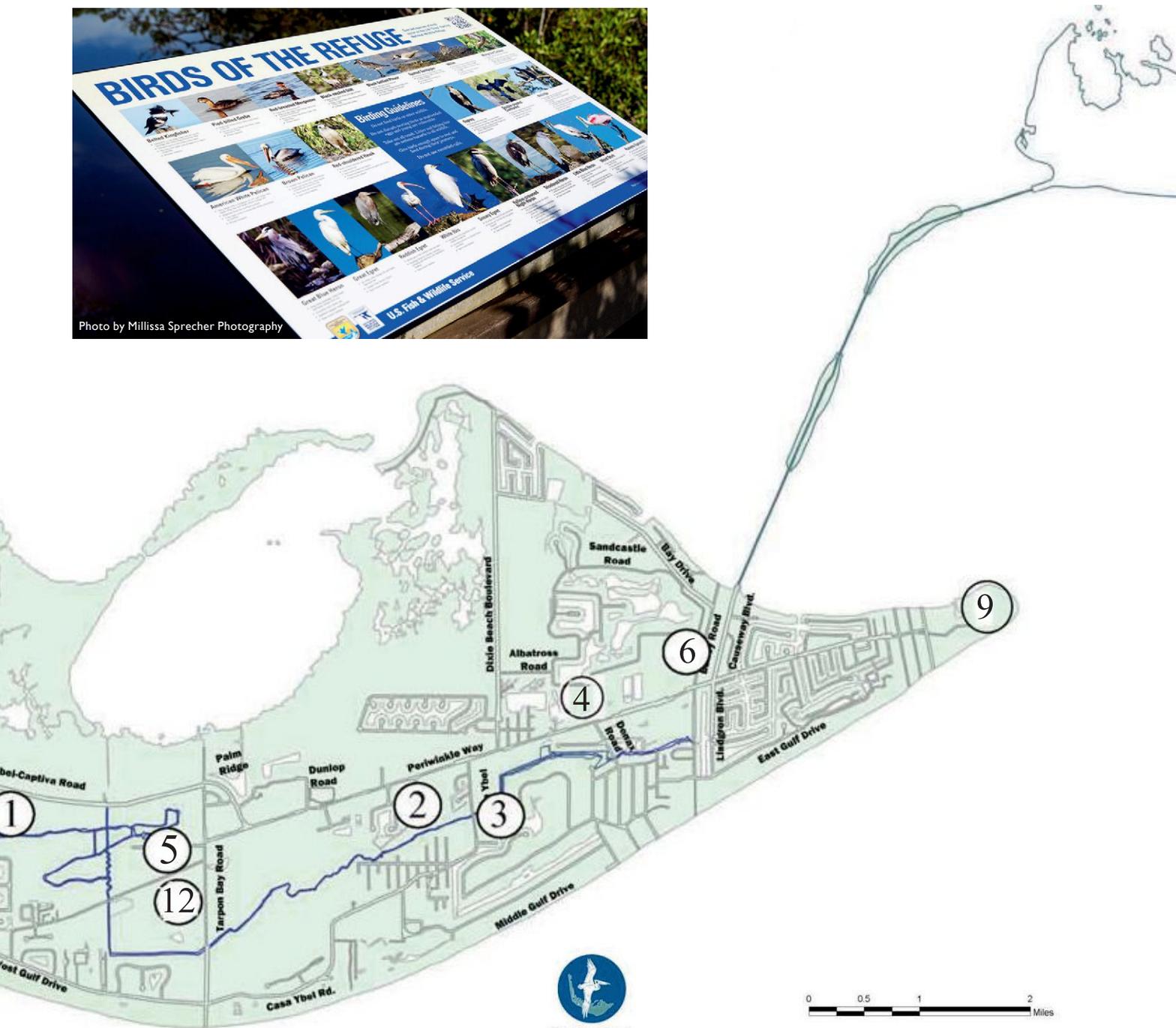


Photo by Millissa Sprecher Photography



SCCF Prepared by: Sanibel-Captiva Conservation Foundation

City of Sanibel Trails

- Sanibel Gardens** - Enter Island Inn Rd. from Tarpon Bay Rd. across from Bailey's grocery store. Park at trailhead.
- Pond Apple Trail** - Park at Chamber of Commerce on Lindgren by causeway; walk or bicycle 1.6-mile loop trail.
- Bowman's Beach Trail** - Paid parking at Bowman's Beach, trail runs parallel to beach.
- Silver Key Trail** - Paid parking at Blind Pass and walk .5 mile SE along beach to trail head.
- Lighthouse Park** - Paid parking at Lighthouse Beach – walking trails, restrooms, fishing pier and picnic area.

“Ding” Darling Refuge Trails

- Indigo Trail & Wildlife Education Boardwalk** - Park at Visitor & Education Center. Walk 4.6-mile round-trip trail.
- Calusa Shell Mound Trail** - Park at parking area at end of Wildlife Drive. Walk 1/3-mile boardwalk trail.
- Bailey Tract** - Park at trail head on Tarpon Bay Rd. Walk or bike through trails.



Out-of-Car EXPERIENCES

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Instagram
Alert

Shoot a bird's eye perspective from the observation tower along SCCF's Nature Center trails. @sccf_swfl #sanibelfromabove

Photo Credit Lee County VCB/Fort Myers-Sanibel.com

When it comes to exploring our islands, think outside of the car. Or just think "outside." No car required. Downshift into island mode and take your explorations to the sands, trails, paths and waterways for the ultimate island experience. It's better for your health and the health of our islands.

Sandy Footsteps

Most people begin their island walks on our most scenic side: the beach. Although it is easy to get distracted by the shells lying at your feet and the dolphins slicing through the waters offshore, the beach supplies a

proper introduction to maritime habitat and a most gratifying way to exercise.

Look closely and you will see the coin-sized holes that ghost crabs have excavated. If you hold still, you might see one at work shoveling fistfuls of sand out of the opening.

Stand at water's edge with your feet planted in the sand, and you might notice a tickling sensation after each wave. That's when you will see hundreds of tiny coquina shells squirming their way back into the wet sand after the surf has exposed them, offering feet a bit of beachside reflexology.

Along the beach, shorebirds skitter and peck for lunch, pelicans do kamikaze dives for fish, and dolphins flirt in the surf. In summer, you will see the roped-off nests of super-sized loggerhead sea turtles and tiny, fluffy snowy plover birds, both listed species.

With animals happening in the air, in the sea and on the land, the beach is decidedly one of the islands' most dynamic wildlife-watching venues. Favorites include **Lighthouse Beach**, where you can explore from Gulf side to bayside, and **Bowman's Beach**, where seclusion rewards and shells abound.

Hot on the Trail

But don't stop there. Much more awaits discovery on inland trails. Steal away to the islands' preserved wild parts, which account for about two-thirds of Sanibel Island's acreage—more than 10,000 square miles of land mass in all.

For birders especially, **J.N. "Ding" Darling National Wildlife Refuge** tops the list, known worldwide as one of the top coastal bird habitats. You could just drive your vehicle around the 4-mile Wildlife Drive, but then you would miss the rich fauna activity along the trails. You must look closely, often with binoculars and scopes, to see the shy birds, partially submerged alligators, antisocial river otters and wee mangrove crabs and lizards that play in and around the wetland.

The trail at the Refuge's **Bailey Tract** loops around lakeside habitat in a remote location off-campus where bobcats prowl, birds nest and alligators swim.

The **Sanibel-Captiva Conservation Foundation's (SCCF)** nature trail leads to a different waterfront—the Sanibel River. Look for golden orb spiders, gopher tortoises, alligators and woodland birds along the way.

SCCF maintains more than 30 other preserves funded by private donations. At some, trails welcome you to hike into the quiet of nature and observe marsh rabbits, raccoons and, if you're really lucky, bobcats. (Don't worry, they're more frightened of you than you of them.)



Island Secret

Indigo Trail at "Ding" Darling Refuge leads to the Wildlife Education Boardwalk where you can make a game of guessing "Whose Scat is That?" Replicated scat samples (that's right: poop!) from various Refuge critters line the boardwalk's railing.

Flat roads, lush vegetation and blue skies are all reasons Sanibel is the perfect place for all types of cycling. Twenty-three miles of paved shared-use paths provide safe passage for family and pleasure cycling, leading to shopping, dining, beaches, trails, and most condos and resorts.

Paths have marked crosswalks without curbs, which helps to accommodate special needs travelers. Adult trikes and wheelchair/bike combos are common sights, along with many other users both on foot and on wheels. The islands have something to offer the road cyclist also. Although there are no marked bike lanes on the roads, the top speed is 35 mph, allowing for safe road cycling. Experienced cyclists enjoy "tip to tip" morning rides which include beautiful gulf water views of both Sanibel and Captiva. Experience a truly breathtaking sunrise or sunset ride along the 3-mile causeway and view the bay from a 70-foot elevation.

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Photo Credit Lee County VCB/Fort Myers-Sanibel.com

Pedal Pushing

Instead of driving around **Wildlife Drive** at “Ding” Darling Refuge, try two-wheeling for close-up encounters. The entire loop from the Visitor & Education Center, through the Refuge and back to the center via the **Sanibel-Captiva Road** (a.k.a. San-Cap Road) shared-use path, is about 8 miles, all paved. Or you may want to diverge onto the unpaved shortcut via the **Cross-Dike Trail** almost 2 miles from the Refuge’s entrance.

Sanibel Island’s 25-mile hard-paved **shared-use path** takes you just about anywhere you want to go. Nature-lovers bike the “conservation corridor” path paralleling San-Cap Road. It leads to “Ding” Darling, SCCF and other environmental attractions. Here there are few cyclists and driveways, which makes biking breezier than on some of the well-traveled path sections along Periwinkle Way.

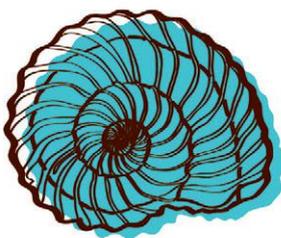
Try the loop off Sanibel-Captiva Road that runs parallel to **Rabbit Road** behind the houses on the west side. It ends at **West Gulf Drive**, where you can turn left and circle around to **Tarpon Bay Road**, past beach and the Bailey Tract (where bikes are allowed, but must be walked in parts), then back to San-Cap Road.

Another favorite by-bike destination along San-Cap Road, **Bowman’s Beach** lies north of the Refuge. At the Blind Pass Bridge to Captiva Island, the shared-use path ends, and pedaling can become a bit treacherous on Captiva’s curvy road, especially in the busy winter season. But if you’re staying in **Captiva Island’s “downtown” area**, by all means rent a bike to explore the nearby sights and shops.

Closer to the Causeway, a shell-paved and boardwalk path takes cyclists off-road along **Shipleigh and Pond Apple trails**, behind the **SCCF Bailey Homestead Preserve** historic site. On Periwinkle Way, stop at the **Shared-Use Path Welcome Gazebo** to rest awhile and view a map of the paths and other useful information for your island cycling explorations.

With an average elevation of 4 feet, the islands’ geography makes biking practically effortless. A number of rental outlets and resorts carry all manner of biking equipment from mountain bikes to tandems, baby trailers and family-sized surreys.

continued on page 36



Island Secret

Before taking to Sanibel Island’s shared-use path on two wheels, visit www.mysanibel.com to watch the “Cycling on Sanibel” video.

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Protect Wildlife

Take the tram. Enjoy a relaxing, informative tour knowing that the proceeds directly benefit the "Ding" Darling Wildlife Refuge.

The J.N. "Ding" Darling National Wildlife Refuge (NWR) is second only to beaches as the island's top attraction. It is one of the most visited refuges in the United States. Traveling Wildlife Drive is an experience people will remember.

This pristine natural ecosystem has been preserved within a densely populated region of southwest Florida. Over 750,000 people visit the refuge annually and explore Wildlife Drive, most of them by car. Unfortunately, this automobile traffic constantly exposes this delicate ecosystem to polluting exhaust fumes and noisy automobile engines. Visitors should consider taking the tram that is offered several times daily to tour Wildlife Drive. Wildlife refuges are created and maintained for the protection and conservation of wildlife and their natural habitats. Bear this in mind, and experience this unique refuge in the way that has the least impact on its inhabitants. If the automobile traffic continues and the human impact on the ecosystem is not reduced, our children and grandchildren will not be able to enjoy this wonderful experience.

Not only is the tram the better touring option when we consider impact, but it is also the more enjoyable option, and it provides a more in-depth learning experience. With an experienced guide,

you'll spot wildlife most visitors would never see on their own or would not be able to identify. In addition to identifying all the refuge inhabitants, the guides are a wealth of information regarding the biology and life history of these species. The guides take visitors past tidal mud flats and mangrove forests where roseate spoonbills, herons, egrets, pelicans, ibis, anhingas and many more birds may be observed.

You will have the chance to stop and stretch your legs along the way. The Mangrove Overlook Boardwalk is a great place to spot tree crabs, fiddler crabs, periwinkle snails and more. On a walk to the water's edge near the Cross Dike, you may spot crown conch, jumping mullet or even a marsh rabbit.

You never know what you may encounter along the way. The tram tour guides are always on the lookout for interesting and unusual wildlife. The guides will stop the tram whenever they – or a passenger – see something to share with the group. The tram tour isn't just about the wildlife; you'll hear who J. Norwood "Ding" Darling was, and also hear much of the history of the Calusa Indians and other Sanibel folklore. The tram benefits the wildlife and the refuge visitors, so please consider this option next time you visit "Ding" Darling NWR.

Sit back and enjoy the ride with your hands free to snap photos or hold your binoculars as you gaze at the wildlife. You'll know you made the right choice by taking the tram. Protect wildlife and take the tram. For more information call 239-472-1351 or 239-472-8900. *

Scan Code To Learn More



A Closer Look

Guides will stop the tram to allow you to more closely encounter this delicate ecosystem and its inhabitants.



Marsh Rabbit

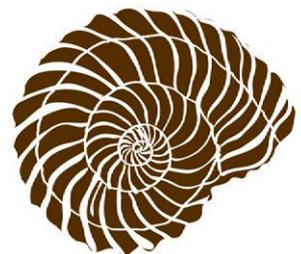
You Deserve a Good Paddle

When it comes to traveling around island waterways—whether it’s the Gulf, bay, estuaries or river—paddling is the most wildlife-intimate, eco-conscious mode. Outfitters on both islands can set you up with a kayak, canoe or stand-up paddleboard (SUP) that best fits the type of water or activity you choose.

Besides rentals, outfitters offer kayaking and SUP lessons for beginners and guided tours into the islands’ most secret wildlife areas where you can’t go by larger craft. There is no better way to get close to the islands’ wealth of bird life and marine creatures. Dolphins often escort your excursion, and occasionally a manatee will sneak a back-scratch from the bottom of your craft. Listen for sounds of the osprey call and the whoosh and laugh of pileated woodpeckers.

Early morning or sunset is the best time to commune with nature in the calm of paddling. **Commodore Creek Trail** at J. N. “Ding” Darling National Wildlife Refuge’s **Tarpon Bay Recreation Area** takes you past rookeries and manatees and into mangroves—a perfect introduction to kayaking for beginners and families.

The calm waters between Captiva Island and **Buck Key** are also conducive to paddling, and the **Buck Key Paddling Trail** keeps you shaded and cool under a mangrove canopy. The trails connect to the 190-mile Great Calusa Blueway Trail (www.calusablueway.com) that travels throughout Lee County.



Island Secret

More than 20 artificial reefs around Sanibel and Captiva Islands attract great schools of fish for anglers and divers. The latest was created in July 2012 after sinking a 165-foot World War II cutter, the *USS Mohawk*, 28 nautical miles off Sanibel Island shores. To learn more about the reefs locations and marine species they attract, visit www.leereefs.org.



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By Sail or Motor

You've decided to come to an island, drawn by the beckon of the sea; so indulge your inner sailor and get out on the water. It's the island thing to do.

Fans of hushed sea adventure with more efficiency than a kayak go for sailing. Then there's that whole romance thing to recommend it. "Sailing into the sunset" may sound like a cliché, but the experience never grows anything less than spectacular.

For fishing or for island-hopping to **Cayo Costa**, **North Captiva Island**, and **Cabbage Key** to beach, shell, picnic or do lunch in a seaside restaurant, power boating is the most practical transportation.

No matter how slowly or fast you want your explorations to move along, you can find boats to rent at island marinas. They stock center-console, deck and pontoon boats for day-cruising up and down the Intracoastal Waterway—surely one of the islands' more simultaneously relaxing and exhilarating experiences.

Some resorts keep a fleet of small catamaran-style sailboats to use from the

beach and out into the Gulf of Mexico. In addition, you will find paddle bikes and other fun water toys. A renowned sailing school on Captiva Island certifies students to rent and operate its graceful sailing yachts.

On windy days at the **Sanibel Causeway** and occasionally on **Lighthouse Beach**, you can watch windsurfers and kiteboarders performing feats of aerial dynamics. Look like fun? Rentals and lessons are available to satisfy that urge to jump on in and fly.



Photo by Alejandra Bustamante

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Sea Cruising

The ultimate way to relax while you explore waters around Sanibel and Captiva Islands, charters and cruises travel around local waters to deep-water fishing holes, to neighboring un-bridged islands and into the sunset.

You will find **charter boats** at the marinas or working independently (check sanibel-captiva.org for both). They are ready to do your bidding, whether your goal is sightseeing, shelling, birding the bay's rookery islands, snorkeling, water-skiing, wakeboarding, sunset-gazing, bar-hopping or a combo platter. Charter boating is ideal for families and small groups who wish to design their own itinerary for a half or full day on the water.

One of the most popular type of boat charters makes use of the captain's local knowledge and GPS waypoints to find fish. For first-time **boat fishing** in the area, chartering is the way to go. Some of the captains have fished these waters for decades, and they know exactly where each species of fish hangs out in every season and whatever time of day.

Cruise boats present a more affordable option for seeing nature and the upper islands. Regularly scheduled cruises specialize in various experiences from shelling to yachting and gambling. Some tours focus on dolphins and the environment. Others talk about the history of the islands. One of the latter tours stops for lunch at historic **Useppa Island**, a private club accessible only to its members and the day-passengers of luncheon cruises.

Island Secret

Pond apple trees are native to the islands. Despite their fruity name, they rarely appeal to human tastes, although some animals find them tasty enough.

Sea life cruises involve a naturalist who identifies beach and marine finds. Sunset cruises end the day with drama and romance. One comes complete with a cash bar and live entertainment. An entirely different excursion takes you on a high-speed thrill ride around the islands, while sailing cruises take the slowest, laziest route possible. There's even a cruise with a pirate theme.

Many of the large tour boats also hire out for big-group, special-event chartering and custom cruises. A beach feast for 20 on castaway Cayo Costa anyone?



Photo Credit Lee County VCB/Fort Myers-Sanibel.com



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If your family is looking for something just as exhilarating but not quite as sky-high, banana boat rides accommodate up to six passengers. Riders must be age 6 to climb aboard this frenzied float.

Escape on your own adventure and agenda with a Waverunner rental. Zip around local waters with a half-hour or hour rental, or book a guided excursion to the upper islands or into dolphin habitat.

Island Secret

Summer evenings at sea can surprise with a spectacular finale—glowing organisms in the water known as “dinoflagellates.” Lay folk call it “phosphorescence,” but whatever you call the unpredictable visits to our summer waters, they create a magic, topsy-turvy, ethereal feeling that someone—without warning—has transformed the sea into a starry sky.

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Roughly shaped like a wishbone, tiny Captiva Island makes you wish you'd never have to leave this land beyond Sanibel Island, beyond compare.

A little bit Key West, a teeny nip of New England and a dash of Caribbean, Captiva resists comparison to any of those places. It simply is Captiva, as exotic and captivating as it sounds. A place unlike any other. A restful place, the ultimate escape from pressures and worries: Pressures and worries, after all, are considered contraband when you are crossing the Blind Pass bridge.

Welcome to Captiva...

Blind Pass, the threshold between Sanibel to Captiva Island, is the definitive cut-off from reality. The short bridge between the two islands crosses at Turner Beach, where the flushing waters of the pass reward fishermen, surfers and shell-gatherers.

From Turner Beach, Captiva Drive begins its corkscrew foray into this island world. Nothing is as it should be here, much like circumstances in *Alice in Wonderland*. Roads run—ignoring grids and logic—in delightful confusion. Trees, bushes and flowers grow amok. There are no mailboxes, no street lights, no points of reference. People call their houses by names like Hakuna Matata and Daze-Off—houses obscured behind hedges of blossomy bougainvillea and ixora. Humble to magnificent, the homes demonstrate Captiva's fetching blend of old-new, whimsical-sophisticated.

Captiva Island introduces its eccentricities slowly, gently. The road contorts through a column of tall, thick palm trees. In understories, sea hibiscus, poincianas, scaevola, sea grapes and plumbago proliferate. The vegetative



Instagram
Alert

Captiva Island's charming Chapel By the Sea—once a schoolhouse—provides a picturesque photographic subject. #religiousexperience. At the historic seaside cemetery next to it, visitors often leave seashells rather than flowers at the headstones. #restinginpeace #seashellbouquet

channel gives way to the road's only straight stretch along sea and sand, one of Florida's most scenic and photographed drives. At places, you can see from one island shore across to the other. A sharp turn snaps you quickly from Gulf to bay and into "downtown Captiva," if such a thing exists.

The Captiva Lifestyle

More of a neighborhood than a town, Captiva sees its residents and visitors walk or drive golf carts from place to place along Andy Rosse Lane. Vacationers stay in fishing cottages, guest houses, sweet little inns and fantasy resorts. They blow kazoos at crab races and march in Mullet Parades. They stop at restaurants with peculiar names to eat Duck Fingers, Bubble Bread and Gator Bites. They visit lollipop-colored shops that look victim to a crayon factory explosion. They walk the 5-mile beach that stretches past Gulf-front homes to the island's northern tip at Redfish Pass. Access to the north-end Alison Hagerup Beach lies in between, off a parking lot at the end of Captiva Drive.

Island Secret Captiva Island's north end was once connected to today's North Captiva Island by a neck known as The Narrows. A 1921 hurricane broke that neck to create Redfish Pass. The pass was thusly christened when, for some unknown reason, redfish ran through it so profusely that the waters looked red. The phenomenon has never happened since, much to the chagrin of those in quest of the prized food fish.

Activity of the adventurous kind centers around Captiva's resorts, abuzz with the adrenaline of sporting types. Harbor-side marinas provide a full menu of watersports activities. Board a tour boat to collect shells, and have lunch at an unbridged island to the north. Or rent a vessel and chart your own high seas course. Hook up with a fishing guide, who will whisk you off to a favorite, secret sweet spot. Hop aboard a kayak and enjoy our rare ecology at fundamental level, through Captiva's Roosevelt Channel to the offshore mangroves of Buck Key. Float the heavens on a parasail ride. Local watersports rental shops can also get you out on anything from a stand-up paddleboard or surfboard to a sailboat, banana boat or waverunner.

Muses & Luminaries

From Roosevelt Channel—named for President Theodore Roosevelt, who once fished these waters—you will notice an old, stilted fish house hovering over bay waters and connected to land by a narrow wooden bridge. Once owned by conservationist and Pulitzer Prize-winning political cartoonist Jay N. "Ding"

Darling, it later served as a studio for world-renowned assemblage artist Robert Rauschenberg. Today the fish house is part of a 20-acre artist's colony complex, Rauschenberg's island legacy.

The Robert Rauschenberg Foundation Captiva Residency Program was inspired by the artist's early years at Black Mountain College in North Carolina, where the artistic community greatly influenced the direction of his groundbreaking work in the late 1940s. The Captiva program reflects Rauschenberg's career-long interest in collaborative creativity and promotes a spirit of innovation and boundary-busting.

Island Secret Early Captiva Island settlers farmed eggplants, tomatoes, peppers and other ground and tree crops. The Chadwick plantation, where South Seas Island Resort now spreads, was once the world's largest producer of key limes.

The Texas-born artist worked from his island studio for more than 40 years, up until his death in 2008. He was not the first to find his muse on this quirky little island. Charles Lindbergh, famed *Spirit of St. Louis* pilot, and his wife, Anne Morrow Lindbergh, vacationed on Captiva Island and visited often during the late 1930s and early 1940s. Both recorded impressions of their stays in published journals—most famously in Anne's *Gift From the Sea*, poignant essays that compare the stages of a woman's life with the seashells the author found on the beach.

The close-knit community of islanders back then guarded the Lindberghs' privacy during controversial times, and for decades the location of their "sea-shell of a house" and clandestine visits was kept under wraps.

Other creative luminaries who spent time on the island include pop artist Roy Lichtenstein, playwright Thornton Wilder and violinist-composer Albert Spalding.

Captiva Island remains a tight, insular community that gathers at the Captiva Civic Association complex to hash out local issues. The newly expanded building holds the Captiva Memorial Library and an exhibit room hosted by the Captiva Island Historical Society. It explores and celebrates the island's fascinating past and ever-captivating charms through exhibits, videos and historic images.

Island Secret The historical society's Captiva Island exhibit boards the replicated *Santiva* mail boat, which carried a lot more than letters between the mainland and islands from 1936 to 1963, pre-Sanibel causeway. Vacationers, school kids, groceries, farming supplies and other folks and necessities made the daily trips.



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Fishing

Sanibel & Captiva Islands

Exciting fishing opportunities around Sanibel and Captiva Islands await the angler who is eager to “wet a line.” Whether fishing inshore, the back country, on a fishing pier, offshore or at the beaches, fishing areas are easily accessible and productive all months of the year. Anglers with all levels of skill and experience seek the pristine waters around the islands to take advantage of the great fishing opportunities for a variety of species.

Going offshore for grouper, Spanish mackerel, king mackerel, grouper, snapper, sharks, bonito, cobia, tripletail or tarpon means the boater might be as close as one to two miles or as far as 20-30 miles away from land. Many artificial reefs and wrecks offer the angler unlimited chances for terrific fishing and/or diving.

Tarpon fishing in world-famous Boca Grande Pass is usually drift fishing in large boats with heavy tackle or jig fishing in large skiffs.

The back country and flats fishing can be “gang busters” when it comes to sight fishing in the clear waters for snook, redfish, seatrout and other species. Tarpon fishing in the back bays can be very productive when the water temperature reaches 75-76 degrees. Fishing for tarpon along the beaches in smaller skiffs is quite popular especially for fly fishermen.

Wade fishing along the beaches or fishing off the Sanibel Fishing Pier offers the angler a wide variety of fish to cast to: pompano, whiting, seatrout, snook, redfish, sheepshead, mackerel, sharks or flounder to name a few.

Fishermen from novice to advanced anglers, using heavy tackle, light tackle, live bait, artificial lures or fly rods, can experience world-class fishing around Sanibel and Captiva Islands.

Written by Joyce Rehr



Photo by Nick Adams Photography



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CULTURE:

Artful Heritage

Inspired by nature and history

Photo by Alejandra Bustamante

From Calusa tribesmen to Robert Rauschenberg, these islands have ever inspired the arts with their intrinsic beauty and spirit of individuality.

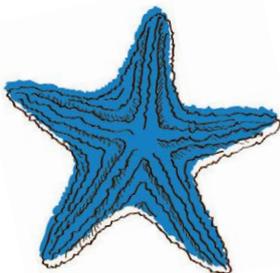
The Calusa built shell mounds to demonstrate hierarchal importance, fashioned tools out of seashells, carved intricate masks and sculpted pottery to use for cooking. Today multilayered history has built upon that native foundation, a history that informs and inspires a strong legacy of island pride and passion for the arts—from painting and sculpture to music and drama.

Past Tense

The Sanibel Historical Museum and Village remembers the Calusa with a room devoted to their culture. The museum's collection of vintage and replicated island structures takes visitors into more recent eras—through the days of citrus farming, ferry boat transportation and mosquito brooms.

The Sanibel Historical Society, which operates the village, is also responsible for historical markers placed throughout the island to identify buildings and sites that tell the Sanibel Island story. One of the most-visited historic structures, the Sanibel Lighthouse punctuates with exclamation the island's East End, where a beach and nature park surround it.

The Captiva Community Association serves as the heart of culture on Captiva Island. The building is home to the Captiva Memorial Library and a historical museum that pokes into island bygones and explores historical sites such as Chapel By the Sea.



Island Secret

The Sanibel Island Historical Preservation plans to begin installation of a new City of Sanibel Heritage Trail by 2018. Its interpretive panels explore the island's agriculture, education, pioneers, wildlife, governance, racial integration and other historic aspects.

Art Vibe

Ever since Edna St. Vincent Millay and Anne Morrow Lindbergh visited the islands for literary inspiration, Sanibel and Captiva Islands have attracted the creative. The most famous modern-day artistic resident—the late, world-renowned assemblage artist Robert Rauschenberg—made his home on Captiva Island. The Texas-born artist worked from his Captiva studio for more than 40 years, up until his death in 2008. The artist has left there a legacy of art in the form of a 20-acre artists' colony.

Rauschenberg's early years at Black Mountain College in North Carolina, where the artistic community greatly influenced the direction of his groundbreaking work in the late 1940s, inspired today's Robert Rauschenberg Foundation Captiva Residency Program. It reflects Rauschenberg's career-long interest in collaborative creativity and promotes a spirit of innovation and boundary-bending. Internationally renowned artist Darryl Pottorf, and other locally acclaimed artists such as Jonas Stirner and Andrew Corke have followed in his wake.

The artistic vibe spreads throughout the islands, where a trail of art galleries display fine art of all media inspired by the sea and its various moods. Plein-air artists capture the inspiring scenery in watercolors and oils. The galleries carry works from historic black-and-white island photography to jewelry, textile arts, raku pottery, sculpture and delicate art glass.

You will find galleries in all the major shopping centers and along Tarpon Bay Road. Some are co-operatives, where you can find the artists themselves running the show, sometimes giving demonstrations.

Sanibel Public Library displays the works of the Sanibel-Captiva Art League on a revolving basis. It also hosts important authors such as, in years past, Paul Theroux and Jodi Picoult during its winter lecture series. Sanibel Public Library and Captiva Memorial Library are the islands' intellectual centers, places of refuge for the spirit and mind.

Another oasis of culture, the BIG ARTS complex on Sanibel Island holds two separate galleries with changing exhibits. It also teaches workshops geared both for adults and kids. They address disciplines from glass-fusing to African dance. The 1.5-





Chadwick's Square

2 Islands Gallery is a whimsical fun place to shop for fabulous one of a kind items created by local artists. We feature a large selection of custom made jewelry, pottery, island paintings, artful clothing, handbags, decorative baskets, painted silk scarfs, island ceramics, infrared photography, mermaids, note cards, prints and more.

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www.2islandsgallery.com
 10:00 to 6:00 Mon.-Sun.



acre campus brings performance, as well as visual arts, to appreciative audiences. In its 409-seat auditorium it hosts films, readings, plays, symphony, dance and other performance arts.

Nearby, the BIG ARTS Strauss Theater hosts stage performances in an intimate setting. The 160-seat modern facility stages professional musicals, comedies, revues and other highly entertaining shows that fill the house.

See below for more information on island places where culture thrives like the islands' own flora.

Island Secret

Late artist Robert Rauschenberg's Captiva Island estate includes a historic fish shack (visible from Roosevelt Channel) built by Pulitzer Prize-winning cartoonist Jay Norwood "Ding" Darling. The important '30s political cartoonist constructed a drawbridge to discourage visitors while he was working.

The Culture Trail

BIG ARTS

900 Dunlop Road, Sanibel Island
(239) 395-0900
www.bigarts.org

Each winter season brings a bright choice of high-brow entertainment to the stage at Schein Hall—from film to ballet. Throughout the year, the center offers classes and workshops for kids and adults, as well as art exhibits in its Phillips and Founders galleries. In November, it hosts, along with Sanibel Public Library, the FGCU-Sanibel Island Writers Conference featuring celebrity authors as lecturers.

Office hours: (October through April) 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. weekdays; (May through September) 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. weekdays

BIG ARTS Strauss Theater

2200 Periwinkle Way, Sanibel Island
(239) 472-6862
www.bigarts.org/performing-arts

Created circa 1960 in a historic one-room school building that is now part of the Sanibel Historical Village, it today occupies a thoroughly modern facility. It seats 160 and stages upbeat musical comedy, revues and other performances. Productions in 2018 include *Noises Off* and *Dames at Sea*.

Captiva Memorial Library

11560 Chapin Lane, Captiva Island
(239) 533-4890
www.leegov.com/library/branches/cv

Part of the Lee County Public Library System, the Captiva library offers a quiet

place among books of all genres, specializing in local history and nature. Residents and visitors alike are welcome to peruse the collection, access the Internet through the wireless connection or the library's computers and attend the library's various book discussions and other programs. (For \$15, visitors can purchase a three-month temporary library card.) The library contains a children's section and a room devoted to the Captiva Island Historical Society.

Hours: 10 a.m. to 6 p.m. Tuesday and Thursday, noon to 8 p.m. Wednesday, and 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. Friday and Saturday; closed Sunday and Monday.



Instagram Alert

Get a selfie of you captaining the historic *Santiva* mail boat. With a photographic Roosevelt Channel background, you can take the wheel at this historical society exhibit inside the Captiva library. #ohcaptainmycaptain

Chapel By the Sea

11580 Chapin Lane, Captiva Island
(239) 472-1646, (856) 229-7794 (May through October)
www.captivachapel.com

Once a schoolhouse where religious services were held on Sundays, today this charming, historic building is all church—extremely popular for weddings. During winter season, mid-November through April, it holds an interdenominational church service every Sunday. Next to the chapel at its peaceful seaside setting, a historic cemetery holds the graves of island pioneers and the more recently departed.

Edison & Ford Winter Estates

2340 McGregor Blvd., Fort Myers
(239) 334-7419
www.edisonfordwinterestates.org

If there is ever a reason to leave the islands while visiting, this is it. Here, two of America's most brilliant geniuses, Thomas A. Edison and Henry Ford, spent their winters side-by-side. The estates take in Edison's twin homes, the Ford home, Edison's botanical gardens and laboratory, a museum of Edison's inventions, the Caretaker's Home and a stunning view of the Caloosahatchee River. Visitors can see the grounds by guided or self-guided tour.

Hours: Daily 9 a.m. to 5:30 p.m. Special tours are available weekly.

Admission: Guided tours \$30 for adults, \$25 for teens ages 13 to 19, and \$18 for children ages 6 to 12; laboratory and museum-only admission is \$15, \$12 and \$8; other tour options available on web site.

The Sanibel Community Association

2173 Periwinkle Way
(239) 472-2155
www.sanibelcommunityhouse.net

Here's where it all happens on Sanibel Island, in recently renovated and expanded old-island-style digs. Home to the Sanibel Community Association, it hosts everything from shellcrafting and cooking classes, to community fundraisers and the Shell Festival every winter. The city park next to the House holds a family playground and space for art fairs and other events.

Island Secret

At age 76, artist and socialist Curtis A. Perry decided Sanibel and Captiva needed a community center. That's when he put on his walking shoes and hiked the length of the islands to promote the idea and solicit support door-to-door for today's Sanibel Community House.

Sanibel Historical Museum and Village

950 Dunlop Road
(239) 472-4648
www.sanibelmuseum.org

Step back in time to Old Sanibel, condensed into an easy-to-stroll village of historic and recreated buildings. The village collection began with the early 20th-century Rutland House, an example of Florida Cracker architecture. Today the home holds period furnishings and historic exhibits. Through the years, the Sanibel Historical Society has added the old Bailey's General Store and 1926 Model-T truck, 1926 Post Office, 1924 Sears-Roebuck kit home with a Children's Room, circa-1930 tea room, 1898 cottage, 1896 schoolhouse and a replicated packing house from the early 1900s that undergoes expansion in 2018. The newest additions include a circa-1924 home and its caretaker's cottage. Docents tend a pioneer garden and conduct tours of the peaceful little time warp.

Admission: Admission \$10 per adult (18 years and older), under age 18 free

Hours: (mid-October through April) 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. Tuesday through Saturday; (May through July) 10 a.m. to 1 p.m. Tuesday through Saturday; closed August through mid-October.

Sanibel Lighthouse

Point Ybel, East End of Sanibel Island

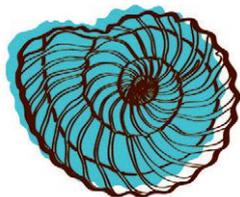
Lovely to enjoy and photograph from outside, the 98-foot light tower itself is rather plain, but the keeper's quarters around it lend yesteryear character. The lighthouse went into service in August 1884 at the insistence of cattle barons, who needed an aid to navigate the tricky waters at Point Ybel. When the U.S. Coast Guard decided to extinguish it in 1972, public protest kept it lit, as it is still to this day. It marks a popular recreational area complete with a beach, fishing pier and nature trail.

Sanibel Public Library

770 Dunlop Road, Sanibel Island
(239) 472-2483
www.sanlib.org

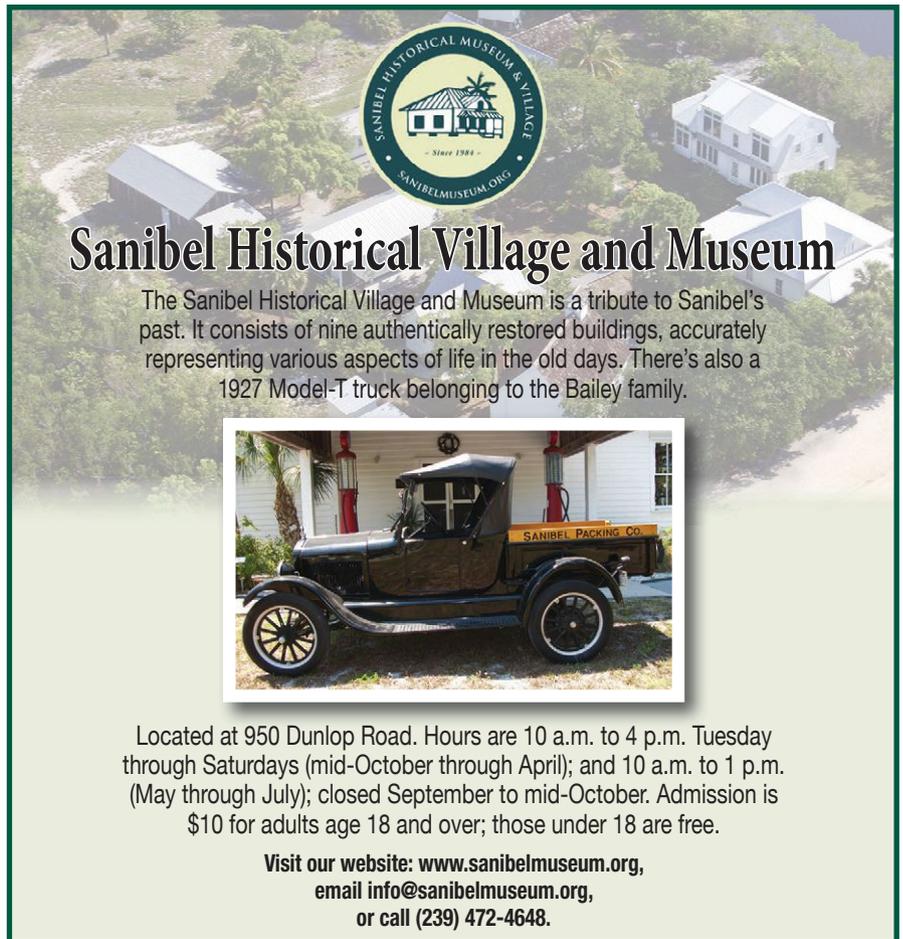
Owned and supported wholly by island residents, the independent Sanibel Public Library boasts a collection of movie DVDs, music CDs, books, magazines, cooking kits and downloadable books, magazines, movies, music and audio books—all accessible through its online card catalog. It offers local museum passes and high-speed Internet access and wireless connection to patrons and visitors. Programs throughout the year are geared toward adults and children. Its modern two-story building features an atrium lobby with a fossil shell collection, plus local history archives, separate spaces for young children and teens, a technology lab and a lakeview reading porch with rocking chairs. The library currently is under renovation, so parts of it may be closed during your visit. A one-year visitor's card costs \$10 and permits checking out books, movies, music and other media.

Hours: 9 a.m. to 8 p.m. on Mondays and Thursdays; 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. on Tuesdays, Wednesdays, Fridays and Saturdays. (Summer Saturday hours are 9 a.m. to 1 p.m.)



Island Secret

The Captiva Island Historical Society (www.captivaishistoricalociety.org) maintains a history exhibit room in the Captiva Memorial Library. Interpretative signage and touch screens tell Captiva tales of the Chadwick lime, a WWII servicemen respite and early visitors such as Charles Lindbergh, "Ding" Darling and Teddy Roosevelt.



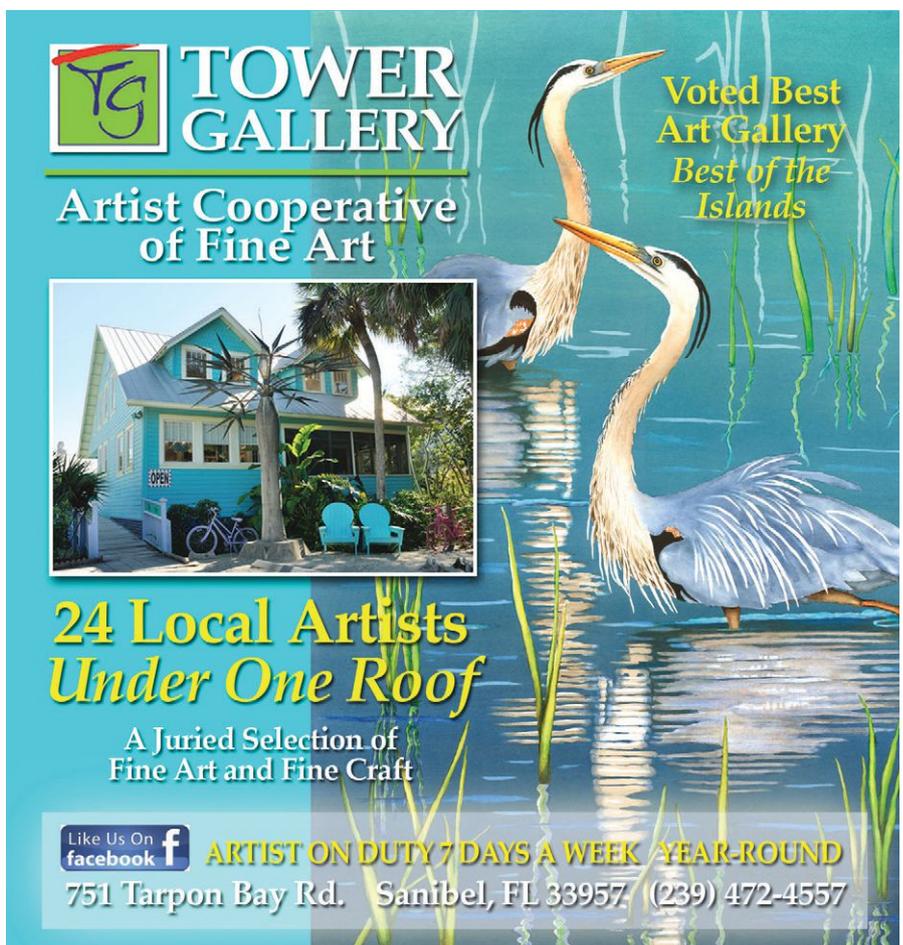
Sanibel Historical Village and Museum

The Sanibel Historical Village and Museum is a tribute to Sanibel's past. It consists of nine authentically restored buildings, accurately representing various aspects of life in the old days. There's also a 1927 Model-T truck belonging to the Bailey family.



Located at 950 Dunlop Road. Hours are 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. Tuesday through Saturdays (mid-October through April); and 10 a.m. to 1 p.m. (May through July); closed September to mid-October. Admission is \$10 for adults age 18 and over; those under 18 are free.

Visit our website: www.sanibelmuseum.org,
email info@sanibelmuseum.org,
or call (239) 472-4648.



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COUPLES ON CAPTIVA, BELLS ON SANIBEL

Birds, bees and beyond



Photo by Nick Adams Photography



Photo by Nick Adams Photography

Birds do it. Bees do it. And on these islands, manatees, dolphins, alligators and even tiny insects known as love bugs do it. Every living thing takes inspiration from the sexy, swaying coconut palms and the warm kiss of sea waters. Whether you are coming to the islands to celebrate love or marriage, you are sure to be swept away by the sheer romance of it all.

Many couples come to Sanibel and Captiva Islands specifically to get married. Others fall victim to the influence of courting egrets and kissing manatees and find themselves wed before they know what hit them. There's no underestimating the power of island romance.

Who could help but fall in love—for the first time or all over again? Whether you are planning on a romantic getaway together, exchanging vows or renewing your commitment to each other, Sanibel and Captiva Islands set the perfect stage.

continued on page 51



Southwest Florida's beloved manatees are often caught "kissing" in local waters. Scientists believe that touching snouts may be a form of communication between the mammoth marine mammals.



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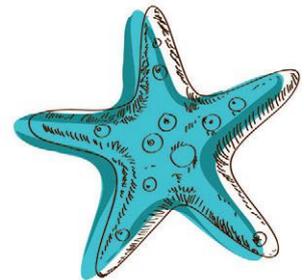
Photo by Milissa Sprecher Photography

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www.MilissaSprecher.com



Island Secret

Built in 1901, Captiva's Chapel By the Sea has been on the National Register of Historic places since 2013.

Island I Do's

Island wedding bells ring a different tune from your typical march to the altar. Altered instead to island tempos, weddings here often come with a side of sand and water. Island ceremonies, in general, tend to be more casual, more creative. More romantic and memorable.

Many brides opt to walk down an aisle carpeted with white sand and seashells—the beach. Countless others have sailed into the sunset for an intimate exchange of vows. Wedding planners report the offbeat to the conventional: In addition to beachside betrothals, they have seen splashy in-pool knot-tyings, formal church affairs, ceremonies on the greens, boat excursions to Cayo Costa and intimate gatherings at the historic Captiva Chapel By the Sea.

Independent island wedding planners can tell you the ins and outs of your preferred venue. Many large resorts and some local tour boat operators retain the services of planners on staff for the utmost in convenience. They will work with you on every detail of ceremony and reception starting with the theme. Seashells? Dolphins? Luau? Sandcastles? Birds and butterflies, perhaps?

How about the flowers and decorations? A bouquet of white calla lilies or a single bird-of-paradise stem are elegant island choices. Attach dried starfish to the sides of the chairs. Stick white candles in the sand. Line the bridal path with

continued on page 53



Photo by Millissa Sprecher Photography



Island Secret

A certain goofy, friendly insect flies around Sanibel and Captiva Islands in the spring and fall. It goes by the name “love bug.” It doesn't bite, but its life's determination to fly around in blissful wedlock truly inspires love-bitten passion.



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Island Secret

Instead of preserving your wedding dress after the big day, island photographers suggest a fun photo op known as “trash the dress.” Sometime during the honeymoon the bride suits up again to take the plunge in the Gulf while the photographer captures the madcap moment. Couples celebrating their anniversaries, too, find it fun to liberate that white gown from the back of the closet with a dunk in the sea.

continued from page 51

seashells. Simplicity is the new conspicuous wealth when it comes to island weddings. Planners are knowledgeable about local caterers, cake artists, photographers, florists and musicians—whether you prefer the tropical strains of a steel drum band or a single classical guitar.

Weddings Intimate to Grand

Ceremonies come in all shapes and sizes on the islands—and on the waters surrounding them. One of the best options is a quiet exchange with only the two of you, your witnesses and the officiate at the edge of the waves during sunset on a secluded beach. Or, consider the altar of an all-to-yourselves church or the bow of a sailboat under a moonlit sky.

Many, however, prefer a large to-do. If your style dictates a ceremony with all of your family, friends and a 16-person bridal party on a sprawling lawn, island hotels and resorts can prepare a fitting setting for the rehearsal dinner, ceremony and reception. But remember to plan ahead: Major venues sometimes book up a year in advance.

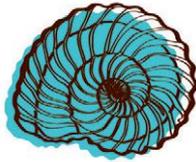
Time for Two

Should you decide to prolong your island stay past the big day (most do!), planners can make your wedding and honeymoon a worry-free, seamless series of events. For what better place to unwind after your wedding than here, where island rhythms and tropical pacing practically mandate relaxation?

Spend the dawn of your new lives together or your romantic getaway for two exploring island trails on a bicycle built for two. Rent a double kayak and paddle along the solitude waterways of J.N. “Ding” Darling National Wildlife Refuge, or do a serenaded sunset cruise from Captiva Island. Start a collection of seashells together. Play a round of golf, and then relax with a couples massage. Laze on the beach. Sail away to an island with no physical connection to mainland or anything remotely mainstream. Reserve a window table at sunset. Dance on the beach in the moonlight. Sleep in.

Whether it’s your first, second, or 20th honeymoon, or just an opportunity to get to know one another better, Sanibel and Captiva Island breezes have a way of fanning the flames of passion. Fill your wedding album with images of tropical

beauty and sunny togetherness. Make memories that will keep for the rest of your shared lives.



Island Secret

Island beach weddings of 25 people or fewer do not require event permits. Setting up chairs, tiki torches, a podium or an archway does, however.



Patricia Slater's Weddings by the Sea
Officiant and Wedding Planner
239.472.8712
www.sanibelcaptivaweddings.com

dream “I do”



At Casa Ybel Resort, walk down the aisle to an island wedding *dream* come true. Imagine your romantic beginning as the white sand beach aligns with the crystal blue waters of the Gulf of Mexico.

Say your “I do’s” on the lushly landscaped lawn overlooking the Gulf of Mexico, beneath swaying coconut palms, or on a natural shell strewn beach as our grand-old island manor backdrops the broad expanse of white sand.

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Pledge your commitment with a sand-gram – your heart-encircled message of love, that goes beyond Me + You, inscribed in the sand. #shesaidyes #gotthering

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Do you find yourself daydreaming about how wonderful it would be to live here year-round? Are you ready to make Sanibel or Captiva Island your new address? You know you don't have to leave the islands just because the calendar says your stay is over. So go ahead, dig your heels into the sand. Vow you are never going to leave, and mean it.

The move to a lifetime—or at least a part of each year—in this land of sun, flowers and pure nature is easy. A large percentage of island residents, after all, started out as visitors, just like you.

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continued from page 56

Step One: Shop Around

Of course, your foremost resource is a qualified real estate agent, and the islands have plenty. But first you may want to peruse the local newspapers, real estate publications and websites to narrow down your price range, location and size preferences. The Sanibel Island & Captiva Island Chamber of Commerce website, sanibel-captiva.org, can help you locate real estate agent websites and other contact information.

It's a fun vacation pastime to hop on a bike and pedal by one or two of the listed prospects each day. When you have found a few that fit your needs, make contact with an agent, who can also recommend other properties with comparable prices and locations.

Pick Your Style

Your island options range from undeveloped lots to condominiums, duplexes to single-family homes. Decide where you want to live: on the Gulf, on the bay, on a golf course, near shopping and restaurants or away from it all.

For waterfront living, condominiums pose your most affordable option. They offer the added bonus of typically being maintained under contract with the condo association—meaning less worry and work for you. They also often come with added amenities such as a swimming pool, whirlpool spa, tennis courts and exercise facilities.

The islands offer timeshare, fractional and full condo ownership plans. To get your feet only slightly wet in the island real estate market and island life experience,

Every person who owns and resides on real property in Florida on Jan. 1 and makes the property his or her permanent residence is eligible to receive a homestead exemption up to \$50,000. Source: <http://dor.myflorida.com>



Island Secret



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Open Monday - Friday 10am - 5pm
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Instagram Alert

Picture yourself in that island dream home! Take a few selfies of you and your family in front of houses you like, and see how they look on you.

Photo by Alejandra Bustamante

you may want first to consider timeshare or fractional ownership, where you buy one week or month in the condo complex of your choice. Often known as “interval ownership,” most plans allow you to trade in your time slot for other locations, should the urge hit.

If you decide upon full condo ownership, you still have the option of putting it in the rental market for the periods you are not occupying the unit—a smart way to help pay for your investment.

Families—who move here for highly rated K-8 The Sanibel School, our enviable quality of life and safe environment—usually look for a duplex or single-family home. The islands boast abodes from Old Florida-style cottages to grand, modern mansions. Most are tucked off main thoroughfares in inviting neighborhoods with a variety of character and a ton of quiet. Some are gated communities; others congregate around a lake, the Sanibel River, a golf course or the sea.

Island Stylish

Island style dictates an easy way of life that blurs the boundaries of indoors and outdoors, reflecting the local semitropical vegetation and climate. Screened lanai porches, sunny “Florida rooms,” backyard swimming pools, comfortably furnished porch decks, outdoor kitchens and blossomy gardens expand island home living area year-round. Strict density and set-back regulations ensure ample yard space and privacy.

Your real estate agent can advise you about insurance requirements and neighborhood guidelines. A number of property management, grounds maintenance and house-sitting services on the islands makes your time away from your island home worry-free.

But like most of the transplanted islanders here, you will probably find yourself spending more and more time on the islands as time goes on. You will know you have sunk in the roots as a “true islander” when the tides turn and you now spend your vacations up north and your life on-island.

Island Secret

In 2017, the City of Sanibel was designated as the seventh safest city in Florida by the National Council for Home Safety and Security.

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CELEBRATE!

Nature, food and a sense of community bring festivities to the calendar.

Festival Showcase: 30th Annual “Ding” Darling Days 2018 Oct. 12-14

Birding, kayaking, paddleboarding, archery and live animal presentations: “Ding” Darling Days, the annual eco-festival at J.N. “Ding” Darling National Wildlife Refuge, boosts environmental awareness to a whole new level of fun just as summer’s heat cools to fall.

The festival honors the birthday of the Refuge’s namesake and father of the Duck Stamp, Jay Norwood Darling, who twice won the Pulitzer Prize for his syndicated—and often controversial—political cartoons back in the 1930s.

Sunday’s all-free Family Fun Day features live wildlife, Refuge tram tours, a butterfly house, archery, kids nature crafts, giveaways and hot dogs. Throughout the weekend, the Refuge hosts free and discounted birding, biking, nature, boating, stand-up paddleboarding and kayak tours plus educational lectures about Refuge wildlife and heritage.

On Saturday’s Conservation Art Day, federal duck stamp artists present, plus there’s cartooning, a photography tram tour and other nature art activities. Admission to Wildlife Drive is free to all on Sunday and Saturday and to bikers and hikers on Friday, when the drive is closed to all private vehicular traffic.

The U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service, “Ding” Darling Wildlife Society-Friends of the Refuge and Tarpon Bay Explorers recreation concession cooperatively host “Ding” Darling Days with support from local businesses and individuals.

To learn more about the week’s events and activities, please visit www.dingdarlingdays.com or call (239) 472-1100 ext. 222.



Photo Credit "Ding" Darling Wildlife Society-Friends of the Refuge



Instagram Alert

Kids love getting their pictures taken with the costumed Blue Goose character at "Ding" Darling Days. The mascot of the national wildlife refuge system, he evolved from the blue goose logo that refuge namesake Jay N. "Ding" Darling designed for the federal agency in the 1930s.



Photo Credit "Ding" Darling Wildlife Society-Friends of the Refuge



Photo Credit "Ding" Darling Wildlife Society-Friends of the Refuge

MORE 2018 FESTIVALS AND EVENTS

(Note: Exact dates are subject to change. Please call or visit the event website before finalizing plans to attend.)

Feb. 17-18: Rotary Club of Sanibel-Captiva's 35th Annual Arts & Crafts Fair. More than 120 juried artists and 10,000 visitors fill Sanibel Community House grounds for two days during this popular representation of multi-media art works. www.sanibelartfair.com

March 1-3: 81st Annual Shell Festival. In celebration of Sanibel's reputation as a world-renowned shelling island, this longtime tradition showcases shell displays and crafts. It includes food

booths, entertainment and raffles at the Sanibel Community House. (239) 472-2155, www.sanibelcommunityhouse.net

March 3-24: 32nd Annual Sanibel Music Festival. Sanibel Island devotes one entire month to seven classical music concerts performed at the Sanibel Congregational Church by emerging artists from around the nation. (239) 344-7025, www.sanibelmusicfestival.org

March 16-17: Sanibel Captiva Lions Club's 35th Annual Arts & Crafts Fair. Artists from around the country submit their work for jury selection to be able to sell at the fair and to be eligible to win prizes at this well-attended event held at the Sanibel Community House. www.sanibelcaptivevalions.org

July 4: Independence Day Celebration. Sanibel Island throws a good, old-fashioned festival, where paraders toss candy and gifts while the crowd cheers them on. Merchants host special sidewalk sales and parties for the whole family. Locals and visitors participate in the Road Rally scavenger hunt. Fireworks over the Causeway light up the night. For

more information: (239) 472-1080, www.sanibel-captiva.org.

Nov. 3: The 25th Annual Esperanza Woodring Memorial Castnet Rodeo. Kids under the age of 16 can participate in demonstrations, lessons and a youth competition. (239) 472-1618, www.baitboxsanibel.com

Nov. 11: 37th Annual Taste of the Islands. Sample island cuisine and dance with the locals to live music at the Dunes Golf & Tennis Resort. The food festival benefits the Clinic for the Rehabilitation of Wildlife (CROW). (239) 472-3644, www.crowclinic.org

Dec. 7-8: 34th Annual Christmas Luminary. A merry trail of luminary candles leads to festively decorated businesses hosting entertainment and free refreshments. The first night takes place on Sanibel Island and the second on Captiva Island. (239) 472-1080, www.sanibel-captiva.org



Photo Credit Lee County VCB/Fort Myers-Sanibel.com



PINCHERS

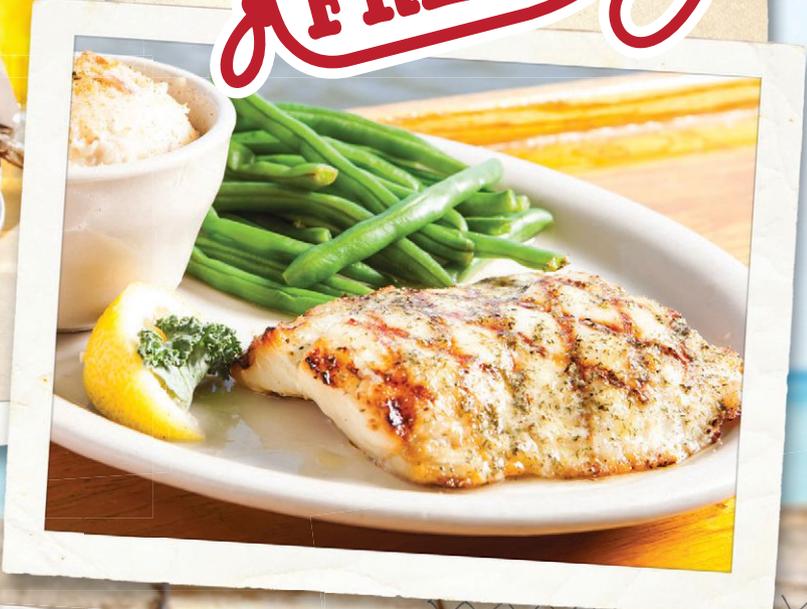
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♦ Waterfront Locations



Happy Hour
FOOD
FROM
3-6 P.M.

KIDS EAT
Free
*Restrictions apply. See server for full details.

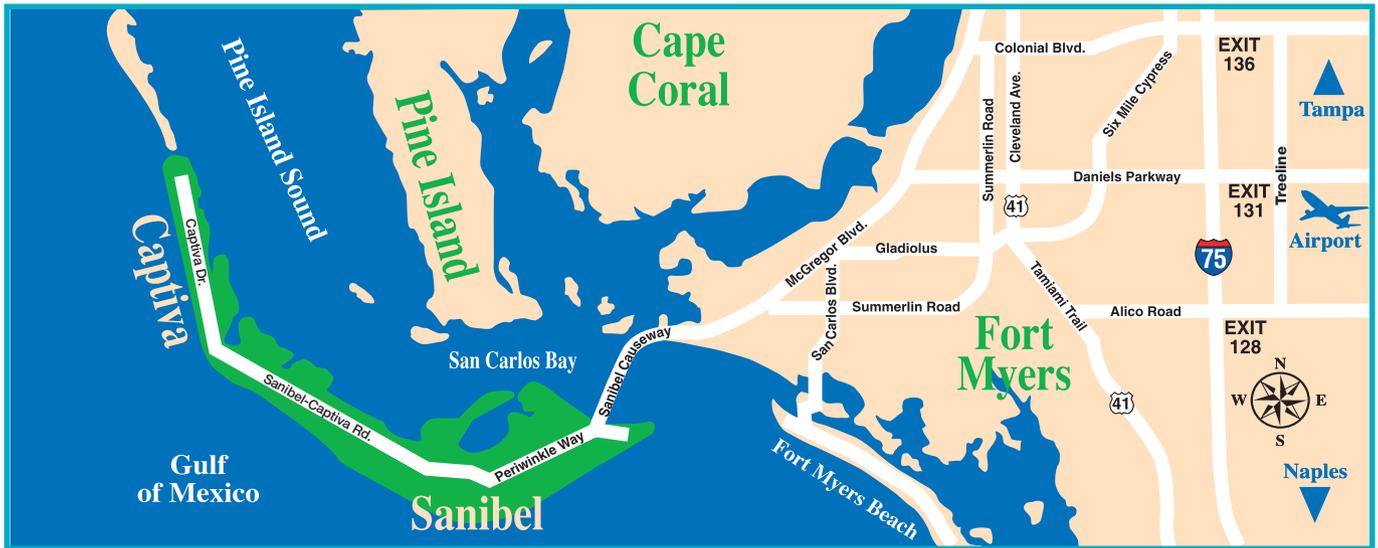
2 for 1 ALL DAY
EVERY DAY!
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GETTING HERE: FOLLOW THE ISLAND-BOUND ROAD

EASY TO GET TO, HARD TO LEAVE



Distance from Sanibel-Captiva (in miles) to other Florida cities:

Clearwater 160	Ocala 243
Daytona Beach 235	Orlando 180
Fort Lauderdale 146	Palm Beach 186
Gainesville 275	Sarasota 104
Jacksonville 344	St. Augustine 287
Key West 307	St. Petersburg 141
Miami 162	Tallahassee 421
Naples 48	Tampa 154

BY VEHICLE

Interstate 75

From the north, take Exit 131 (Daniels Parkway) and head west to Summerlin Road. Turn left on Summerlin Road and follow to the Sanibel Causeway (\$6 toll driving onto the island).

From the south, take Exit 128 (Alico Road) and head west to Highway 41/Tamiami Trail. Turn north (right) and follow to Gladiolus Drive. Turn left and continue, staying in the left lane and taking the ramp to Summerlin Road, which you will then follow to the Sanibel Causeway (\$6 toll driving onto the island).

Interstate 95

If you are driving into Florida from the north on I-95, turn west on I-10 (near Jacksonville), then south on I-75 and follow the directions above.

From Miami, take I-95 north to I-595 west and follow signs directing you to I-75 north (toward Naples). Follow directions above for I-75 from the south.

Interstate 4

From Orlando, head west on I-4 to I-75 south and follow directions above for I-75 from the north.

Here at Last!

Drive across the scenic causeway and onto Sanibel Island. The second cheerfully painted building on your right is the Chamber Welcome Center, where visitors can find information and a red-carpet greeting.

At the four-way stop sign at Periwinkle Way, either a right or left turn will lead you to beaches, shops, restaurants, attractions and accommodations. (See the map on pages 67 - 69.) Straight ahead, you will reach the Gulf drives and more beach accesses.



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To reach Captiva Island, turn right onto Periwinkle Way at the four-way stop and again at the west end of Periwinkle Way on either Palm Ridge Road (via turning lane) or Tarpon Bay Road (at the T-intersection). Both take you to Sanibel-Captiva Road. Drive about 8 miles and cross the Blind Pass bridge. It takes 15 to 30 minutes to drive between Sanibel and Captiva islands, depending upon traffic. Warning: The speed limit is closely monitored and rigidly enforced. Be sure to abide by school zone limits when the light signal is flashing.

Island Secret: In high season, avoid traffic coming onto the island between 9 a.m. and noon. Traffic leaving the island is heaviest 2:30 to 5:30 p.m. Visit www.mysanibel.us/traffic for live feed from a number of island and causeway street cams.

CAR RENTALS

You will need a valid driver's license and major credit card. (Most rental agencies have minimum age requirements.) Nearly all major car rentals are available at Southwest Florida International Airport; it's best to reserve before you arrive.

BY AIR

Southwest Florida International Airport (RSW) (239) 590-4800; www.flylcpa.com

Located in Fort Myers, the terminal is accessible off I-75's Exit 131 and Exit 128. An easy 45- to 60-minute drive brings you to Sanibel Island via Daniels Parkway and Summerlin Road. Most major

domestic airlines serve RSW.

Orlando International Airport (MCO)

(407) 825-2001; www.orlandoairports.net

Located 7 miles south of Orlando; take I-4 west to I-75 south.

Miami International Airport (MIA)

(305) 876-7000; www.miami-airport.com

Located 5 miles northwest of downtown Miami; take I-95 north to I-595 west and I-75 north.

Fort Lauderdale/Hollywood International Airport (FLL)

(866) 435-9355; www.broward.org/airport

Located 4 miles south of downtown Fort Lauderdale; take I-595 west to I-75 north.

Tampa International Airport (TPA)

(813) 870-8700; www.tampaairport.com

Located off I-275; take I-275 south to I-75 south.

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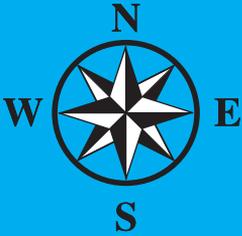
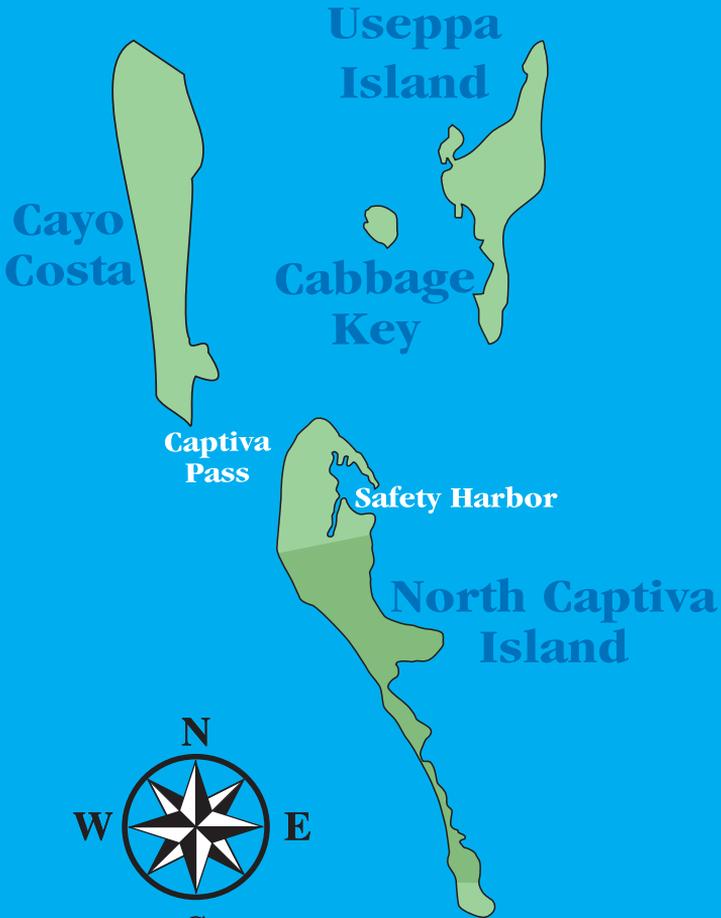
Mark McCumber within a stunning wildlife preserve sanctioned by the Audubon Society.

Call 239-472-3355 for your tee time. Present this ad when you visit us to play and

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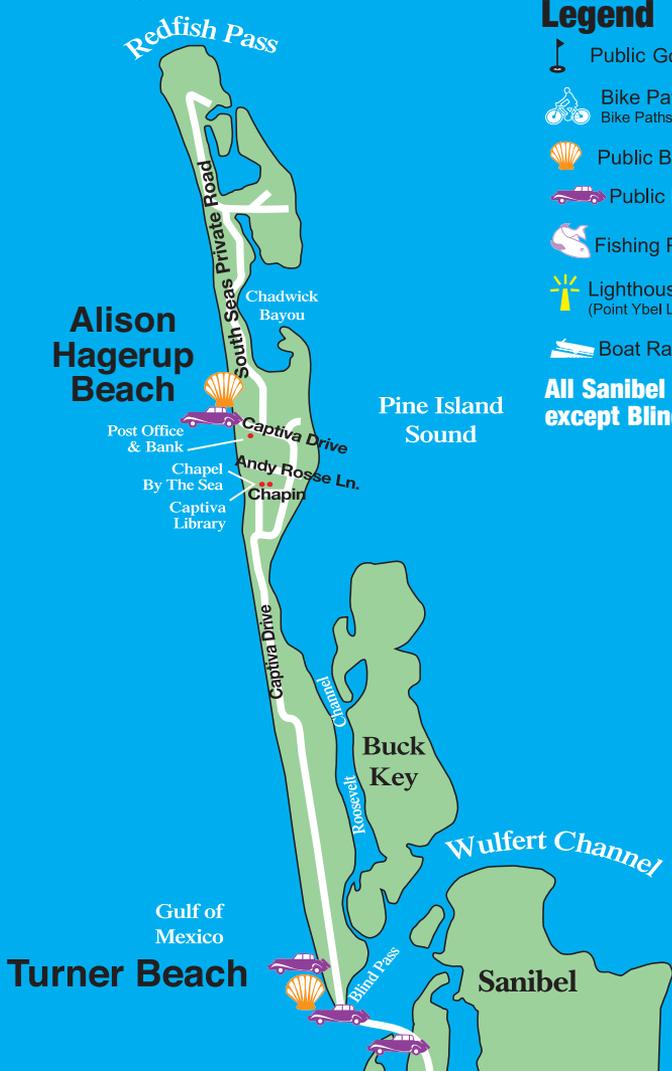
Contact Dana for a membership tour: 239-472-3355 • DSwanson@TheInnsOfSanibel.com

DunesGolfSanibel.com • 949 Sand Castle Rd. • Sanibel Island, FL 33957



Captiva & Sister Islands

POINTS OF INTEREST



Legend

-  Public Golf Course
-  Bike Paths
Bike Paths run parallel to, but not on, the roadway
-  Public Beach Access
-  Public Parking Available (Fee)
-  Fishing Pier
-  Lighthouse
(Point Ybel Light)
-  Boat Ramp

All Sanibel beaches have restrooms except Blind Pass Beach



Sanibel & Captiva Islands

POINTS OF INTEREST



<http://www.facebook.com/SanibelCaptivaChamber>

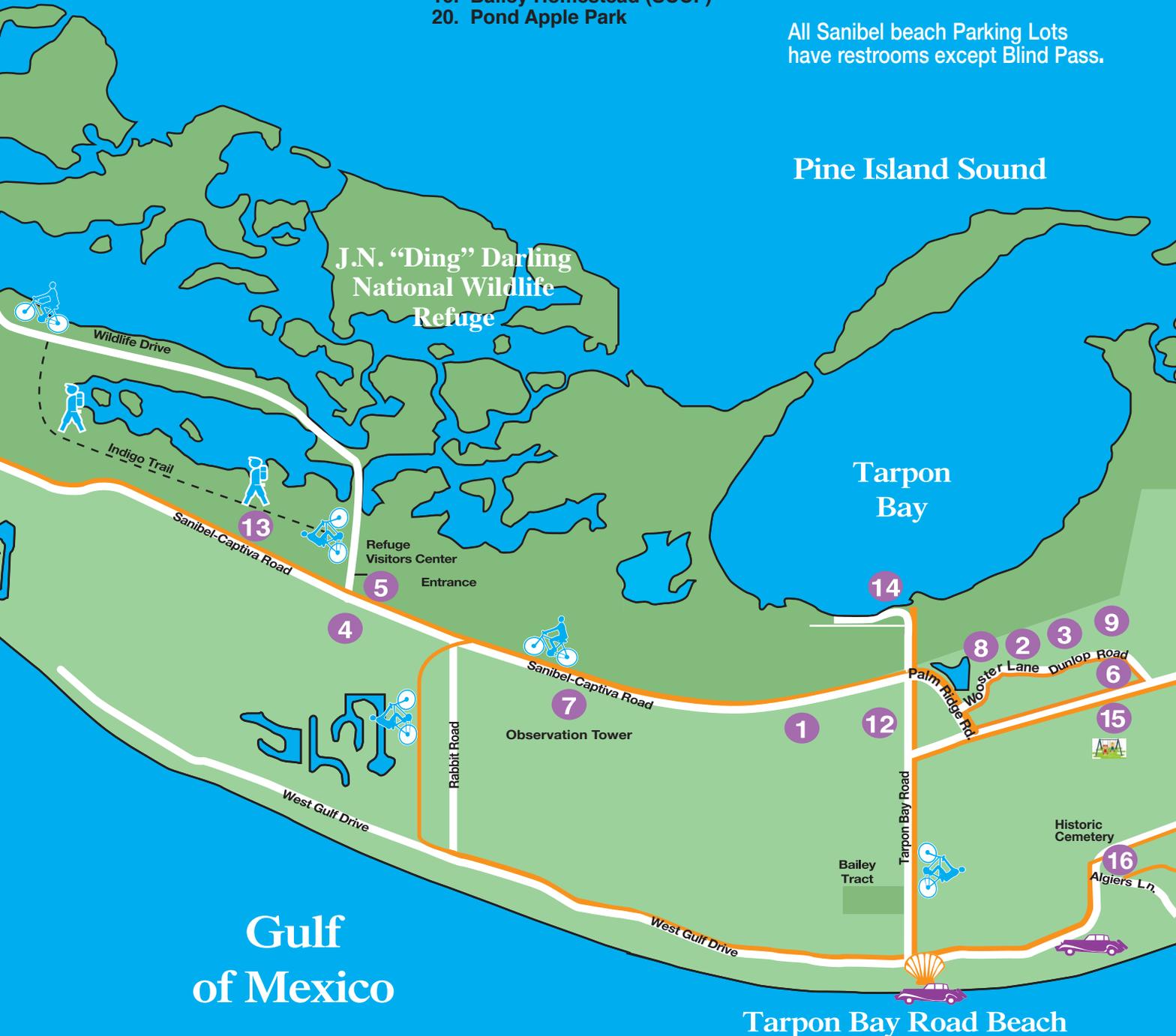
Points of Interest

1. Bailey-Matthews National Shell Museum
2. BIG ARTS
3. City Hall / Police
4. C.R.O.W.
5. J.N. "Ding" Darling Wildlife Refuge Entrance – Visitors Center
6. BIG ARTS The Herb Strauss Theater
7. Sanibel-Captiva Conservation Foundation
8. Sanibel Historical Village
9. Sanibel Public Library
10. Sanibel Lighthouse
11. Sanibel Marina
12. Sanibel Post Office
13. Sanibel Recreation Center
14. Tarpon Bay Nature Center
15. SCA Community House
16. Historic Cemetery
17. Sanibel Sea School
18. Bike Stop
19. Bailey Homestead (SCCF)
20. Pond Apple Park

Legend

-  Public Golf Course
-  Bike Paths
Bike Paths run parallel to, but not on, the roadway
-  Public Beach Access
-  Public Parking Available (Fee)
-  Fishing Pier
-  Lighthouse (Point Ybel Light)
-  Boat Ramp
-  Playground

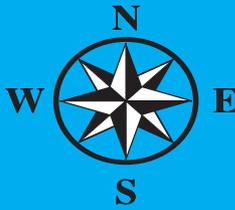
All Sanibel beach Parking Lots have restrooms except Blind Pass.



Pine Island Sound

Gulf of Mexico

Tarpon Bay Road Beach



The Islands of
SANIBEL & **CAPTIVA**
CHAMBER OF COMMERCE
**Francis P Bailey
Visitor Center**

San Carlos
Bay

Lighthouse
Beach

Sanibel
Island

Gulf Side City Park

Sanibel Island is approximately 12 miles long and three miles across at its widest. Captiva Island measures about five miles long and 1/2-mile wide.



LEE COUNTY
HENRY COUNTY

S.W. FLORIDA
INTERNATIONAL
AIRPORT

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884

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7

Shopping



On The Sly



8 insider tips to island retail therapy

Want to know one of the best-kept shopping secrets in the state of Florida? Look no further than Sanibel and Captiva Islands.

Skip the traffic, crowds and noise you find in the canned atmosphere of a mega-mall. Forget Black Friday. How about Green Everyday in our outdoor shopping centers, where park-like settings and seaside themes take you far away from mall madness?

Instead of a strip of chain and franchised stores, you will find—tucked demurely into the foliage throughout the islands—owner-operated galleries, one-of-a-kind clothing stores, unique boutiques, hardware and garden outlets and blingy jewelry shops. Sometimes you really have to look to find them, so we are going to let you in on eight of the islands' best shopping tips.

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Bailey's

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suncatchers@earthlink.net



Photo by Alejandra Bustamante

Tip #1: Browse Olde Sanibel.

Many visitors never discover that, aside from all the shops they see along Sanibel Island's Periwinkle Way west of the Causeway, a charming throwback to old-island times awaits toward the Sanibel Lighthouse on the island's East End.

Sanibel's original settlement, it cropped up after the government built the lighthouse in 1884. The ferry that transported all visitors and goods to the island before the Causeway opened once loaded and offloaded here.

The neighborhood retains a time-warp feel where folks, many of whom are staying in the neighborhood's small inns and lodging, roam the paved shared-use path to leisurely shop a blend of funky and finery. In between shopping sprints, they pause for breakfast, a deli sandwich, a Sea Turtle sundae or people-watching from benches in front of the shops. Then they head for the nearby beach.

Tip #2: Find seashells away from the seashore.

Sure, you can comb the beaches for shells for free, but what if you need supplies to turn those shells into crafty gifts to take home? Nowhere else in the whole world can you find in one small town a half-dozen shops devoted entirely to seashells and shell art. Only on Sanibel Island, shell capital of the United States. And that's not even counting the many stores that sell seashells as part of their gift merchandise.

Shell shops spread through Sanibel Island like treasures washed up on a beach. And same as with those shell treasures, you sometimes have to look closely and ask locals for advise on where to find them.

The shops' inventory includes decorative and rare specimen shells, sea stars, coral, sea glass, minerals, collector kits, fossils, shell craft supplies, identification and DIY craft books, nautical accessories, gifts, shell jewelry and exquisite works of art fashioned from shells. Buy a tiny cat's-eye shell for 39 cents or pay up to \$4,000 for a rare showpiece cowry shell.



Island newspapers print pictures of shellers who have found the island's rare prize shell – the #junonia. Improve your chances: Grab a junonia at one of the shell shops and post your own #shellfie.

RANKED SANIBEL'S #1 Shopping Destination!

By the Lee County Visitor & Convention Bureau



2075 Periwinkle Way • www.PeriwinklePlace.com • Open Daily



Photo by Alejandra Bustamante

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 239.395.5353 • synergysportswear.com

Tip #3: Shop “The Ridge.” As you head west on Periwinkle Way, take the right exit lane that leads to Palm Ridge Road. Many first-timers miss this off-the-main-route lineup of unique shops and restaurants, where you will find everything from shoes to some of the island’s best homemade soup. Need a pharmacy or looking for a chocolate cure? Hang a right!

Tip #4: Wander “downtown Captiva Island.” Whether you are in the market for an inflatable octopus or a turn-of-the-20th-century Tiffany lamp, it dwells among the wares displayed along the tight nucleus of shops in “downtown Captiva.” The vivacious scene resounds with live music, emits delicious scents from the neighborhood outdoor bistro and bubbles with the gaiety of folks headed to the beach.

You can easily walk the extent of the shopping district, which starts where Captiva Drive and Andy Rosse Lane intersect. And ends, in either direction, at the beach. Expect to find the quirky in art galleries, boutiques and eateries.

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Tip #5: Gallery hop. Captiva and Sanibel Islands both claim their share of unusual galleries, where often you can find the artists themselves hanging out, running the cash register, demonstrating or talking about their art.

The range of art covers wildlife photography, raku pottery, exquisite jewelry, seascape watercolors, fused and hand-blown glass, sea life wall hangings, driftwood sculptures and oil paintings inspired by vintage beach art.

Tip #6: Find treasure in our thrift shops. The islands are all about the environment and recycling, so don't be surprised to find name-brand, practically new clothing, household accessories and furnishings at Sanibel Island's thrift shops. Noah's Ark at St. Michael & All Angels Church benefits area charities, plus a Goodwill Industries shop is stuffed with fun surprises for the treasure- and bargain-hunter.

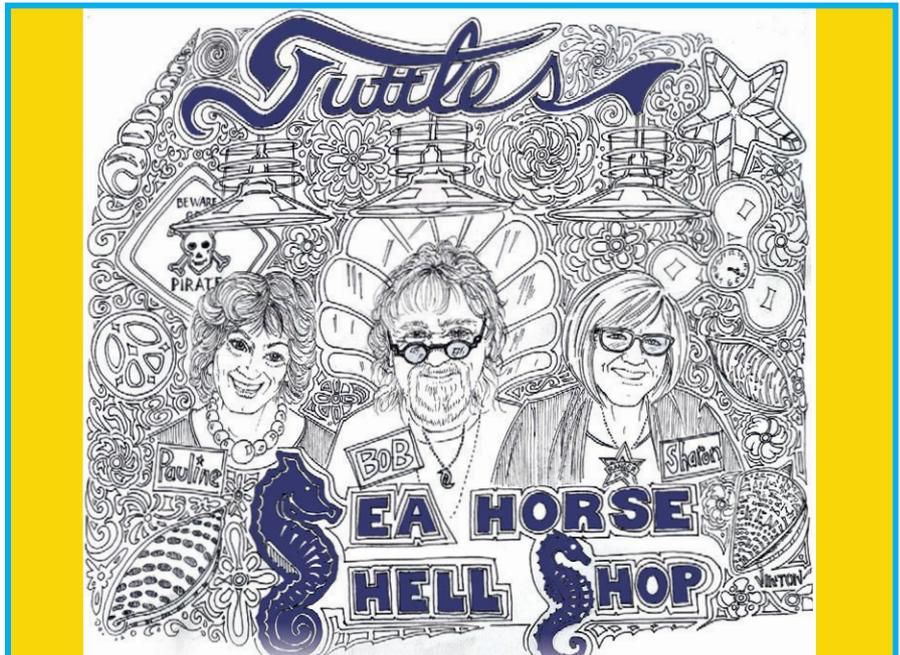
Tip #7: Literally literary. Skip the impersonal, supermarket-sized bookstores and online outlets. Sit, chat and turn some pages at the islands' individually owned book shops. Watch for news of author appearances and other special events.

Tip #8: Stalk specialty gifts at our nature attractions. If you are looking for the extraordinary in nature-oriented gifts, you will find it in the gift shops at some of the islands' environmental attractions. It's a great way to show your allegiance to nature and find gifts for your "wild" friends and family.

CROW (Clinic for the Rehabilitation of Wildlife) sells fun things for kids—books, puzzles, wildlife toys and jewelry—at its visitors center. "Ding" Darling's Refuge Nature Store carries a complete range of birding supplies—from high-quality binoculars to stuffed bird toys, field guides, osprey T-shirts and even a game called Bird-Opoly. The Bailey-Matthews National Shell Museum store is shell-oriented, naturally, with gifts from jewelry to pottery. Sanibel Sea School's Ocean Tribe Outfitters stocks water shoes, rash guards and all the gear you need for water-related recreation.

The best part about buying at these outlets is that the profits benefit environmental research, preservation and education.

So now that you're armed with a local's best intel, grab your credit card and, why not? Charge!



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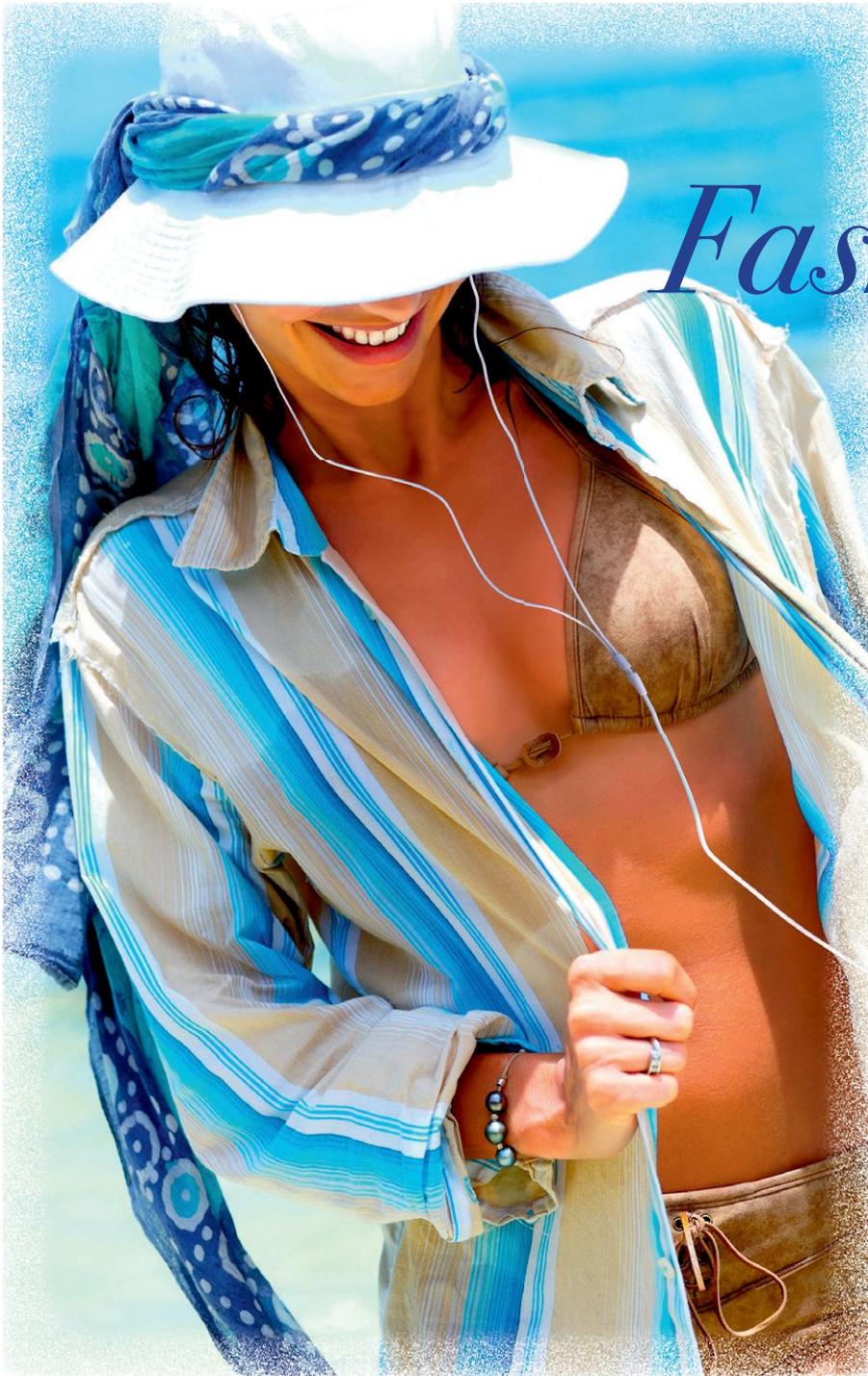
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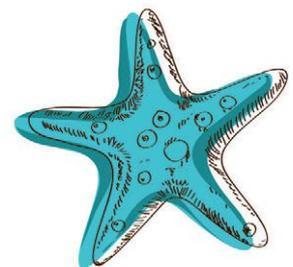


Island Fashionista

Flirty cotton skirts imprinted with tropical flowers and fish. Slip-on flip-flops decorated with rhinestones, buckles, shells and lollipop hues. Sun-protective fishing shirts and hats with removable neck capes. Earrings and pendants in the shape of dolphins, hibiscus, sea turtles and sand dollars. Kids' shark socks and T-shirts that change color in the sun.

Noticing a pattern here? It's what we call "island style," a relaxed sense of fashion that evolves from our love of the sea, wildlife and vegetation. Colors mimic the flowers and fruit that bear year-round in shades of ixora pink, hibiscus yellow, lime green, blushing mango, heron blue and so on. Fabrics match our easy lifestyles and warm climes—cool cottons, breezy rayons, lightweight blends, wicking micro-fabrics.

From the most affordable resort wear shops to the most elegant jewelry boutiques, island merchants showcase a diverse and wearable sense-of-place. Practical for playing in the sun, waves and sand, island style makes a fashion statement that no one can question.



Island Secret

See the calendar of events on page 62 or visit the Sanibel Community House website (www.sanibelcommunityhouse.net) for art fairs and other special shopping events, where you can find the unique and creative in gifts and souvenirs.

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Pandora's Box
Pandora's Box Too
Royal Shell Real Estate
Royal Shell Vacations
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t2 Traders 🍴
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For individual shop information:

www.ShopOnSanibel.com



DINING: Bon Appetit!

The islands invented sea-to-table.



Photo by Millissa Sprecher Photography

Ever since the native Calusa first dropped in on the islands to catch dinner, fish and shellfish have reigned as a mainstay of local diets. Further down the timeline, the commercial fishing industry and Cuban trade thrived for decades on the islands' bounty. During Prohibition, Cuban rum was the currency of exchange for mullet roe. Smugglers transported kegs to the islands in their bait wells.

Early settlers subsisted on farming, particularly tomatoes and citrus. A coconut and key lime plantation once thrived on Captiva Island. Sanibel Island became synonymous with winter produce. "Sanibel Tomatoes" were so prized for their flavor and juiciness that unscrupulous competitors took to "borrowing" the brand.

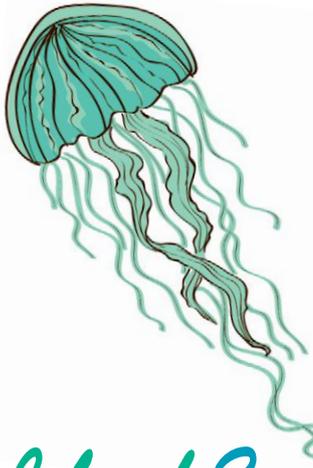
As intrepid tourists began making their way to this acclaimed "garden spot of Florida," makeshift, seasonal restaurants furthered the Sanibel, dinner-bell connection. Miss Charlotta Matthews' Tea Room, which now resides at the Sanibel Historical Village, was among the first to welcome visitors with island culinary hospitality as they disembarked the ferry from the mainland. Charlotta served tea, biscuits, light lunch, and even a little golf to her guests. Old Thistle Lodge, faithfully replicated at today's Casa Ybel Resort, hosted Thomas A. Edison and other prominent island visitors.

Today's island restaurateurs and chefs have contributed ingredients and foodways from all corners of the planet. As in the days of the Calusa, seafood stars on most menus—such local specialties as wild Gulf shrimp, stone crab claws, grouper, snapper and pompano. Dual growing seasons assure that the freshest produce hits your plate. A local farmer's market provides residents and visitors with homegrown and homemade goodness during winter season. And rum still flows freely into fruity punches, daiquiris and pina colodas at local bars.

The result: an all-fresh culinary legacy that is equal parts island-inspired and steeped in tradition. Come, taste the richness of the present spiced with the past.



Thomas Edison probably caught a dramatic seaside sunset view from the Thistle Lodge, and so can you. #dinnerwithaview #JustLikeTom



Island Secret

You could say that cows built the Sanibel Lighthouse and the islands' first settlement. The lucrative cattle-shipping business made a powerful case for better navigational guidance at tricky Point Ybel, and, in 1884, the lighthouse put an end to cattlemen's "beefs" about the dangers.



Photo by Nick Adams Photography

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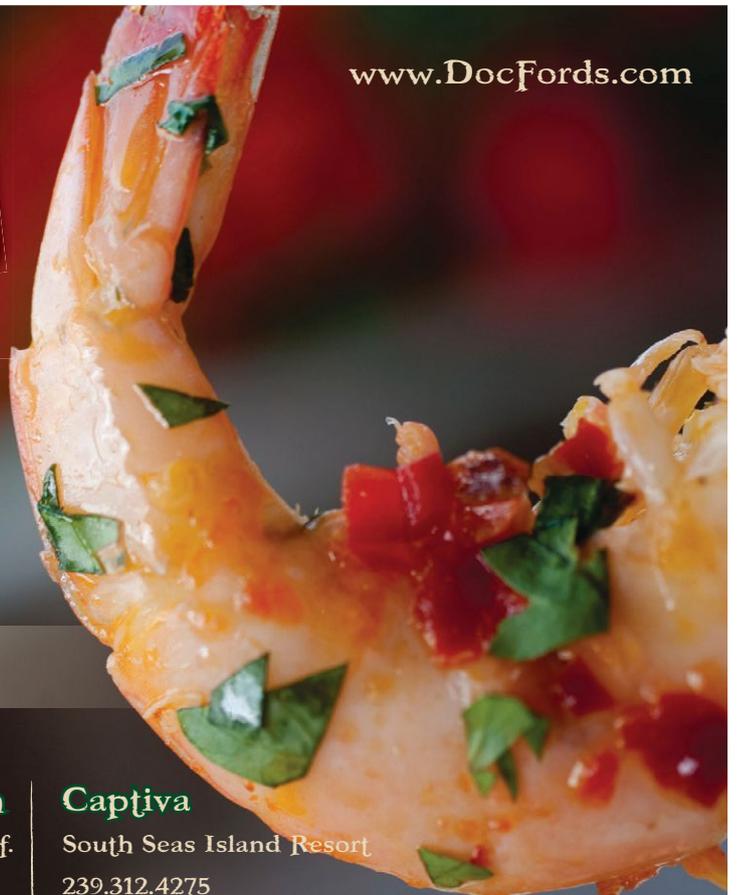
2500 Island Inn Rd.
239.472.8311

Ft. Myers Beach

708 Fisherman's Wharf.
239.765.9660

Captiva

South Seas Island Resort
239.312.4275



www.DocFords.com

Yucatan Shrimp

Sanibel & Captiva Dining

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	Credit Cards Accepted	Breakfast	Lunch	Dinner	Sunday Brunch	Take-Out	Waterfront Dining	Entertainment	Wine and Beer Only	Happy Hour	Outdoor Dining	Reservations Suggested
Bailey's 2477 Periwinkle Way, San, 472-1516 (Catering, Deli, Bakery)	2,3,5	Y	Y	Y		Y					Y	
Bleu Rendez-Vous French Bistro 2430 Periwinkle Way, Suite A, San, 565-1608 (French)	2,3,5			Y							Y	Y
Blue Coyote 1100 Parview Drive, San, 472-9222 (Continental Drift, Wine, Art)	2,3,5		Y	Y	Y					Y		Y
Blue Giraffe 2075 Periwinkle Way Suite #14, San, 472-2525 (Island American Cuisine)	2,5	Y	Y	Y		Y				Y	Y	
Cheeburger Cheeburger 1975 Periwinkle Way, San, 472-6111 (Casual, American, Family)	2,3,5		Y	Y		Y			Y			

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National Geographic Travel Guide Best Ice Creams in Gulf Coast America

Visit Florida.com 8 Best Ice Creams in Florida

Real Foods Real Kitchens Top 10 Best Chocolate Shakes in America



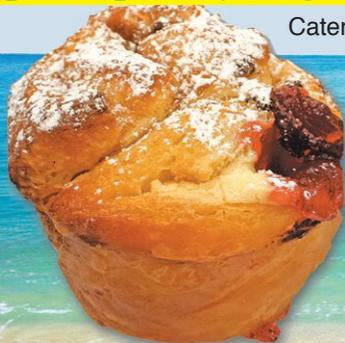
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	Credit Cards Accepted	Breakfast	Lunch	Dinner	Sunday Brunch	Take-Out	Waterfront Dining	Entertainment	Wine and Beer Only	Happy Hour	Outdoor Dining	Reservations Suggested
Cheeburger Cheeburger at the Sanibel Outlets 20350 Summerlin Rd, Fort Myers, (Casual, American, Family)	2,3,5		Y	Y		Y			Y	Y	Y	
Cips Place Island Restaurant 2055 Periwinkle Way, San, 472-0223 (Casual Island Dining)	2,3,5		Y	Y		Y				Y	Y	Y
The Coffee Bar @ Bailey's 2477 Periwinkle Way, San, 579-0026 (Best Coffee Bar)	2,3,5					Y					Y	
The Crows Nest 15951 Captiva Drive, Cap, 472-5161 (Food, Music, Fun)	2,3,5			Y		Y	Y	Y		Y		
Doc Ford's Sanibel Rum Bar & Grille 2500 Island Inn Road, San, 472-8311 (Caribbean Flair, Family)	2,3,5		Y	Y		Y					Y	



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Jean Le Bocq, News-Press

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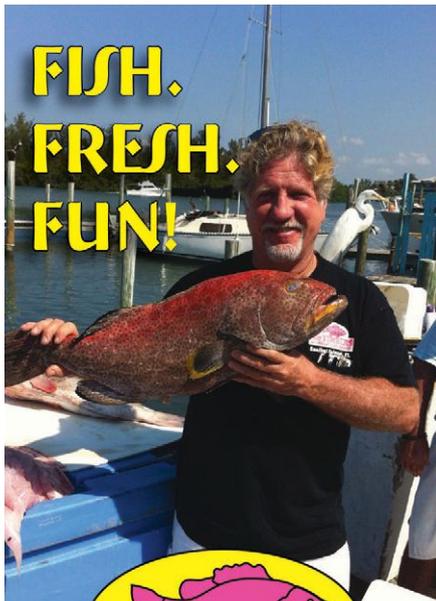
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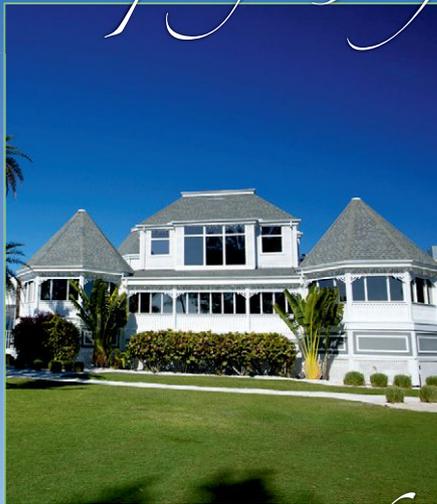


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Doc Ford's Sanibel Rum Bar & Grille South Seas Island Resort, Cap, 312-4275 (Carribbean Flair, Family)	2,3,5		Y	Y		Y		Call			Y	
The Dunes Golf & Tennis Club 949 Sand Castle Road, San, 472-3355 (Club Dining Room)	2,3,4,5		Y	CALL				Y		Y	Y	Y
Geppetto's Beach Foodies 362 Periwinkle Way, San, 472-6566 (Grab-n-Go Beach Cuisine)	2,3,5	Y	Y	Y		Y					Y	
George & Wendy's Seafood Grille 2499 Periwinkle Way, San, 395-1263 (American, Seafood, Casual)	2,3,5		Y	Y		Y		Y		Y	Y	Y
Gramma Dot's 634 N Yachtsman Drive, San, 472-8138 (American Seafood)	2,5		Y	Y		Y	Y		Y			

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Island Ceviche

- One pound of local Gulf Shrimp
- 8 big limes (juiced)
- 1 cup finely chopped red onion
- 1 Serrano chili, minced
(all ribs and seeds removed)
- 1 cup chopped cilantro
- 1 diced avocado
- 1 peeled and diced cucumber
- Salt & Pepper to taste

Preparation:

Boil the shrimp for a quick minute, with salt to taste.

Remove and drain right away to avoid over cooking.

Cool off the shrimp by placing it in cold iced water.

Drain and cut the shrimp in small pieces (unless using small shrimp).

Place it in a glass bowl with the lime juice, salt and pepper, cover

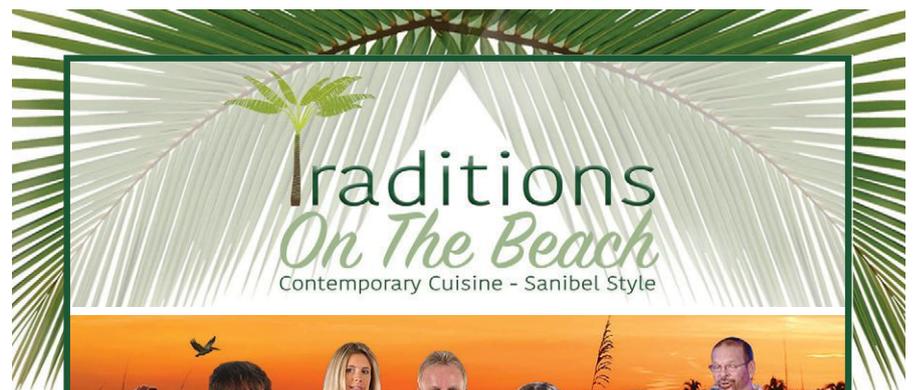
and leave it in the fridge for half hour.

Mix in the chili and the chopped onion and refrigerate for an

additional 20 minutes.

Add the cilantro, cucumber and avocado before serving.

Enjoy with chips!



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	Credit Cards Accepted	Breakfast	Lunch	Dinner	Sunday Brunch	Take-Out	Waterfront Dining	Entertainment	Wine and Beer Only	Happy Hour	Outdoor Dining	Reservations Suggested
Greenflash Restaurant 15183 Captiva Drive, Cap, 472-3337 (Seafood, Steak, Pasta)	2,3,5		Y	Y	Y	Y	Y				Y	
Island Cow Eatery 2163 Periwinkle Way, San, 472-0606 (Fun Casual Dining)	2,3,5	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y		Y		Y	Y	
Jerry's of Sanibel 1700 Periwinkle Way, San, 472-9300 (Family Style Dining)	2,3,5	Y	Y	Y		Y			Y			
Lighthouse Café of Sanibel 362 Periwinkle Way, San, 472-0303 (Casual, Dinner in Season)	5	Y	Y	CALL		Y			Y			Y
Love Boat Ice Cream 1700 Periwinkle Way, Unit #9 San, 312-4356 (Best Ice Cream Ever)	2,3,5		Y	Y		Y					Y	

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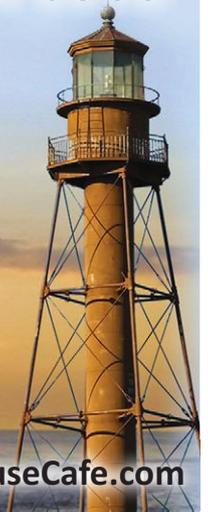
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Love Boat Ice Cream 16475 San Carlos Blvd, Fort Myers, 466-7707 (Best Ice Cream Ever)	2,3,5		Y	Y		Y						
Matzaluna, The Italian Kitchen 1200 Periwinkle Way, San, 472-1998 (Pizza, Pasta, Seafood)	2,5			Y		Y				Y		
Mucky Duck 11546 Andy Rosse Lane, Cap, 472-3434 (American, English Pub)	2,3,5		Y	Y		Y	Y	Y	Y		Y	
Normandie Seaside Cafe' 3345 West Gulf Drive, San, 800-824-0476 x 310 (Casual, American)	2,3,5	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y			Y		Y
The Old Captiva House at 'Tween Waters Inn 15951 Captiva Drive, Cap, 472-5161 (Delicious, Fresh, Florida)	2,3,5	Y		Y			Y	Y			Y	Y

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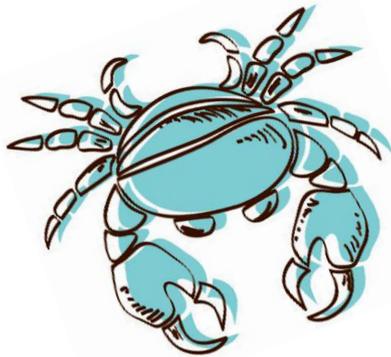
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	Credit Cards Accepted	Breakfast	Lunch	Dinner	Sunday Brunch	Take-Out	Waterfront Dining	Entertainment	Wine and Beer Only	Happy Hour	Outdoor Dining	Reservations Suggested
The Oasis Pool Bar 115951 Captiva Drive, Cap, 800-223-5865 (Casual, American Bar & Grille)	2,3,5		Y	Y		Y		Y		Y	Y	
Over Easy Café 630 Tarpon Bay Road Unit # 1, San, 472-2625 (Fun Casual Dining)	2,3,5	Y	Y			Y			Y		Y	
Pinocchio's Original Italian Ice Cream 362 Periwinkle Way, San, 472-6566 (Homemade Ice Cream)	2,3,5	Y	Y	Y		Y					Y	
Point Ybel Brewing Company 16120 San Carlos Blvd. Suite #4, Fort Myers 603-6535 (Craft Brewery)	2,3,5							Y	Y			
The Sandbar 2761 West Gulf Drive, San, 472-0305 (Sanibel's Freshest Seafood)	2,3,5		Y	Y		Y				Y		Y



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Sanibel & Captiva Dining

KEY

San = Sanibel, Cap = Captiva

1 = Cash Only; 2 = American Express;

3 = Discover; 4 = Diners Club; 5 = MasterCard and Visa

	Credit Cards Accepted	Breakfast	Lunch	Dinner	Sunday Brunch	Take-Out	Waterfront Dining	Entertainment	Wine and Beer Only	Happy Hour	Outdoor Dining	Reservations Suggested
Sanibel Deli & Coffee Factory 2330 Palm Ridge Road, San, 472-2555 (American, Ice Cream, Pizza)	2,3,5	Y	Y	Y		Y			Y		Y	
Sanibel Fish House 1523 Periwinkle Way San, 472-7770 (Family, Sports Bar)	2,3,5		Y	Y		Y		Y		Y		Y
Sanibel Grill 703 Tarpon Bay Road in Timbers Plaza, San, 472-4453 (Sports Bar, Seafood)	2, 5		SEASON	Y		Y				Y		
Schnappers Hots Inc. 1528 Periwinkle Way, San, 472-8686 (Fresh food, Carry-out)	3,5		Y	Y		Y						Y
Sea Breeze Cafe' 1451 Middle Gulf Drive, San, 395-6013 (American, Seafood, Gulf-front)	2,3,5	Y	Y	Y		Y	Y	Y		Y	Y	
Shima Japanese Steakhouse & Sushi Bar 1451 Middle Gulf Drive, San, 395-6017 (Hibachi, Sushi)	2,3,5			Y		Sushi						Y
Shima Grab N Go 1451 Middle Gulf Drive, San, 395-6005 (Sushi, Take out)	2,3,5		Y	Y		Sushi			Y			
Thistle Lodge 2255 West Gulf Drive, San, 472-9200 (Seafood, Floridian)	2,3,5		Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y		Y	Y	Y

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	Credit Cards Accepted	Breakfast	Lunch	Dinner	Sunday Brunch	Take-Out	Waterfront Dining	Entertainment	Wine and Beer Only	Happy Hour	Outdoor Dining	Reservations Suggested
Timbers Restaurant & Fish Market 703 Tarpon Bay Road, San, 472-3128 (Fresh Seafood Market)	2,5			Y		Y						
Traders Store & Café 1551 Periwinkle Way, San, 472-7242 (Island Bistro Cuisine)	2,3,5		Y	Y		Y		Y		Y		Y
Traders2 at The Village Shops 2340 Periwinkle Way, Unit B-1 San, 558-8919 (Casual Bistro Dining)	2,5		Y	Y		Y					Y	
Traditions at the Island Inn 3111 West Gulf Drive, San, 472-1561 (Upscale American Cuisine)	2,3,5			Y		Y	Y	Y				Y
The Upper Deck 3345 West Gulf Drive, San, 800-824-0476 (Casual, American Bar & Grille)	2,3,5		Y				Y	Y		Y	Y	

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- 1/2 cup light rum
- 8 cups crushed ice
- Mint sprigs and lime wedges for garnish

In a saucepan over medium heat, add the sugar and water. Cook for about 5 minutes, stirring often, until the sugar is dissolved and the syrup is clear. Set aside to cool.

Put the sugar syrup, lime juice, mint leaves, lime zest, and rum into a blender and blend until smooth. Add the ice and blend until slushy. Spoon into glasses; garnish with a sprig of mint and a lime slice.

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back to the days of hoop skirts, steamships and ferry boats. Island accommodations have welcomed wayfarers and vacationers since the early 1900s. Boisterous tales of whopper fish drew statesmen, stars and captains of industry back then.

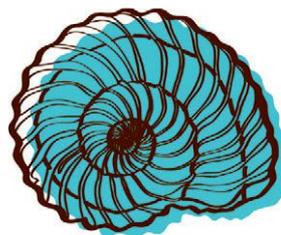
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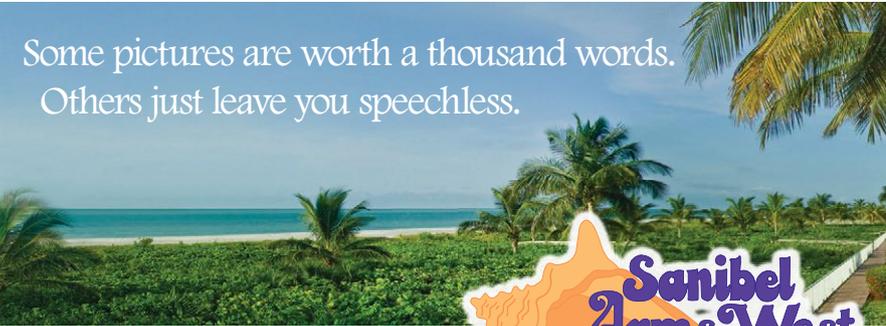
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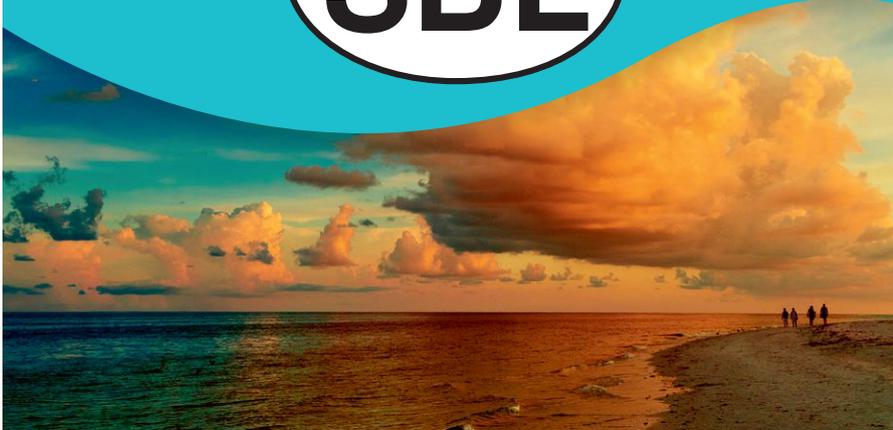
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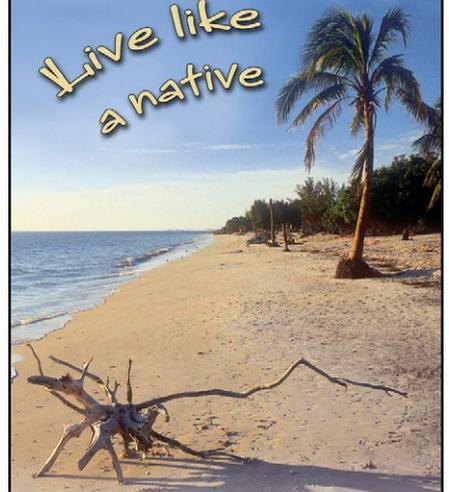
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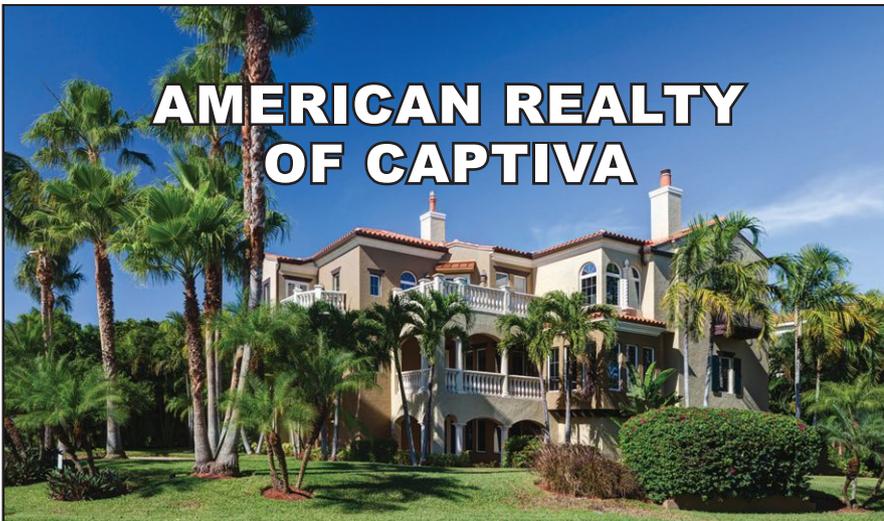
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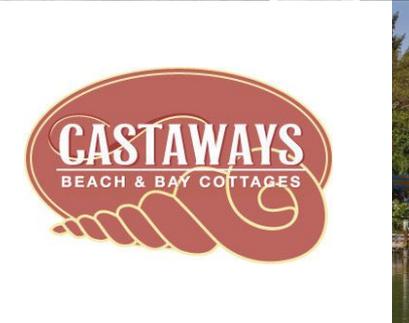
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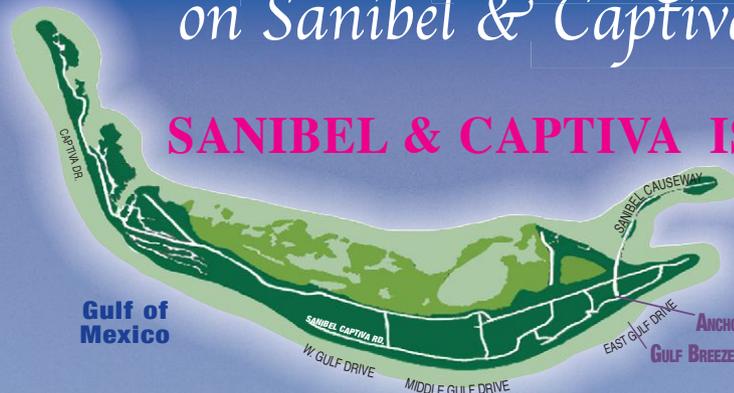


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