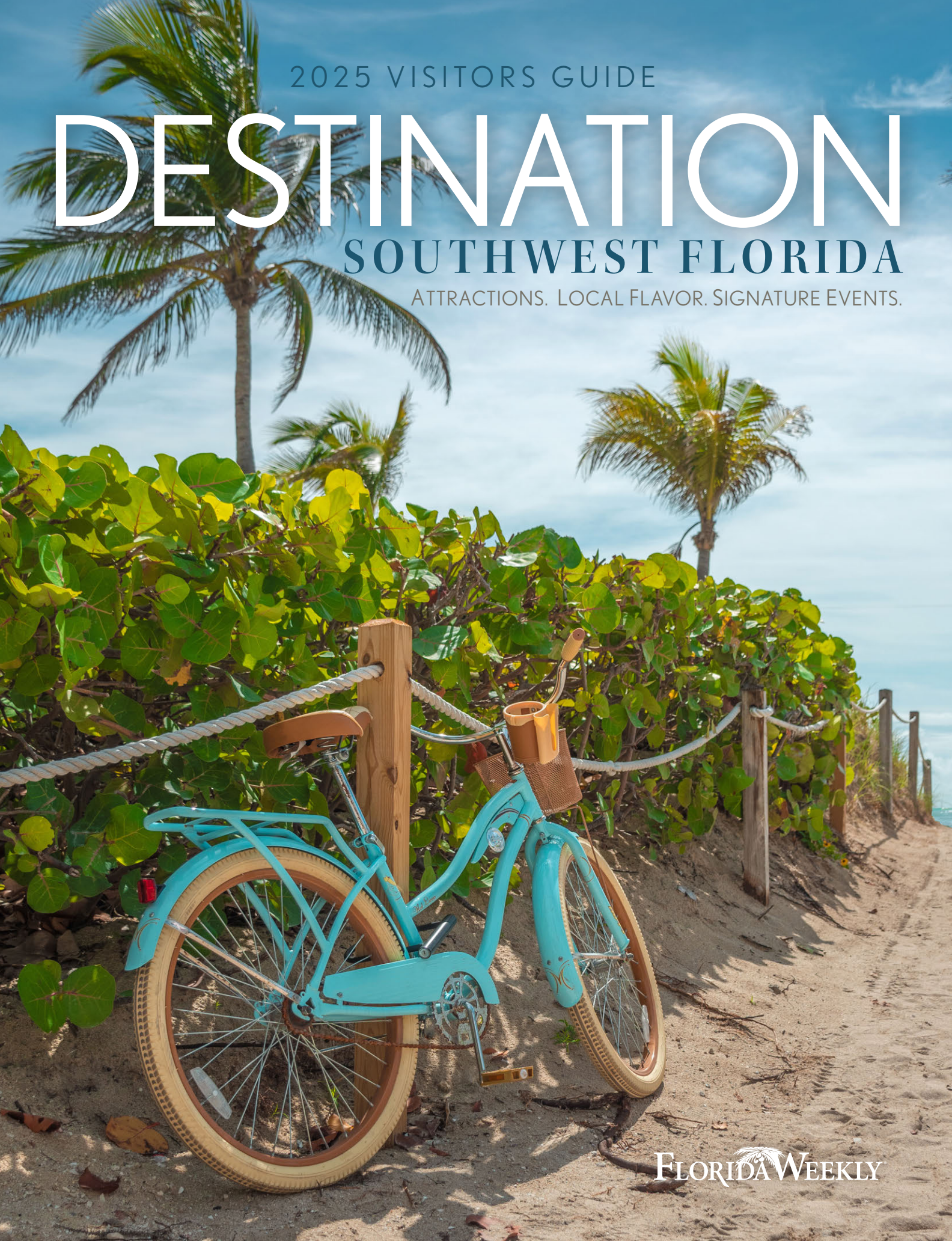


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A LEAGUE OF HER OWN

Barbara moved with her husband to Ave Maria, but lost him to cancer a little over a year ago. "He was the golfer. I'd just ride along and caddy. But I started to play, and then I started a league." She is the leader of the Ladies Wednesday Golf League at Panther Run. "It started with four of us who wanted to play together. It's grown to about 140. We really have a great time. You don't have to have a handicap, just a good attitude. Everyone is very supportive."

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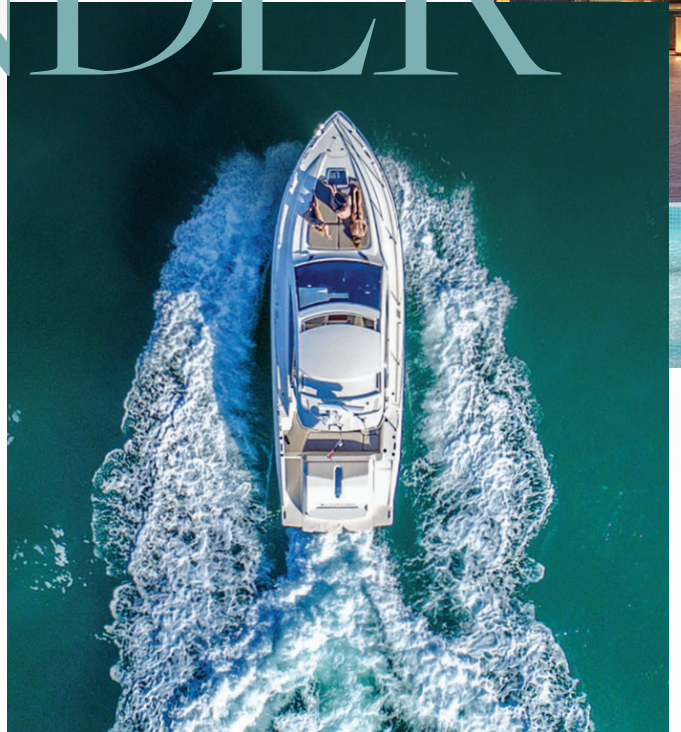


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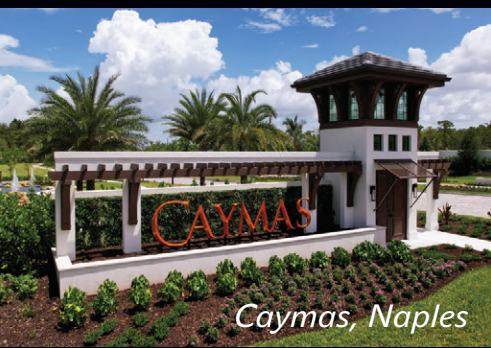
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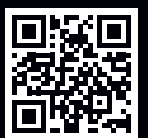
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“We can’t begin to describe with enough accuracy how amazing Sharon is. She went above and beyond our expectations to help us find and purchase our new home. Sharon is so genuine that we felt like old friends rather than newcomers to the area. Any questions we had were answered immediately, never did a call, text or email go unanswered. We felt like we were her first and only priority throughout the entire process.” – DR & NR

“Sharon is an experienced agent and extremely knowledgeable about the area. She was so flexible to my schedule and catered to my needs by showing me many different houses in different areas of SWFL. As a first time home buyer, Sharon kindly guided me through the process when I (we!) found a winner. She had the contract drawn out to sign quickly and held my hand every step of the way. She goes above and beyond, contacting the appropriate parties to ensure everything transitions smoothly. Sharon is simply the BEST!” – AV

*“This experience was my second with Sharon and as a former real estate agent she goes above and beyond to make sure the details of the transaction are taken well care of and in a timely knowledgeable fashion. Needless to say she gets ***** 5 stars plus and a wholehearted recommendation” – BB*

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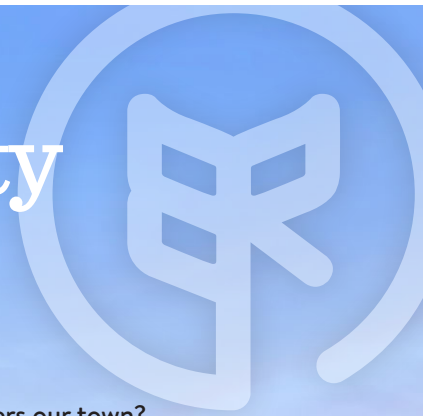
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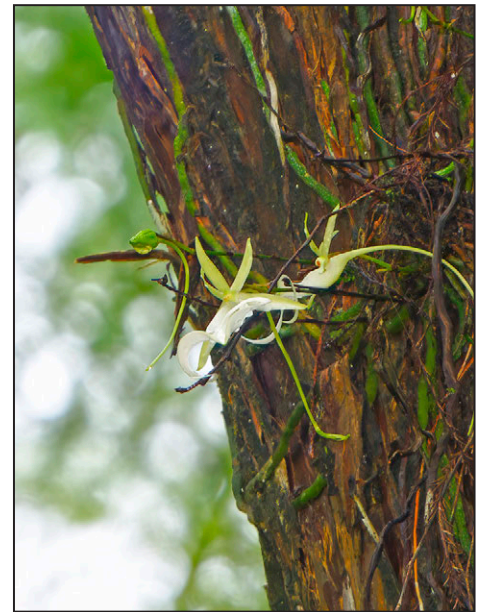
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DELVE INTO
SOUTHWEST FLORIDA'S
CULINARY SCENE

51

■ Cultural venues.....	26	■ Sports.....	67
■ Historic districts	34	■ Shopping	73
■ SWFL Golf	38	■ Focus on SWFL.....	78
■ Insider	42	■ Attractions	82
■ Local flavor	51	■ Amazing museums ..	86
■ Hurricane tips	56	■ News & info.....	91
■ Health care.....	61	■ Beaches & parks	92
■ Signature events	62		

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239-323-5533 | thebelletheatre.com



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BIG ARTS

Originally known as the Barrier Island Group for the Arts, BIG ARTS was established over 40 years ago to celebrate the artist in everyone and our shared humanity. Each year, it provides the community with a diverse array of performing and visual arts, films, workshops and lectures.

900 Dunlop Road, Sanibel
239-395-0900 | bigarts.org

Bob Rauschenberg Gallery

For over 25 years, the Gallery at Florida SouthWestern State College has enjoyed a meaningful partnership with renowned artist Robert Rauschenberg. Since 1980, it has hosted numerous world premieres, including the debut of the "1/4 Mile" and "2 Furlong Piece."

8099 College Pkwy., Fort Myers
239-489-9313 | rauschenberggallery.com

Bower School of Music & the Arts

A key component of Florida Gulf Coast University's campus culture, Bower School organizes more than 150 events each year and prepares students for successful careers in the arts. Additionally, it participates in distinctive partnerships that merge academic disciplines, such as the Crossroads of Art and Science Residency.

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

Broadway Palm Dinner Theatre

Broadway Palm has delighted over 170,000 annual guests for 30 years, offering a 382-seat dinner theatre, an 86-seat black box theatre and various amenities. Each year, it presents eight Broadway musicals, smaller revues and comedies, children's productions and hosts over 200 community events.

1380 Colonial Blvd., Fort Myers
239-278-4422 | broadwaypalm.com

Caloosa Sound Amphitheater

A venue for outdoor entertainment features concerts, festivals and various events. The location provides scenic views of the Caloosahatchee River and boasts contemporary amenities for live performances.

22101 Edwards Drive, Fort Myers
239-314-3757 | caloosoundamp.com

Cape Coral Museum of History

Founded in 1987, the Cape Coral Museum of History is focused on preserving and sharing the city's heritage through its exhibits and programs.

544 Cultural Park Blvd., Cape Coral
239-772-7037 | capecoralhistoricalmuseum.org

Cultural Park Theater

Founded in 1963 by Herb Strauss as the "Cape Coral Players" in a small storefront, Cultural Park Theatre has since evolved into a vibrant cultural hub



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CULTURAL VENUES

in its permanent location in the Cultural Park area of Cape Coral, expanding its offerings to showcase local talent and diverse performances.

528 Cultural Park Blvd., Cape Coral
239-772-5862 | culturalparktheatre.org

Edison & Ford Winter Estates

The historic winter residences of Thomas A. Edison and Henry Ford, situated along the Caloosahatchee River, are among the most significant historical landmarks in Southwest Florida. Take guided tours to discover the homes, expansive botanical gardens, museum, laboratory, Garden Shoppe and Museum Store.

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

Florida Repertory Theatre

Florida Repertory Theatre has a rich history spanning 27 years in regional theatre, drawing over 87,000 guests each year. The theatre presents a diverse range of comedies, dramas and musicals at the historic Arcade Theatre located in the River District of Fort Myers.

2268 Bay St., Fort Myers
239-332-4488 | floridarep.org

Fort Myers Theatre

A cultural venue that hosts musicals, dramas, youth performances, shows for homeschoolers and special events like Theatre Drop-In Day, where children can engage in skits, musical performances, costume exploration and theater activities.

16120 San Carlos Blvd. Suite 5, Fort Myers
239-323-6570 | ftmyerstheatre.com

Harbour View Gallery

As Cape Coral's only artist-owned cooperative, this gallery exclusively features juried local art from exhibiting artists and hosts a popular monthly program with public receptions every first Tuesday.

5789 Cape Harbour Drive, Suite 104, Cape Coral
239-540-5789 | harbourviewgallery.com

Hertz Arena

A versatile sports and entertainment arena that can accommodate up to 8,000 spectators. It hosts a variety of events, including concerts, ice hockey matches (home arena for the Florida Everblades), family-oriented shows and much more.

11000 Everblades Pkwy., Estero
239-948-7825 | hertzarena.com

Laboratory Theater of Florida

The Laboratory Theater of Florida was founded in 2008 by Annette Trossbach, Nicole Rizley and Louise Wigglesworth to showcase innovative and classic plays that enrich Southwest Florida's cultural landscape. Now a professional teaching theater, this theater emphasizes holistic actor training and collaborates with various community organizations to promote artistic diversity.

1634 Woodford Ave., Fort Myers
239-218-0481 | laboratorytheaterflorida.com

Lee County Civic Center Complex

The Lee County Civic Center Complex is a versatile venue hosting various events, including the Southwest Florida Ag Expo, 4-H meetings and events, agriculture and livestock showcases, RV shows, craft fairs, gun shows and antique markets. With its arena, exhibition halls and outdoor areas, it's an ideal location for concerts, trade shows, festivals and community gatherings.

11831 Bayshore Road, North Fort Myers
239-533-1168
leegov.com/parks/centers/civiccenter

Music & Arts Community Center

Located within the Unitarian Universalist Church of Fort Myers, this center serves as an active performance space as well as the main office for the Gulf Coast Symphony. The symphony also extends its concerts and educational programs to multiple sites throughout Lee County.

13411 Shire Lane, Fort Myers
239-277-1700 | gulfcoastsymphony.org/macc

Players Circle Theater

A professional black box venue providing

top-tier entertainment, established by Southwest Florida theater veterans Carrie Lund Cacioppo and Robert Cacioppo. They have significantly shaped Lee County's theater landscape for over 30 years, including founding the area's first professional theater and the renowned Florida Repertory Theater.

13211 McGregor Blvd., Fort Myers
239-800-3292 | playerscircle.org

The Ranch Concert Hall & Saloon

The Ranch blends the atmosphere of a nightclub with that of a live music space. It boasts a sprawling 25,000-square-foot Western-style saloon, an impressive 400-foot bar, a specially designed 1,800-square-foot stage for popular performers and a spacious 4,500-square-foot dance floor that welcomes guests to dance on Wednesdays, Fridays and Saturdays.

2158 Colonial Blvd., Fort Myers
239-985-9839 | theranchfortmyers.com

Sidney & Berne Davis Art Center

Set in a historic early 20th-century post office, the Sidney & Berne Davis Art Center is a venue for art exhibits, concerts, film screenings and community events. On Wednesday to Friday nights, visit Sidney's Rooftop for stunning city views, drinks and dancing over the Caloosahatchee River at sunset.

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

Southwest Florida Symphony

The Southwest Florida Symphony hosts a variety of Masterworks concerts that cover music from the Baroque period to contemporary times, along with informative pre-concert talks. In addition to these performances, the symphony enhances community engagement through Pops



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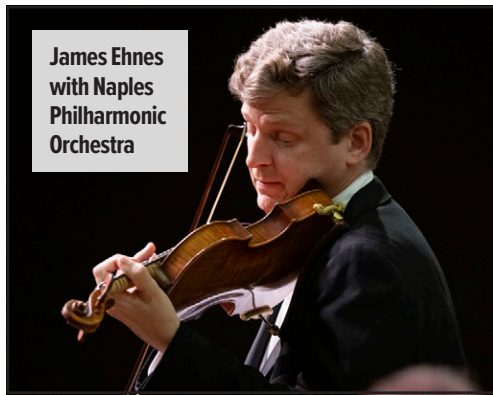
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CULTURAL VENUES



ARTIS—NAPLES / COURTESY PHOTO

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7500 College Pkwy., Suite 200, Fort Myers
239-418-0996 | swflso.org

Tribby Arts Center

The Tribby Arts Center, located in Shell Point Retirement Community, is a 44,000-square-foot facility with a 400-seat auditorium, three art galleries and studios for music and crafts. It also features the Tribby Café, an outdoor sculpture garden and Serendipity gift shop.

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

COLLIER COUNTY

Artis—Naples

Artis—Naples offers a diverse range of artistic and cultural experiences, emphasizing inspiration, education and entertainment. It features The Baker Museum, renowned for its impressive art collections and exhibitions, along with Hayes Hall, a modern performance space that presents concerts, Broadway productions, dance shows and various other events.

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

Cambier Park bandshell

Cambier Park, a vibrant 12.84-acre spot in Naples named after 1926 key town engineer William Cambier, is a favorite venue for music enthusiasts. It hosts outdoor concerts featuring the Naples Big Band, Naples Concert Band and other talented performers.

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

Gulfshore Playhouse

Dedicated to enriching the cultural landscape, this organization focuses on high-quality professional theatre and inclusive educational opportunities. It fosters a sense of community and shared humanity among diverse audiences and artists.

100 Goodlette-Frank Road S., Naples
239-261-7529 | gulfshoreplayhouse.org

The Holocaust Museum & Education Center of Southwest Florida

The museum aims to inspire action against hatred and foster mutual respect by educating people about the Holocaust through artifacts and photographs highlighting personal stories within its broader context. Additionally, it offers educational programs for students of all ages and public exhibits that emphasize its collection and the lessons of the Holocaust and other genocides.

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

Marco Island Center for the Arts

The center hosts art exhibitions, educational programs and events for all ages, promoting economic growth and cultural diversity. The Arts Center Theatre enhances the local cultural landscape through its performances.

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

Marco Island Historical Museum

The Marco Island Historical Museum, established in 2010, highlights the area's rich history, with a focus on the Calusa Indians. It features exhibits on local archaeology, the island's evolution and a serene landscape that includes a gazebo and a gallery for traveling art exhibits.

180 S. Heathwood Drive, Marco Island
239-389-6447 | themihs.org

Naples Art Institute

With nearly 70 years of history, Naples Art Institute offers a range of programs and exhibitions designed to engage a broad audience with visual arts. It provides art education and hosts events featuring artists from both the local community and around the world.

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

Naples Performing Arts Center

Founded in 2012 by Lori Oliver, this community-focused center offers inclusive arts education in dance, drama and music for students of all backgrounds, including those with special needs. Its mission is to foster creativity, build self-esteem and provide life skills while addressing gaps in local arts programs.

5450 YMCA Road, Naples
239-325-8789 | naplesperformingartscenter.com

The Naples Players

Established in 1953, this community theater enhances community connections through exceptional theatrical experiences. Engaging over 80,000 individuals annually, TNP continues to celebrate inspiring performances, programs and classes aimed at enriching our community and shaping the future of the arts in Southwest Florida.

701 Fifth Ave. S., Naples
239-263-7990 | naplesplayers.org

Norris Community Center

The Norris Community Center boasts a multipurpose facility that includes an auditorium, dance studio, art gallery and additional spaces. It offers a variety of cultural and recreational programs, including watercolor painting, dance, acting workshops and special holiday events for families.

755 Eighth Ave. S., Naples
239-213-3049 | naplesgov.com

Seminole Casino Hotel

Managed by the Seminole Tribe of Florida, Seminole Casino Hotel offers diverse gaming options, including table games and slot machines. Guests can enjoy amenities like a hotel, outdoor pool, fitness center, event venues and live performances such as concerts and comedy acts catering to a wide audience.

506 S. First St., Immokalee
239-658-1313 | casino.hardrock.com/Immokalee

TheatreZone

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CULTURAL VENUES

Actors' Equity Association, it attracts top talent in acting, singing, dancing and stage management.

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

CHARLOTTE COUNTY

Blanchard House Museum

Founded in 2004, the museum focuses on preserving and showcasing artifacts related to African American history and culture in Southwest Florida. It features an educational scavenger hunt to engage visitors. Currently, the museum is closed due to damage from Hurricane Ian.

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

Charlotte Harbor Event & Conference Center

The Center offers 44,000 square feet of flexible space for concerts, theaters and various events. It includes seven venues for up to 1,800 guests, 240 free parking spots, high-speed internet and catering from Savor... Charlotte Harbor.

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

Charlotte Players

Founded in 1961, the Charlotte Players is a community theater in Charlotte County that has produced over 300 performances. They offer acting workshops, run the "Kids Onstage" initiative and collaborate with the Dolly Parton Imagination Library to support the arts and the community.

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

Englewood Art Center

The Englewood Art Center, part of Ringling College of Art and Design, offers various educational initiatives, exhibitions and special events. Situated in south county Sarasota, it features four galleries, multiple studios for activities like ceramics and digital media, and a library for lending purposes.

350 South McCall Road, Englewood
941-474-5548 | ringling.edu

Florida Studio Theatre

Founded in 1973, Florida Studio Theatre,

located in Downtown Sarasota, boasts five intimate performance spaces and is directed by Richard Hopkins. FST is dedicated to making the arts reachable for everyone, drawing more than 230,000 visitors each year through its mainstage performances, children's theatre and improvisational programs.

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

Gulf Theater in the Military Heritage Museum

The Military Heritage Museum, a short walk from Fishermen's Village, features the recently updated 247-seat Gulf Theater. This venue offers a range of events, from lectures to performances, and is equipped with modern audiovisual technology and amenities, including free Wi-Fi and outdoor seating areas.

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

Lemon Bay Playhouse

A local community theater committed to delivering high-quality live shows across various genres such as drama, comedy and musicals. Founded in 1987, it serves as a venue for local talent and volunteers to engage in theatrical performances.

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

Sarasota Opera

The Sarasota Opera is well-known for its wide range of operatic performances held at the iconic Sarasota Opera House. Established in 1960, it is acclaimed for showcasing operas in their authentic versions and for its extensive Verdi Cycle, which features every piece created by Giuseppe Verdi.

61 N. Pineapple Ave., Sarasota
941-328-1300 | sarasotaopera.org

Sarasota Players

A blend of live theater and educational programs is provided, nurturing the growth and creativity of performers of all ages and skill levels on Florida's Cultural Coast. This non-professional theatre is dedicated to accessibility and showcases local talent while also celebrating the arts and fostering a supportive environment for anyone eager to explore their potential on stage.

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

Urbanite Theatre

This intimate theater is recognized for its daring and modern productions that address important social issues. Established in 2015, Urbanite Theatre emphasizes groundbreaking plays and new talent, providing a distinctive alternative to conventional theater.

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

Venice Theatre

Established in 1950, Venice Theatre presents a diverse selection of performances, encompassing musicals, dramas and comedies. It also provides educational initiatives for individuals of all ages.

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

Visual Arts Center

The Visual Arts Center features three galleries, six classrooms and studios for jewelry, glass and pottery. Its 12,000-square-foot facility includes an arts library and an Art Supply Store, offering year-round classes and workshops for all ages and skill levels.

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

Westcoast Black Theatre Troupe

Founded in 1999, Westcoast Black Theatre Troupe is a professional theater company dedicated to celebrating African American arts and culture through a diverse array of performances, including musicals, dramas and comedies.

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



VISUAL ARTS CENTER / COURTESY PHOTO

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HISTORIC DISTRICTS



Banyan Street, with its shady trees and scenic charm, is perfect for a relaxing stroll or bike ride through the heart of Boca Grande.

LEE COUNTY VISITOR & CONVENTION BUREAU / COURTESY PHOTO

COASTAL TAPESTRY: EXPERIENCE VIBRANT COMMUNITIES, LOCAL HERITAGE AND NATURAL WONDERS

BY CHELLE KOSTER WALTON

If Southwest Florida did an ancestry test, it would discover in its genes a diverse heritage of Indigenous Americans, immigrants, creative geniuses, railroad and hotel magnates, soldiers, pioneers and adventurers. Diversity, along with vintage architecture and landmarks keep the past alive in five of the region's historic districts.

Boca Grande

The railroad, tarpon fishing and Gasparilla Inn first brought captains of industry to tiny Gasparilla Island and its town of Boca Grande at the turn of the century. The railroad has transformed into a path

for bicycles and golf carts, while the historic depot holds boutiques, an ice cream shop and Keylime Bistro.

Within its three-block-long area, downtown Boca Grande holds historic gems well beyond the circa-1913 Gasparilla Inn. You can easily stroll or bike around its beautiful churches, pink-hued Johann Fust Library and handsome Community House, then along canopied Banyan Street and to the beach. The Port Boca Grande Lighthouse & Museum encapsulates local history, overlooking tarpon-rich Gasparilla Pass.

Downtown Bonita Springs

Old 41 Road has seen heydays come

and go ever since its youthful tourism era. Today, its magnetism has returned, built on the very foundation of historic hotels and the nature attraction that brought the Everglades wilds to its main street in the 1930s - now undergoing a rejuvenation as Wonder Gardens.

Today, Shangri-La Hotel stands as a symbol of Bonita Springs' healthful reputation and alluring 1920s hospitality. Around it, historic buildings have turned into fine restaurants, craft breweries, cocktail lounges and a new food truck park that overlooks the town's lifeblood, the Imperial River. Discover Bonita Springs' deep roots at Riverside Park, devoted to olden days and new waves of festivity and vigor.



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HISTORIC DISTRICTS

Looking to the future, the town continues to build a party reputation as Sugarshack Downtown – a combo live music stage, craft brewery and restaurant – prepares to open any minute now.

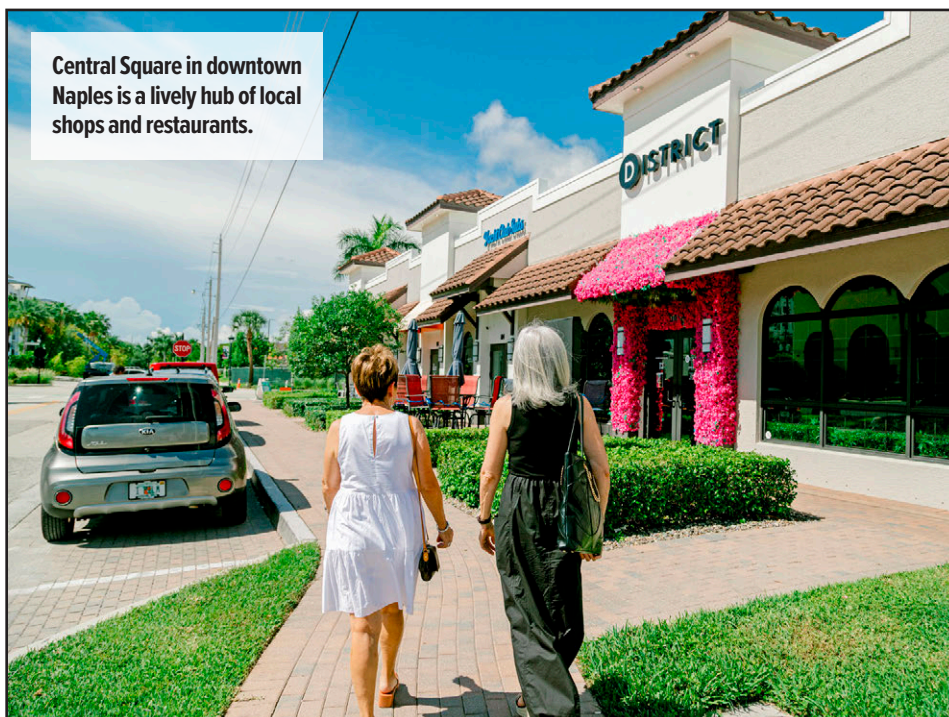
Downtown Naples

Fifth Avenue South and Third Street South have held the heart of historic Naples since the 1920s when distinguished visitors and winter residents arrived by boat to the Naples Pier and traded with Seminole natives. Today, instead, you'll find glamour shops in historic buildings selling jewelry, fashions, home accessories and other wares.

The neighborhoods are known, too, for their fashionable sidewalk restaurants and cultural venues. Famed downtown Naples, including the Naples Design District, has spread in recent years. Like nearby Fifth Avenue South, it blends vintage vibes with modern trends and is famed for its galleries, home craftsmanship and contemporary spots to eat, socialize and spend the night in modern luxury.

Downtown Punta Gorda

The wide and placid Peace River separates old from new in Charlotte County, where Punta Gorda dates to the 19th century and tells its story through a series of vibrant murals. Marion Avenue, the pretty and picturesque main street, lines up eclectic shops and eateries like The Perfect Caper and Celtic Ray Public House, each



Central Square in downtown Naples is a lively hub of local shops and restaurants.

KATHLEEN ELIZABETH PHOTOGRAPHY / COURTESY PHOTO

with its unique charm. It overlooks the river and the county's newest attraction on the opposite shore – Sunseeker Resort Charlotte Harbor, a vital entertainment center for everyone.

Along the riverfront in Punta Gorda, Wyvern Hotel's rooftop bar and Four Points by Sheraton with TT's Tiki Bar maintain the lively atmosphere. Laishley Park and its crab house cater to sea enthusiasts and families, complementing the ex-

tensive bike trails along the river.

Fort Myers Historic River District

Like many downtowns of a certain age, there came a time when Fort Myers' urban sprawl left its core looking a little abandoned. Wiser heads prevailed, however, to save the Historic River District, with all its vintage gems, from falling victim to trends and "out with the old" attitudes.

Thanks largely to the endurance of the Edison & Ford Winter Estates at its fringe, the historic downtown was renewed. An old, handsome federal building became an art center; a vaudeville house circa 1915 evolved into a live theater. Stores and restaurants moved into buildings dating back to the late 18th century, as was the case with The Veranda, a gracious restaurant that lives in two pioneer homes.

Bars and lounges today draw a young crowd to frenzied hangouts such as the Sky Bar and Downtown Social. The new Bay Street Yard takes the party outside, and Luminary Hotel & Co. serves as a hub for social activity with restaurants, a rooftop bar and a sports pub with virtual gaming.

The Historic River District continues to take full advantage of its waterfront beauty and bygone intrigue as more hotels move in and people of all ages come out for its monthly street parties and annual festivals. ■



Every Saturday from 8 a.m. to 1 p.m., there is a farmers market in Punta Gorda on Marion Avenue, featuring fresh produce, local crafts and delicious treats.

PUNTA GORDA/ENGLEWOOD BEACH VISITOR & CONVENTION BUREAU / COURTESY PHOTO

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Golfers enjoying the sunny weather on a Naples course in 1960.

STATE ARCHIVES OF FLORIDA/STOKES / COURTESY PHOTO

TEERING OFF HISTORY: THE ENDURING LEGACY OF FLORIDA'S HISTORIC GOLF TRAIL AND ICONIC COURSES

BY GLENN MILLER

Golf has long been a Florida destination, intertwined with its history alongside theme parks, sandy beaches, palm trees and sunshine. Launched in 2014, the Historic Golf Trail highlights this heritage, featuring over 50 courses, including three notable ones in Southwest Florida: Arcadia Municipal Golf Course, the Fort Myers Country Club and the Naples Beach Hotel & Golf Club.

Arcadia Municipal Golf Course

Not far away in DeSoto County is the Arcadia Municipal Golf Course. It's a short drive from coastal Southwest Florida counties.

Babcock National Golf Club is 35 miles away, and Aileron Golf Club, also in Charlotte County, is a mere 22 miles away. Arcadia Municipal opened in 1923, long after the town was founded in 1886.

"And no one was thinking about golf then, or even when they were rebuilding the downtown structures after the devas-

tating 1905 fire," Arcadia historian and author Carol Mahler said. She is working on a historical marker for the golf course.

Mahler's research indicates that a man named A.C. Polk, Sr. was the driving force behind bringing golf to Arcadia. Polk moved to Arcadia in 1916 and passed away in 1970 at the age of 90.

There's a link between the first golf courses in Arcadia, Fort Myers and Boca Grande. This connection is a man named Harry A. Cowie, who died in 1929 at the age of 38. He was a pro who played and

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KOLTER
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SWFL GOLF

taught all three courses.

A significant figure in the development of the DeSoto County golf course is Albert W. Gilchrist, Charlotte County's only governor, who leased 50 acres for its establishment. Cowie planned the nine-hole course, which was completed in 1923, though it took a while to expand to 18 holes.

"Although the original Arcadia Golf Club planned an 18-hole course, the expansion was not completed until 2001 after the city purchased an additional 24 acres in 1999," Mahler said.

Fort Myers Country Club

Legendary golf course architect Donald Ross designed the Fort Myers Golf Country Club. Construction of the course between U.S. 41 and McGregor Boulevard took place from late 1916 and into 1917.

At the time, Collier County had not yet been formed; it was carved out of what was then a vast Lee County. There was no Tamiami Trail linking Tampa and Miami. World War I was in full swing, and not only was there no TV or the internet but there was also no commercial radio. Fort Myers had a population of around 3,500. Cape Coral and Lehigh Acres had yet to exist, nor did shopping malls, a bridge to



SOUTHWEST FLORIDA HISTORICAL SOCIETY / COURTESY PHOTO

Sanibel or the right for women to vote.

The Fort Myers Country Club has been described as a jewel right in the heart of town. It's one of many golf courses that have helped lure people to the Sunshine State for more than a century. In 1916, when construction began in Fort Myers, nine-hole courses were already operating on Useppa and Boca Grande.

Fort Myers aimed to join in the excitement and attract tourists to Florida's west coast. In a story from the Fort Myers Press dated Dec. 9, 1916, it was announced that the city would be opening a golf course that would be comparable to some of the best clubs in the nation.

Powerful people were behind the project. Famed inventor and part-time Fort Myers resident Thomas Edison was list-

ed as one of 15 directors of the new course taking shape.

Fort Myers Country Club has hosted some of golf's biggest names, enhancing the course's reputation and the community. Notable players include Arnold Palmer, Gene Sarazen and LPGA founder Patty Berg, who was a local resident until her passing in 2006 at 88.

Naples Beach Hotel & Golf Club

The Naples Beach & Golf Club opened in 1931, eight years after the establishment of Collier County, named after Barron Collier, and the Arcadia course's nine-hole facility.

The facility, which closed in 2021, is undergoing renovation and rebranding and is expected to reopen in late 2025 as the Naples Beach Club, a Four Seasons Resort.

The original course was designed by T.E. Fredericks, who worked for Donald Ross, the man who designed the Fort Myers Country Club.

Golf continues to be a vibrant attraction, drawing people from Naples to Fort Myers, Port Charlotte and even inland to Arcadia. This has been true since the 1920s, remains true in the 2020s, and is likely to persist far into the future, possibly even into the 2120s. ■

The Arcadia Municipal Golf Course, founded in 1923, is a nine-hole course in DeSoto County.




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ANDREA STETSON / FLORIDA WEEKLY

PLAN YOUR IDEAL TRIP: STUNNING ITINERARIES FOR SHORT VISITS AND EXTENDED STAYS

BY ANDREA STETSON

LEE COUNTY

Southwest Florida is so much more than sun, surf and sand. It can be history, hiking, wildlife, entertainment, gardens and boating. Whether you are here for just a few days or a week, there is much to enjoy in Lee, Collier and Charlotte counties.

Two days:

Bailey-Matthews National Shell Museum – Get some in-depth information about local shelling and view a large variety of shells from our local beaches and around the world. Visit the Great Hall of

Shells for displays highlighting some of the 550,000 shells in the museum's collection. The Living Gallery of Aquariums displays more than 60 species of marine life.

'Ding' Darling National Wildlife Refuge – Stop by the free education center and learn more about the local environ-

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ment. Take a ride on the four-mile Wildlife Drive or take a 90-minute tram tour.

While you are on the island, head to the beach. Lighthouse Beach Park features a historic lighthouse built in 1884. Blind Pass Beach connects Sanibel to Captiva, while Bowman's Beach has the best parking.

Edison & Ford Winter Estates – Thomas Edison and Henry Ford both had huge, large estates by the Caloosahatchee River that visitors could visit. Enjoy over 20 acres of historical buildings and gardens, including the 1928 Edison Botanical Research Laboratory. Most of the Edison main house and guest house furnishings were used by the Edison family, who enjoyed the place as a winter retreat for six decades.

Three to five days:

Koreshan State Park – Along the Estero River, beside the majestic oaks, is a settlement once inhabited by pioneers who arrived here in 1893. The religious sect, led by Cyrus Teed, was committed

to communal living and believed that the universe existed inside the Earth. There are 11 restored and nationally registered historic buildings to explore, as well as hiking trails along the river.

Old US 41 – Twenty years ago, Old 41 was a place to avoid. The rundown area was lined with auto repair shops, a neglected park and even a hotel that prostitutes frequented. Now, it is nothing like that at all. The City of Bonita Springs beautified the area with brick pavers, roundabouts and landscaping. The garages and run-down shops have been replaced with restaurants, breweries, wine bars, a food truck area and more. The park is clean and the centerpiece of the area. Concerts and festivals are constantly held there. Walk through the park and visit the colorful artist cottages, explore the shops and restaurants, amble through the gardens at the Shangri-La, visit the historical society to learn about Bonita's history and visit the Wonder Gardens, which has been there for almost 90 years. "It is a new destination," said Trish Leonard, past president of

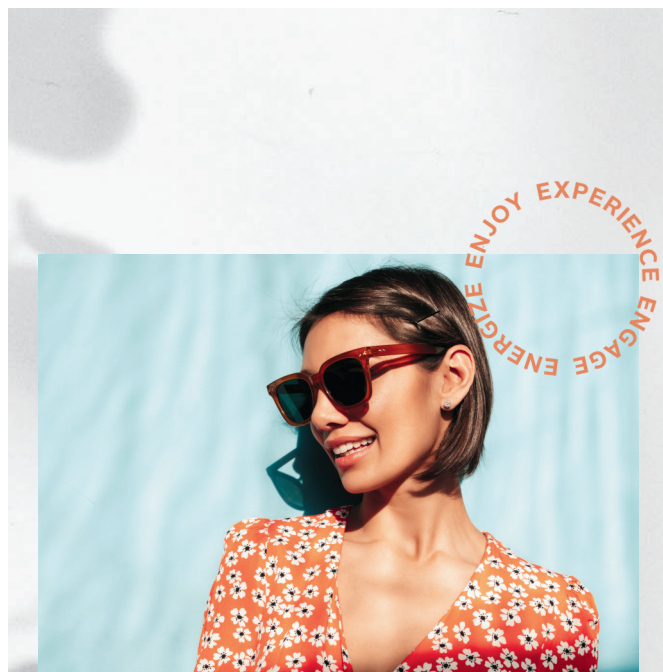
the downtown alliance. "We have wonderful restaurants, entertainment and a hotel, and it is just a small-town charm with a big bright future."

Seven days:

Area beaches – Southwest Florida's main attraction is the beaches, and there are plenty of them. Fort Myers Beach still has the scars of Hurricane Ian, but Times Square is back with its restaurants and shops by the beach. Further south, Bonita Beach Park is open and so is all the access except for number 10 on the island's north end. The restrooms and barbecue grills at Bonita Beach Park were destroyed, but there are some port-a-potties there.

Lovers Key State Park – Take a tram ride to the south beach or hike the trails along narrow canals and lagoons. In the early 1900s, the islands were accessible only by boat, and the legend was that only lovers made the effort to get there, so it was named Lovers Key. Legends also hint that a pirate named Black Augustus escaped capture and lived on the island.

Manatee Park – If you are here during

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cold weather and want to see these gentle giants, head to Manatee Park. The manatees flock to the warmer water created there by the nearby power plant. There are walkways and viewing areas along the waterway.

Ostego Bay Foundation Marine Science Center – This marine center has interactive exhibits, small aquariums, a touch tank and unique displays. However, the facility has been closed for repairs, so call 239-470-4993 first.

Wicked Dolphin Rum Distillery Tours – Guests are invited on free tours of the facility in Cape Coral to learn how they transform locally sourced Florida sugar into handcrafted small-batch rum. Visitors see the cooking, fermenting and distilling processes and then get to sample different types of rum.

COLLIER COUNTY

Two days:

Pure Florida – Getting out on the water is one of the best ways to experience the nature of Southwest Florida. Pure Florida is one of the many companies that offer that opportunity. The three-hour eco and dolphin-watching tours take guests to Keewaydin Island. Shells are plentiful on islands like this that are not packed with crowds. Experts narrate everything from the mangroves and waterways to the many bird species seen along the way. Visitors can also end the day with a 1.5-hour sunset cruise that culminates with watching the sunset from the Gulf just beyond Gordon's Pass. "Being on the water is such a huge part of our story, and that is what makes Pure Florida so unique is that we have multiple ways to experience being on the water," said Merry Kaufmann, director of marketing and communications with Pure Florida.

Sandy shores – A trip to the beach is a must if you have only a couple of days in town, so avoid some of the more crowded beaches and head to the Barefoot Beach Preserve. Many people see a gatehouse and stop before ever getting there. But if you travel 1.2 miles past the mansions in the Barefoot community, you will arrive at the 342 acres of beach and natural preserve. The first parking lot and education center are still closed due to damage from Hurricane Ian, but parking lots two and



The Ostego Bay Foundation Marine Science Center features interactive exhibits.

ANDREA STETSON / FLORIDA WEEKLY

three are open. Visitors can walk south past the preserve all the way to Wiggins Pass. There is also a kayak launch and walking trails.

Three to five days:

The Conservancy of Southwest Florida – If you want an in-depth look at what Southwest Florida's natural environment is like, this is the place to go, and since it is

right next door to the zoo you can do both in one day. The 21-acre nature center has indoor and outdoor exhibits showcasing the area's unique ecosystems. There is an electric boat ride through the mangroves and along the Gordon River, a discovery center packed with exhibits on invasive species and local history and there is a section with wildlife that was injured and can't be returned to the wild. There is also a wildlife animal hospital on site with some viewing windows for the public to observe some of the creatures being cared for.

"We love people to come to the Conservancy to learn what we do and the advocacy for our land and wildlife," said Renee Stoll, director of communications and marketing. "We are happy that people get to understand fully what we do and enjoy things like going on our boat tours and understanding our habitats and how our ecosystems work."

Palm Cottage – If you want a look at life in Collier County in the days of the pioneers, head to Palm Cottage, the oldest house in Naples that was built in 1895 and constructed of tabby mortar. Learn historic facts and tales about some of the first settlers.

Revs Institute – Auto Trader recently ranked this place as the fifth-best auto museum in the world. The collection of vehicles includes the 1896 French Panhard et Levassor Wagonette, the 1934 Chrysler Airflow Imperial CV-8 Coupe,



Glide through the Everglades on an airboat, spotting alligators and birds.

SWFL INSIDER



Collier County's five free museums highlight its rich history and early settlers.

ANDREA STETSON / FLORIDA WEEKLY

and the 1974 powder blue Jorgensen Eagle 7400 USAC that won the 1975 Indianapolis 500.


Seven days:

Airboat rides – If you want something really different, head to the Everglades and hop on an airboat through the waterways encircled by a river of grass. You will probably see alligators and many birds along the way while having an adventure on these unique vessels. There are many vendors in both the Everglades and on Lake Trafford in Immokalee.

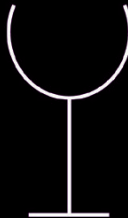
Collier County museums – Collier County has five free museums, though Naples Depot Museum is still closed due to hurricane damage. Each museum delves into the history of the area. The biggest is the Collier Museum at the Government Center. There are exhibits on prehistoric mastodons and colossal sharks. Visitors will see ancient tools and ceremonial masks and learn facts about the Calusa Indian civilization. You can learn about the Seminole people and the origins behind their traditional crafts. The exhibits also explore the daily lives and isolation of early settlers and their families. See how cattlemen, clam diggers, trailblazers, plume hunters, hermits, loggers, railroaders, rum runners, Crackers and Indian traders used to live. If you happen to be in Everglades City, the small Museum of the Everglades is packed with big information from the first settlers to the red-coat men who patrolled the roadways to the creatures that lived there. The Immokalee Pioneer Museum lets you walk among the buildings used by some of the area's first settlers and the Marco Island Historical Museum takes you back through the history of the island and surrounding areas. "Collier County has just an incredible variety in its history," said Elaina Gyure, curator of education. "You can immerse yourself in the very specific history of the locations. When you are visiting a place, there is no better way to learn


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SWFL INSIDER

about its history.”

Smallest Post Office – Near Everglades City in Ochopee is the nation’s smallest post office. The 7x8 building used to be a tomato farm shed for irrigation pipes, but in 1953, it was transformed into the tiniest post office.

CHARLOTTE COUNTY

Two days:

Babcock Ranch Eco Tours – Take a swamp buggy tour through a working cattle ranch to see a plethora of local wildlife. On the 90-minute tour, guests get a chance to see wild turkeys, turtles, osprey, sandhill cranes, fox squirrels and more. While the buggy tours have a fee, guests can opt to take a free self-guided walking tour through the ranch.

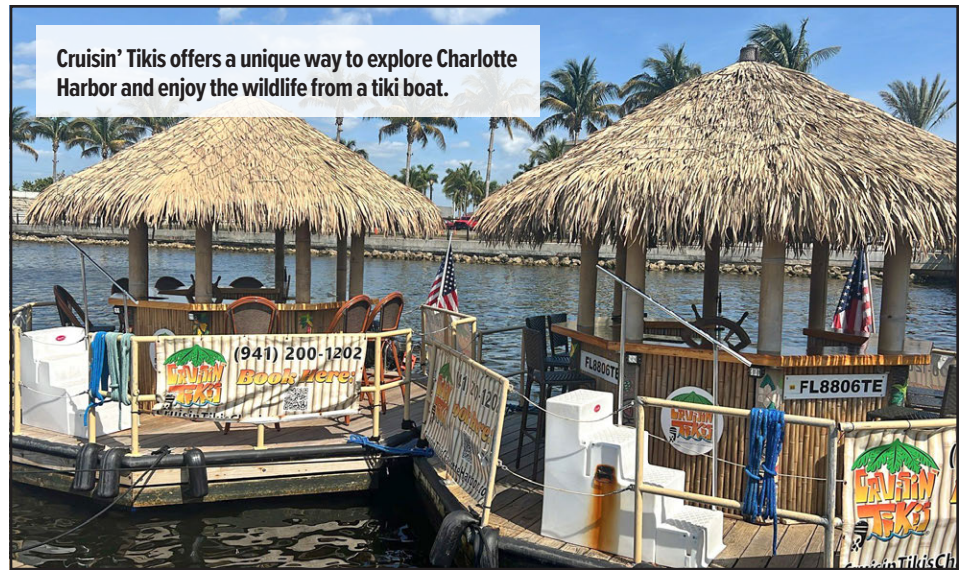
Celtic Ray Public House – It is really hard to find good Irish food in Southwest Florida, but this place has it. The menu features a variety of traditional items from Cornish pasties and bangers and mash to Shepherd’s pie and fish and chips. Inside, the pub looks like it could be in Ireland. There is a patio out back, but even better are the swing seats and tables out front.

Fisherman’s Village – End the day at this Punta Gorda icon that features boutiques, restaurants and water views. “We are known locally, regionally and nationally as an icon in Punta Gorda,” said Kathy Burnman, marketing and events manager. “We have such a beautiful setting in Southwest Florida.”

Peace River Botanical & Sculpture Gardens – Along the Peace River, the 30-acre sanctuary lets visitors explore five ecosystems: marshlands, wetlands, mangroves, uplands and tidal basins. The gardens showcase about 4,500 trees and bamboo varieties. Shaded pathways lead to the river and a bridge to an island offers a vista of the wetlands by Hunter’s Creek.

Four to five days:

Cruisin’ Tikis – Offering a unique way to see Charlotte Harbor, the six-person tiki boat cruises through the harbor at about five miles per hour for 90 minutes, giving guests lots of time to enjoy the wildlife and views. Guests are allowed to bring their own food and drinks on board. There are both day and sunset cruises. “We see dol-



Cruisin’ Tikis offers a unique way to explore Charlotte Harbor and enjoy the wildlife from a tiki boat.

JAKE WEILAND/CRUISIN’ TIKIS / COURTESY PHOTO

phins quite often,” said owner Jake Weiland.

Punta Gorda History Park & Artisan Village – The Punta Gorda Historical Society maintains a series of historic buildings and gardens. The park is free to explore. The buildings are open year-round on Sundays during the Sunday Market, from 9 a.m. to 1 p.m.

Searching for shark teeth – The guidebooks might direct you to Venice as the place to get shark teeth, but there are more to be found and fewer crowds at Stump Pass Beach State Park and Englewood Beach in Charlotte County. Grab a sifter and fill it with sand at the water’s edge and then spill out your goodies to search for shark teeth.

Tippecanoe Environmental Park – The 380-acre preserve has diverse habitats, including oak scrub, scrubby flatwoods, coastal hammocks, floodplain forests, salt marshes and mangrove swamps. The park has one of the largest contiguous tracts of xeric oak scrub in Charlotte County. This scrub provides the ideal habitat for the Florida scrub-jay, along with other protected species like the gopher tortoise, eastern indigo snake and gopher frog. The salt marshes and mangrove swamps are places to look for wading birds, reptiles, amphibians, osprey and bald eagles.

Seven days:

Fossil tour – The Peace River is known for its fossils and there are several companies offering fossil tours along the rocky

shoreline. About 50 million years ago, high sea levels submerged Florida. Fossils erode from the banks and bottom of the Peace River and collect in gravel areas. Visitors can also rent a kayak and paddle up the river, looking for a gravel spot to search.

Mineral springs – While Florida boasts a plethora of cold springs, just north of Charlotte County in North Port is Warm Mineral Springs State Park, the only warm springs in the state. The water is 85 degrees year-round. This unique spring is on the U.S. National Register of Historic Places and is believed to be one of the highest mineral contents of any natural spring in the United States. There are chairs set all around the springs, some under a canopy of trees. The water is clear, so bring your mask or goggles. Hurricanes destroyed the main building, but spacious portable restrooms are there.

Punta Gorda History Mural Society – Since 1994, local mural art has been preserved, resulting in more than 30 murals now displayed around town. This impressive collection has established Punta Gorda as one of the leading mural towns in the country. You can download a copy of the mural walking and cycling guide at pungordamurals.org.

Spring Training – The Tampa Bay Rays have their spring training at the Charlotte Sports Park. If you are in town during spring training, contact springtraining@raysbaseball.com to snag some tickets. ■

LOCAL FLAVOR



The wine wall at Bruno's of Brooklyn showcases a diverse selection of local and international wines to perfectly complement the menu.

BRUNO'S OF BROOKLYN / COURTESY PHOTO

NEW TASTES: DELVE INTO SOUTHWEST FLORIDA'S CULINARY SCENE

BY KAREN FELDMAN

A major benefit of living in Southwest Florida is that talented and entrepreneurial culinarians and restaurateurs are drawn here, too. The result is that the region offers an impressive mélange of cuisines, from roll-off-the-beach-and-into-a-booth casual to upscale establishments with tuxedoed servers and a formal approach to dining.

Have a craving for Indian? Thai or Vietnamese? French, Italian, Lebanese, Cuban or Peruvian? Farm-to-table, vegetarian or organic? Seafood, Florida or New England style? Artisanal bakeries, independent pizza joints, upscale steakhouses and serious barbecue? All are present and accounted for.

Like the population, the number of restaurants is growing. It's a challenge to keep up with all the new spots, of which there have been many in the past year. Here is a taste of what's new and delicious.

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LOCAL FLAVOR

LEE COUNTY

Bellini's

13451 McGregor Blvd., Fort Myers
239-270-5005
bellinifortmyers.com

It's always nice to reunite with an old friend, and that's what Bellini's is to those who have lived here for a couple of decades or more. The restaurant was a favorite on Captiva until closing 20 years ago. Now it's back, this time on the mainland in the Cypress Square location that was previously home to Stillwater Grill. The menu includes raw oysters, branzino, seafood fideuà (think paella with pasta instead of rice), lobster ravioli carbonara, rack of lamb and sweets like Bellini's tiramisu, Basque cheesecake, Nonna's limoncello and ricotta bread pudding. Sunday brunch features avocado, lobster toast, filet mignon with potato hash, lump crab Hollandaise and chocolate crepes.

Blossom & Brie

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

First opened as Rosy Tomorrows Heritage Farm a decade ago, this 86-acre property in North Fort Myers affords a rare chance to dine on a working farm, where many of the resident cows, sheep, chickens, ducks, donkeys and pigs will amble over to the fence to check out visitors. Lunch, dinner and weekend brunch are served in the spacious venue by a professional staff. Executive Chef Wesley Robbins and his team produce imaginative and beautifully presented dishes using proteins and vegetables raised at the farm.

Bruno's of Brooklyn

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

The restaurant isn't new but the space in which Bruno's of Brooklyn now operates seems worlds away from the modest space it occupied for a decade just a half mile from the new spot on First Street. Chef and owner Cal Bruno and his wife, Genevieve, have taken Bruno family recipes that made their previous restaurant such a favorite and now offer it in a more spacious and visible spot at First and Dean streets



PJK Neighborhood Chinese offers a tantalizing mix of grouper bao buns, braised short ribs and a variety of traditional and modern dim sum.

PJK NEIGHBORHOOD CHINESE / COURTESY PHOTO

in downtown Fort Myers. Spicy lobster capellini, cavatelli sausage and broccoli rabe over house made pasta, 18 types of antipasti and veal chop Parmigiano are among the dishes that await diners here.

Guru Indian Bistro

Prado at Spring Creek, 25151 Chamber of Commerce Drive, Bonita Springs
239-427-0924

guruindianbistro.com

This new Bonita Springs restaurant offers a heady mix of aromatic Indian dishes, including multiple options for vegetarians and seafood lovers. Besides the ubiquitous chicken tandoori and tikka, there is tandoori shrimp or salmon as well, dal makhani (Punjabi-style black lentils and kidney beans), biryani, vindaloo and, for dessert, house-made mango pistachio kulfi.

PJK Neighborhood Chinese

Coconut Point, 23151 Village Shops Way, Estero
239-421-9867
pjkchinese.com

From the company that brought us PF Chang's and Fleming's Steakhouse comes PJK Neighborhood Chinese, a casual, upscale concept combining traditional Chinese flavors with modern interpretations and focusing on local seafood. The

first location, which is in Naples, has been successful and now Coconut Point has the second location of the Naples-based Paul Fleming Restaurant Group fresh concept. Starters on the menu include grouper bao buns, duck confit tacos and eggrolls. Braised short ribs, Peking duck, teriyaki steak, Mongolian chicken (or other protein), and a variety of dim sum (small) plates, including dumplings, duck potstickers and chili wontons.

Sunqu Delights of Peru

529 Pondella Road, North Fort Myers
239-360-7906
sunquperu.com

This little gem has a modest exterior, but the doors that once led to a convenience store now open onto a charming bastion of well-executed Peruvian food served by a charming team. Chef and co-owner Oscar Ludena ably manages the kitchen while co-owner Nicholas Byrnes works in the front of the house, making guests feel like family. He's also equipped with an iPad containing photos of all of the dishes on the menu and he will graciously review them with anyone uncertain about what to order. Servings are generous. One of their ceviche platters and a paella entree are plenty for two. Can't decide? Consider ordering a boat that resembles the type used for sushi, but this one contains portions of 10 Peruvian dishes. Whatever you choose, save room for dessert: The Seven Leches Cake made by the chef is worth every single calorie.

Wickies Lighthouse Restaurant

362 Periwinkle Way, Sanibel
239-472-0011
wickieslighthouserestaurant.com

Brought to you by the owners of The Island Cow on Sanibel (destroyed by fire in August 2022) and Mad Hatter (washed away by Hurricane Ian a month later). The owners of the two establishments partnered in Wickies Lighthouse. The result is a restaurant that serves breakfast, lunch and dinner, plus weekend brunch. Diners will find a wide-ranging menu with plenty of comfort fare – think omelets, pancakes, fried green tomatoes, shrimp and grits – and some surprises – like blueberry jalapeno flatbread, a burger with fig and bourbon compote, candied bacon

LOCAL FLAVOR



Chef and Owner Fabrizio Aielli with Corporate Executive Chef Jason Goddard at the Bakery at Grappino in Naples.

B3 MARKETING / COURTESY PHOTO

and pepperjack cheese, and the signature Mad Hatter crustless cheesecake.

COLLIER COUNTY

Bakery at Grappino

80 Ninth St. N., Naples
239-331-4325
aielligroup.com

The culinary team that brought us Sea Salt, Barbatella, Dorona and Grappino have added to their repertoire with the opening of Bakery at Grappino, a venture that involved sending the executive chef to Europe for an intensive immersion in baking Old World style. The bakery serves breakfast and lunch with a bounty of freshly baked breads and pastry. Whether it's focaccia, brioche, ciabatta or cannoli, it's made in-house.

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LOCAL FLAVOR

Coffees, smoothies, fresh juices and ginger shots are also available. You can buy jars of some sauces used in the restaurants along with the pastries and bread.

Soluna

403 Bayfront Place, Naples
239-384-9436
solunanples.net

Chef William Andraca is known to many who dine in area country clubs. His last stop was the Bay Colony Golf Club. Now, he has opened Soluna in Bayfront at Naples, where Stoney's Steakhouse used to be. Contemporary fare is the concept, featuring dishes such as calabaza risotto, heritage pork chop and black grouper. Brunch might consist of smoked salmon Napoleon, French toast with key lime cream or a grilled black grouper sandwich with umami aioli.

Tap 42 Craft Kitchen & Bar

Mercato, 9118 Strada Place, Naples
239-399-3313
tap42.com

This Florida mini chain opened its first Southwest Florida location in Naples' Mercato last year and is working to open one in Fort Myers this year. Occupying the space that previously held AZN Azian Cuizine, Tap 42 blends contemporary American fare with craft beers and handcrafted cocktails in a casually stylish setting. The beer list includes 42 Hazy Daze, a collaboration between Tap 42 and Funky Buddha Brewery. Choose from a variety of appetizers – Truffle Street Corn avocado toast, guacamole, spicy tuna tartare, chicken lettuce wraps – plus salads, burgers and sandwiches and plated entrees like prime chimichurri skirt steak, jumbo barbecued baby back ribs, beer battered fish and chips and chocolate chunk bread pudding.

Unidos, A Latin Kitchen & Bar

1 Ninth St. S., Naples
239-331-3668
unidosrestaurant.com

Nuevo-Latin style adds another dimension to the Latin foods we already like. That's what Unidos serves – dishes we might be familiar with but that are prepared in a way that delivers some surprises. Wood-roasted pork shank tacos come with both green and guajillo sauc-



Unidos reimagines Latin cuisine with dishes like wood-roasted pork shank tacos and grilled cauliflower steak.

KATHLEEN ELIZABETH PHOTOGRAPHY / COURTESY PHOTO

es, plus charro beans. A grilled cauliflower steak comes with passion fruit coconut sauce and yuca fries. Other possibilities include wood-grilled branzino tacos, caramelized plantains and street churros with ice cream, strawberries and mint.

eatory at Schoolhouse Square. The menu includes standards such as lumpia, adobo, currywurst, Mongolian beef, sinan-gag (garlic fried rice), spareribs and halo halo, plus still more lunch and dinner offerings and a full bar.

CHARLOTTE COUNTY

Jay's Smokin' BBQ

10175 Tamiami Trail, Punta Gorda
941-646-8589
jayssmokinbbqfl.com

Texas-style barbecue is this newcomer's specialty. (Actually, the business isn't new, but it used to arrive on a food truck.) With a brick-and-mortar building – the space previously occupied by Stingray's Diner at the defunct Muscle Car City Museum. The menu is extensive, with favorites such as brisket burnt ends, Wisconsin cheese curds, hot honey fried chicken, smoked brisket, Italian sausage and pulled pork. For a serious indulgence, consider the Smashed Potato Skillet (baked, smashed and buttered russet potato with pulled pork or chopped brisket piled on top, smothered in melted beer cheese, then a drizzle of Jay's Signature BBQ Sauce, topped with sour cream and fresh chopped scallions).

Mayon Asian American Restaurant

4300 Kings Hwy, Port Charlotte
941-291-0055
mayoneats.com

Mayon Asian American Restaurant brings Filipino style to this casual new

Sunseeker Resort Charlotte Harbor

5500 Sunseeker Way, Charlotte Harbor
833-914-7300
sunseekerresorts.com

The new Allegiant Sunseeker Resort Charlotte Harbor opened with 20 – yes, 20 – food and beverage options. The resort features seven standalone restaurants, 11 bars and lounges, two poolside options and the 25,000-square-foot Food Hall, in which 11 concepts co-exist, resulting in some 200 dishes from which to choose. There's Arezzo Craft Pizza Kitchen, Kinderhook Raw Bar & Crab Co., Copper Cask Backyard Beer Garden, Sweet Shine patisserie and dessert bar; Charlotte Parlor gelato and creperie; Copper Cask Backyard Beer Garden – you get the idea. Thorough exploration will likely require multiple meals.

U-Yee Sushi & Grill

42031 Cypress Pkwy, Babcock Ranch
239-567-1388
uyeesushi.com

Both sushi and hibachi lovers can find something on the voluminous menu at this Crescent B Commons restaurant. There are plenty of sushi and sashimi variations along with cooked items from the kitchen, such as gyoza, fried soft-shell crab, tempuras and hibachis. ■

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**Wednesday, March 12 at 2pm (Stage West)
The Kouzov Duo, cello & piano**

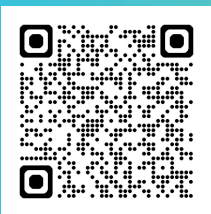
**Thursday, March 13 at 8pm
The Machine performs Pink Floyd**

**Friday & Saturday, March 21-22 at 8pm
Dimensions Dance Theatre of Miami**

**Wednesday, March 26 at 2pm (Stage West)
Zlata Chochieva, piano**

**Thursday, March 27 at 8pm
Feelin' Good-The Ultimate Michael Bublé
Experience**

**Wednesday, April 9 at 2pm (Stage West)
Lysander Piano Trio
(rescheduled from January 22)**



HURRICANE TIPS

Optional

- Generator and gas (store per manufacturer's manual)
- Carbon monoxide detector
- Gas or battery-powered chainsaw and protective gear
- NOAA weather and two-way radios

As far in advance as possible

- Review all insurance coverages
- Set up an online insurance account with a hotline number on your phone
- Inventory and photograph all personal property
- Create a master list of accounts and emergency numbers
- Service/repair hurricane shutters
- CASH (small bills are best)
- Seven days of non-perishable food
- Seven days of toilet paper and paper towels
- Disposable hand sanitizer and/or baby wipes
- Disposable disinfecting wipes
- Drinking water for humans and pets (4 gallons per person and pet per day for 14 days)
- Disposable toothbrushes
- Sandbags or large bags of potting soil
- Trim trees, palm fronds, coconuts, etc.
- No shutters? Have plywood cut in advance and have an installation plan in place
- Give a spare key to a friend for safekeeping

One week before the storm

- Put shutters or plywood up and leave two means of egress
- Recycle any unwanted hazardous materials
- Remove blades from exterior ceiling fans
- Remove and/or tie down exterior light fixtures
- Remove decorative knickknacks, pots, statues, furniture, doormats, etc.
- Purchase boxed milk, oranges, grapefruits and apples
- Turn on government alerts on your mobile phone and register with Alert Charlotte/Collier/Lee/etc.
- Set aside rubber boots and a rain jacket with a hood
- Fill lots of gallon-sized resealable plastic bags with ice
- Empty freezer and refrigerator of all perishable items
- Fill gas tanks and top off all automotive liquids
- Inspect tire pressure
- Limit driving to necessary travel only
- Fill spill-proof gas cans and store them in the garage
- If you decide to evacuate, do not wait.



OLIVIA WILD / FLORIDA WEEKLY

Three days before the storm

- Wash all dirty laundry
- Change bed linens and clean residence
- Balance bank statements
- Pay all credit card bills and estimated taxes
- Be sure everyone in your family always carries detailed identification and medical information
- Keep current digital photos of all family members and pets on your mobile phone in case of emergency
- Pack one duffel bag/person in case of evacuation
- Store all prescription medicines, eyeglasses, contact lenses, hearing aids/ batteries, syringes, pet meds, checkbooks and passports in a watertight container
- Store copies of all insurance policies, HUD statements, title insurances, car titles, prescriptions and medical conditions, proof of address and pet records
- Refill all prescriptions in advance (30-day supply preferable)

24 hours before the storm

- Turn the ice maker off and empty the ice tray
- Pre-cook all meat, fish and poultry
- Crank up the freezer and refrigerator settings to the coldest setting
- Crank up HVAC to cool home (turn AC off when power goes off)
- Pull blinds down to keep your home cool
- Fill bathtubs with water. This water will not be for drinking.
- Fill gallon jugs with water for toilet flushing
- Limit wastewater use until given the "all-clear" by local utility authority
- Run dishwasher and washer/dryer one last time
- Charge all mobile phones, tablets, laptop computers and external battery packs
- Back up files to the Cloud or an external hard drive (keep in a watertight container)
- Store computer/laptop in dishwasher and lock
- Fill several thermoses with coffee
- Tell out-of-town friends and family where you will be during the hurricane, as well as your backup plans (i.e., evacuate)
- Set up group text and tell family and friends to limit contact
- Clear all voicemails, then all deleted voicemail messages from your mobile phone
- Put hurricane supplies in one place and off the floor

Day of the storm

- Pull the car into the garage as far as possible
- Lock the garage from the inside by closing the safety latch and put the lift on the manual setting
- Turn the hot water heater and corresponding circuits off.
- Put dry towels and bathmats on the floor surrounding all windows and doors
- Unplug all small appliances
- Close all windows and interior doors (lock windows, not doors)
- Put all mobile devices on "low battery" mode
- Leave your mobile devices on at all times.
- Pick a windowless interior room where everyone will remain for the duration of the storm
- Have a backup location where everyone goes in case the windows blow



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HURRICANE TIPS

Day of the storm continued

- If you do move to the backup location, take a headcount
- Lock all exterior doors and put the key in a secure place
- Discuss evacuation routes in advance
- Flying debris? Take cover and shelter in place.
- Wear long pants, sneakers and socks (no shorts or flip-flops)
- Everyone should have a raincoat, rubber boots, umbrella, hat and flashlight readily available in case of emergency
- Keep passport, driver's license/identification, cash and credit/debit/ATM cards together in a handbag or resealable plastic bag and place next to your raincoat for quick retrieval
- Keep an extra set of car and house keys in a resealable plastic bag
- Turn the TV off and unplug it until power and cable are stable
- Turn HVAC and corresponding circuits off (air handler first followed by condenser)

After the storm

- Reset the HVAC system by turning the air handler and condenser off at the breaker for 10 minutes before turning back on
- Change AC air filters and reset the temperature to normal
- Run two full cycles in the empty clothes washer and in the empty dishwasher to ensure the water is clean
- Run two or three full ice maker cycles before use
- Reset refrigerator/freezer temperatures to normal
- Report all damage to insurance companies with photos and videos
- Replenish all supplies after the storm
- Remove batteries from all flashlights, radios and fans when not in use



Marla Ottenstein is Naples' Premier Professional Organizer and Certified Move Manager. Renowned for her exceptional expertise in helping clients declutter, consolidate, downsize and transform their spaces, her passion for organization and her commitment to providing unparalleled customer service is unmatched. With more than 16 years of experience in her field, she is the foremost authority in professional

organizing and relocation services in Southwest Florida. She is licensed and insured. Member of National Association of Professional Organizers. Ms. Ottenstein's Ultimate Hurricane Checklist is a copyrighted document that cannot be altered or reprinted without her permission.

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LEE COUNTY

Lee Health operates:

Cape Coral Hospital

636 Del Prado Blvd., Cape Coral
239-424-2000

Golisano Children's Hospital of Southwest Florida

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

Gulf Coast Medical Center

13681 Doctors Way, Fort Myers
239-343-1000

HealthPark Medical Center

9981 South HealthPark Drive, Fort Myers
239-343-5000

Lee Memorial Hospital

2776 Cleveland Ave., Fort Myers
239-343-2000

Rehabilitation Hospital

2776 Cleveland Ave., Fort Myers
239-343-3900

Prime Healthcare Services operates:

Lehigh Regional Medical Center

1500 Lee Blvd., Lehigh Acres
239-369-2101

COLLIER COUNTY

NCH Healthcare System operates:

NCH Baker Hospital

350 Seventh St. N., Naples
239-624-5000

NCH North Naples Hospital

11190 Health Park Blvd., Naples
239-624-5000

Physicians Regional Healthcare System operates:

Physicians Regional Medical Center - Collier Boulevard

8300 Collier Blvd., Naples
239-354-6000

Physicians Regional Medical Center - North

1285 Creekside Blvd., Naples
239-260-6631

Physicians Regional Medical Center - Pine Ridge

6101 Pine Ridge Road, Naples
239-348-4000

CHARLOTTE COUNTY

Due to ShorePoint Health Punta Gorda's permanent closure in December 2024, people needing help in the area should seek medical care at these other nearby hospitals:

HCA Florida Englewood Hospital

700 Medical Blvd., Englewood
941-475-6571

HCA Florida Fawcett Hospital

21298 Ocean Blvd., Port Charlotte
941-629-1181

ShorePoint Health Port Charlotte

2500 Harbor Blvd., Port Charlotte
941-766-4122

Note: As of this writing, Advent-Health has signed a deal to acquire both ShorePoint hospitals in Charlotte County. No further information was available at press time.

Find a physician or caregiver

Discover the finest medical practitioners across Lee, Collier and Charlotte counties with Florida Weekly's esteemed compilation, Health Trends. Navigate to FloridaWeekly.com, choose your specific area, then access this valuable resource by clicking on 'Special Sections' followed by 'Health Trends.' ■



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SIGNATURE EVENTS

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

LEE COUNTY

Southwest Florida Agriculture Expo

Now - March 9

Ever since 1924, the Southwest Florida Lee County Fair, currently named the Southwest Florida Agriculture Exposition, has honored regional agriculture, horticulture and crafts. The event includes carnival attractions, games, various food stalls, a livestock exhibition, entertainment and a petting zoo.

11831 Bayshore Road, North Fort Myers
AgExpo@leegov.com | swflagexpo.com

Concert in the Park

March 6, April 3

Bring your chair and come to the City of Cape Coral for an evening filled with music and tasty food trucks.

March 6: 528 Cultural Park Blvd., Cape Coral

April 3: 4818 Tarpon Court, Cape Coral
239-573-3128 | capeconcerts.com

Sanibel Shell Art Festival

March 6-8

In collaboration with the Sanibel Shell Festival, which is marking its 88th anniversary, the Sanibel Shell Art Festival attracts art lovers and shell fans eager to discover unique shell artworks and creative pieces.

2173 Periwinkle Way, Sanibel
239-293-9448 | boulderbrook.net

Downtown Fort Myers Art Walk

March 7, April 4, May 2, June 6

On the first Friday of every month, enjoy a complimentary event featuring a diverse group of local artists presenting unique artworks made from various materials. It's a great opportunity to experience creativity and discover new talent in the community.

First Street and Hendry Street, Fort Myers
hello@explorefortmyers.com | myriverdistrict.com



Fort Myers
Shrimp Festival

LEE COUNTY VISITOR & CONVENTION BUREAU / COURTESY PHOTO

Shrimp Festival

March 8-9

The Fort Myers Beach Lions Club Shrimp Festival is a highly anticipated annual event featuring a parade, exhibitions, a Queen's Pageant and a shrimp-eating contest, attracting thousands of visitors while raising funds to support community initiatives for those in need.

239-451-3425 | fortmyersbeachshrimpfestival.com

24 Hour Festival

March 9

Experience an exhilarating free event at the Sidney & Berne Davis Art Center, where a dynamic mix of artists will dive into a whirlwind of creativity, tackling whimsical prompts and racing against the clock for 24 hours to unveil an extraordinary showcase of their unique works.

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

Cape Coral Music & Arts Fusion Walk

March 15

The Cape Coral Music & Arts Fusion Walk, organized by the Parks and Recreation Department of Cape Coral, supports local businesses by offering an evening of live music and temporary shops featuring local artists. Explore a variety of unique items, including handcrafted jewelry and

artwork, all within a welcoming environment for families.

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

ECHO's Global Food & Farm Festival

March 16-22

Explore the vast 57-acre Global Farm, discover a tropical rainforest exhibit, engage with alternative energy demonstrations and enjoy interactive activities that teach children about global hunger and how they can contribute to change.

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

Downtown Fort Myers Music Walk

March 21, April 18, May 16, June 20

Held on the third Friday of each month, this free community gathering showcases local and regional artists aged 17 and older, offering a vibrant evening of street dance alongside a concert that highlights musicians of all abilities and diverse musical genres.

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

Fort Myers River District Music Festival

March 21-23

SIGNATURE EVENTS

A celebration featuring a diverse array of fresh and tasty dishes, highlighting seafood sourced from the shores of Florida. The event also showcases live performances by some of the best regional artists across genres such as R&B and reggae. Participants can savor a variety of drinks and desserts in addition to the extensive food selections.

1400 Hendry St., Fort Myers
941-487-8061 | paragonfestivals.com

Sounds of Jazz & Blues

March 22

The Cape Coral Parks and Recreation Department hosts this annual event that showcases outstanding local jazz and blues musicians. This festival is recognized as the city's premier music event and pairs delightful dining options with enchanting performances.

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

Ft. Myers SpringFest Show

March 29-30

The Ft. Myers SpringFest Show, held at Bell Tower, celebrates handmade creations and high-end retail from local and regional artists. It offers a fun family-friendly outing with shopping, snacking and live music in a beautiful coastal setting, all while supporting small businesses and unique artisans.

13499 S. Cleveland Ave., Fort Myers
302-384-1116 | mypromotions.com

Bonita Springs Masters Art Festival

March 29-30, April 26-27

The Promenade at Bonita Bay is offering a vibrant weekend filled with unique artworks and crafts from 39 skilled artists, along with delightful evening dining and a Saturday Farmers Market.

26795 S. Bay Drive, Bonita Springs
239-293-9448 | boulderbrook.net

Bonita Springs Food Truck Rally & Music Festival

April 5-7

The Food Truck Rally & Music Festival presents a weekend filled with tasty dishes from local food trucks, energetic live performances and a vibrant marketplace.

28001 Old 41 Road, Bonita Springs
941-487-8061 | paragonfestivals.com

Bonita Springs Short Film Festival

April 17

The annual film competition celebrates the City of Bonita Springs, inviting participants of all ages and skill levels to creatively showcase their stories through any film genre.

25251 Chamber of Commerce Drive, Bonita Springs
239-302-2707 | bonitaspringsfilmfestival.org

Fort Myers Film Festival

May 14-18

The Fort Myers Film Festival is an essential event for indie filmmakers, providing a stage to present their work at venues like the Sidney & Berne Davis Art Center



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MAIN THEATRE

WAITRESS

APR 11 - MAY 24, 2025

MAIN THEATRE

LEGALLY BLONDE

The Musical

MAY 30 - JUN 28, 2025

MAIN THEATRE

Annie

JUL 3 - AUG 9, 2025

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SAVANNAH SIPPING SOCIETY

FEB 28 - APR 13, 2025

OFF BROADWAY PALM

Half Baked

APR 18 - MAY 24, 2025

SIGNATURE EVENTS

and the Calusa Planetarium. Celebrated for promoting local talent, it attracts a discerning audience, making it a key gathering for indie film lovers in the area.

2301 First St., Fort Myers
239-810-6323 | fortmyersfilmfestival.com

Fringe Fort Myers

May 29 - June 1

Fringe Fort Myers embraces its traditions of being uncensored, unjuried and inclusive, ensuring all ticket sales go directly to artists. The 2025 edition focuses on supporting independent talent and encouraging community engagement in innovative theater and live performances, utilizing a lottery system for selecting performers.

10091 McGregor Blvd., Fort Myers
239-939-2787 | artinlee.org

COLLIER COUNTY

Jewish Book Festival

Now – April 2

The Greater Naples Jewish Book Festival highlights authors and literature that focus on Jewish themes. Its aim is to enrich, entertain and engage the community by creating opportunities for individuals to unite through educational and social gatherings.

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

Evening on Fifth

Second Thursday of every month,
year-round

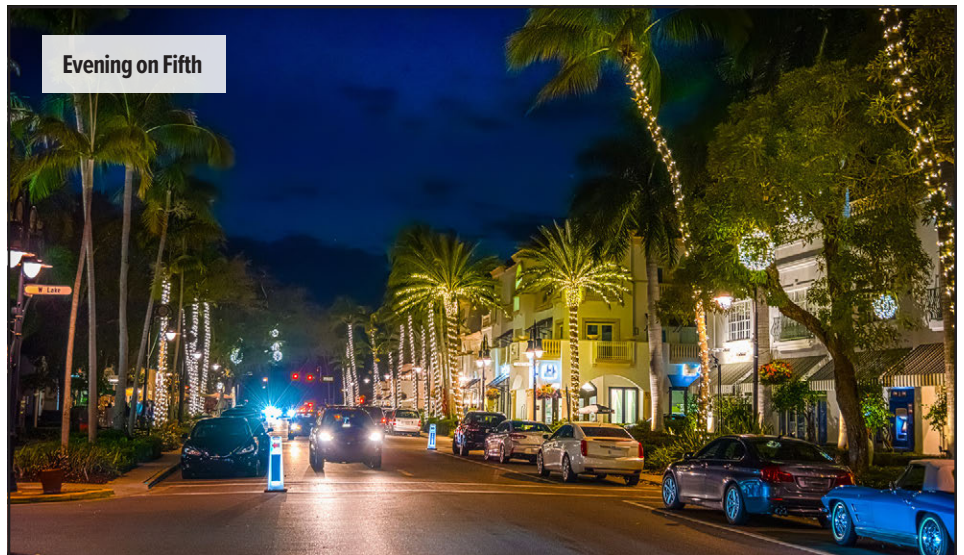
Experience an exciting array of live music bustling through the streets of Fifth Avenue South, complemented by exceptional dining, shopping and a variety of other activities.

Fifth Ave. S., Naples
239-692-8436 | fifthavenuesouth.com

Festival Under the Stars

Now – March 15

The Annual Festival Under the Stars, led by Ramón Tebar and featuring the Naples Festival Orchestra in partnership with the Luciano Pavarotti Foundation, is a two-week outdoor opera celebration that showcases performances of *The Magic Flute*, *La bohème*, *The Mikado* and additional works.



755 Eighth Ave. S., Naples
239-963-9050 | operanaples.org

Naples Artcrafters

March 8 and April 12

Naples Artcrafters organizes monthly art exhibitions that showcase a variety of unique and handmade artworks created by local artists who have successfully passed a strict selection process.

755 Eighth Ave. S., Naples
dusty.beck@gmail.com | naplesartcrafters.com

Marco Island National Fine Art Show

March 8-9

The Second Annual Marco Island National Fine Art Show takes place at Veteran's Community Park, featuring 102 artists across 15 mediums and delicious culinary offerings.

901 Park Ave., Marco Island
HI@maurichproductions.org | minfas.org

Naples Jewish Film Festival

March 9-30

NJFF showcases the most outstanding and captivating scenes from recently released Israeli and Jewish films, all screening at the Nina Iser Jewish Cultural Center.

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

Naples Flower Show

March 14-15

The Naples Flower Show, the largest juried exhibition in Southwest Florida, high-

lights floral designs and unique plants. This event, presented by the Naples Garden Club and Naples Botanical Garden, also includes gardens, photography and educational displays. Admission is part of the standard entry fee to the Botanical Garden.

4820 Bayshore Drive, Naples
239-262-1272 | naplesgardenclub.org

Naples Seafood & Music Festival

March 14-15

A complimentary three-day celebration features continuous live performances, tasty seafood and vegetarian meals from nearby vendors, refreshing beverages, and a marketplace showcasing arts and crafts.

7035 Airport-Pulling Road, Naples
941-487-8061 | paragonfestivals.com

Collier Fair & Exposition

March 20-30

This festival includes family-friendly entertainment, agricultural exhibits, carnival rides, games and live music, celebrating the community and its farming heritage with activities like 4-H contests and animal displays.

751 39th Ave. NE, Naples
239-455-1444 | collierfair.com

Ave Maria Festival of the Arts

March 22-23

The Ave Maria Festival of the Arts, organized by Blue Ribbon Events, will highlight local craftspeople displaying an array of distinctive creations, such as jewelry,

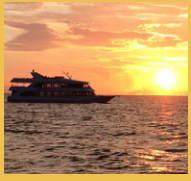


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SIGNATURE EVENTS

ceramics, fabrics and home decorations.

5076 Annunciation Circle, Ave Maria
239-352-3903 | avemaria.com

Downtown Art Fair

March 22-23

A yearly two-day celebration that draws artists, collectors and art lovers from around the world, featuring a wide range of artistic expressions and techniques, allowing participants to discover artworks, engage with creators and immerse themselves in a lively cultural atmosphere.

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

Marco Island Center for the Arts' Art and Craft Fair

March 22-23, April 12-13

This fair showcases a diverse range of handcrafted items, exquisite artworks and creations by local and regional artists, offering a chance to explore and appreciate the lively artistic community of Marco Island.

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

Art in the Park

April 5

Launched in 1957, this renowned event in Naples features a series of juried outdoor exhibitions providing the community access to fine arts and crafts. These prestigious gatherings showcase an extensive range of mediums, such as ceramics, glasswork, painting and sculpture, highlighting local artists' skills throughout the state.

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

Cars as Art

April 5

Cars as Art features stunning classic automobiles evaluated by professional artists rather than automotive specialists. This essential gathering for car enthusiasts in Southwest Florida encourages a \$5 contribution per person and celebrates the unique intersection of automotive design and artistic expression.

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

Margarita & Taco Festival

April 5

The event will include live music, food trucks serving Mexican treats and refreshing margaritas, along with activities such as a primate show, wrestling entertainment, a farmers market and local artisans.

5076 Annunciation Circle, Ave Maria
239-352-3903 | avemaria.com

Southland Bluegrass Music Festival

April 6

The outdoor entertainment lineup announced highlights free performances from headliners Rhonda Vincent & The Rage, Del McCoury, The Infamous Stringdusters, The Travelin' McCourys and Alligator Alley.

506 S. First St., Immokalee
info@goldenentertainment.us |
southlandbluegrassfestival.com

CHARLOTTE COUNTY

Sullivan Street Craft Festival

March 8-9

Discover the finest craftspeople in the charming downtown area of Punta Gorda, located by the Peace River and the Gulf of Mexico. This beautiful location is considered the center of Charlotte County and is a must-visit destination along Florida's West Coast.

331 Sullivan St., Punta Gorda
561-746-6615 | artfestival.com

Peace River National Art Festival

March 15-16

Experience an artistic celebration along the Peace River in historic Punta Gorda, curated by the Visual Arts Center. Accomplished artists will showcase diverse mediums, including art glass, fiber arts, jewelry, metalwork and more.

100 Nesbit St., Punta Gorda
239-293-9448 | boulderbrook.net

Punta Gorda Arts & Crafts Show

March 22-23

For 22 years, MY Promotions has hosted the Punta Gorda Arts & Crafts Show at picturesque Gilchrist Park. The show consistently attracts around 8,000 visitors and ensures excellent sales in a vibrant and engaging atmosphere.

400 W. Retta Esplanade, Punta Gorda
302-384-1116 | mypromotions.com

PULL Music Festival

March 29

Visit the Charlotte County Fairgrounds for an exciting event featuring food trucks, vendors and live music, including a performance by Yuhon Marley, the grandson of the legendary Bob Marley.

2333 El Jobean Road, Port Charlotte
941-276-1976

Sarasota Film Festival

April 4-13

The Sarasota Film Festival, founded in 1998, features more than 200 films, including narratives and documentaries. It highlights filmmakers' artistic efforts and supports community growth through a range of programs held throughout the year.

332 Cocoanut Ave., Sarasota
941-364-9514 | sarasotafilmfestival.com

Punta Gorda Seafood & Music Festival

April 18-20

Spend a weekend indulging in a variety of mouthwatering cuisine featuring seafood, meat and vegetarian options. Listen to live performances by local musicians while exploring a marketplace that showcases arts, crafts and specialty goods. Best of all, general admission to the event is free.

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

FloFest

April 26

This festival showcases live reggae performances, local artisans, tasty food trucks and a VIP area. Be sure to bring a blanket or chairs, as umbrellas are permitted, but tents are not allowed, regardless of weather conditions.

2333 El Jobean Road, Port Charlotte
potlucksrq@gmail.com | potlucksrq.com

Hibiscus Festival of Punta Gorda

May 2-4

The Hibiscus Festival, founded in 2004 by Dawn MacGibbon and local enthusiasts, celebrates Punta Gorda's unique history and connection to hybrid hibiscus breeder Harry R. Goulding.

400 W. Retta Esplanade, Punta Gorda
941-815-0324 | thehibiscusfestival.com

SWFL SPORTS



FGCU Eagles crushed the Ave Maria Gyrenes 108-31, setting a record with 18 three-pointers.

LINWOOD FERGUSON / COURTESY PHOTO

CHAMPIONSHIP CALIBER

The rising influence of college and professional sports

BY GLENN MILLER

Right in the heart of Lee County, nestled between Collier and Charlotte counties, is a campus of champions. That is the home of Florida SouthWestern College, a powerhouse in junior college sports.

The women's volleyball team recently won its third consecutive National Junior College Athletic Association title. Not surprisingly, volleyball coach Thais Baziquetto-Allen was named national coach of the year for the third consecutive year. The parade of the national championship

began in 2021, only five years after FSW President Jeffrey Albritten revived athletics at the school formerly known as Edison State College and Edison Junior College.

FSW has made a name for itself in recent years, but Southwest Florida has a rich history of both pro and amateur



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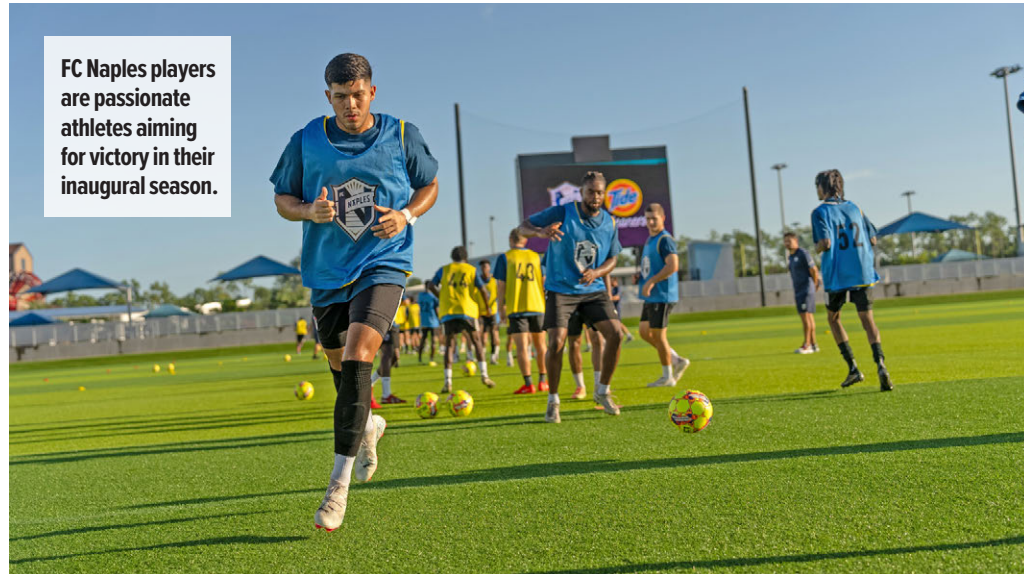
sports. Southwest Florida is not home to the National Football League, National Basketball Association or National Hockey League franchises, but it offers a vibrant variety of sports.

Four Major League Baseball teams hold spring training in the area: the Boston Red Sox and Minnesota Twins in Fort Myers, the Tampa Bay Rays in Port Charlotte, and the Atlanta Braves in North Port. The region's connection to spring training dates back to 1925 when the Philadelphia A's began training in Fort Myers.

While the FSW Buccaneers have done well in junior college athletics, a short drive away at Florida Gulf Coast University, the Division 1 Eagles have a flourishing program that offers more than the five sports at FSW.

The most successful FGCU program is women's basketball, which has won seven consecutive Atlantic Sun Conference titles. The volleyball team recently won its fourth consecutive ASUN title.

Basketball coach Karl Smesko started



FC Naples players are passionate athletes aiming for victory in their inaugural season.

FC NAPLES / COURTESY PHOTO

and built the women's program and the rousing success attracted the attention of the Women's National Basketball Association. He is now the head coach of the Atlanta Dream.

The Florida Everblades have won three consecutive Kelly Cup titles, the championship of the ECHL, a minor-league hockey league. A new addition to the sports landscape this year is a pro soccer



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SWFL SPORTS



FSW Baseball defeated Polk State 10-3 on April 29, 2019, while honoring their departing sophomores.

LINWOOD FERGUSON / COURTESY PHOTO

team in Naples. FC Naples plays its home games at the Paradise Coast Sports Complex. This will be its inaugural season.

The Fort Myers Might Mussels baseball team, under one name or another, has been around a lot longer than FC Na-

ples. The Mussels are affiliated with the Minnesota Twins and play their home games at Hammond Stadium in the Lee Health Sports Complex. The Mussels were previously known as the Miracle and began playing at Hammond Stadium

1992, a year after it opened.

At FSW

Back at the campus of champions, FSW Athletic Director George Sanders works in his third-floor office of the Suncoast Credit Union Arena. This impressive 75,000-square-foot facility, with a seating capacity of 3,500, serves as the home for the school's volleyball and basketball teams. It stands as the crown jewel among the campus's athletic facilities, which also feature baseball and softball fields.



SANDERS

This sports journey began when Albritten brought athletics back beginning 2016.

"He wanted to do it right, and this building is the first testament to that and the work that he's done in the communi-



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SWFL SPORTS

ty and continues to do to try to support the program and the college,” Sanders said. “This building is the benchmark, for lack of a better word, in the success of what he wanted to build and what he expected from the programs.”

The arena plays a crucial role in recruiting athletes. “It’s an easy sell,” Sanders said. “The whole community is an easy sell. We have a great campus. We have an arena on campus, which is a little different than a lot of the junior colleges. We have the best arena in the country, and we have the beaches.”

FSW actively recruits individuals from across the U.S. and beyond. The rosters feature athletes from various countries, including Argentina, Australia, Brazil, Bulgaria, Canada, the Czech Republic, Finland, Honduras, Italy, Latvia, the Netherlands, New Zealand, Nigeria, Peru, Poland and Slovakia.

Finding the right coaches is also critical for Sanders. “I like people who understand us,” Sanders said. By “us” he means



The FSW Bucs clinched the 2022-2023 State Championship by defeating Miami Dade in straight sets.

LINWOOD FERGUSON / COURTESY PHOTO

junior college athletics. “It’s a different world,” Sanders said. “You have constant turnover.”

At four-year universities, students tend to stay longer. “We have to continue to realize that we’re a stepping stone insti-

tution,” Sanders said. By that, he means FSW is a gateway to four-year universities for many student-athletes. It’s also a gateway to professional sports for some. There are now more than 20 former FSW baseball players in professional baseball.

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Finding the right people means people such as volleyball coach Thais Baziquetto-to-Allen, a native of Brazil. It also might mean softball coach Robert Iamurri, who coached Naples High School softball from 1986 to 2014 before starting up the FSW program.

The first year for softball was 2016, when the Bucs were 53-16. Iamurri said administrative support and facilities have been key. Before on-campus fields were built for the FSW baseball and softball teams, they played at City of Palms Park in downtown Fort Myers.

Another key to recruiting, according to Iamurri, is a dormitory. "So you had real nice dorms with 24/7 security," Iamurri said.

Players are just steps away from where they practice and play, and having a location in Florida is also beneficial. "Palm trees, white beaches," Iamurri said. Those can be particularly appealing to players from Canada or Wisconsin.

So is success. Iamurri could see play-



FGCU Eagles

LINWOOD FERGUSON / COURTESY PHOTO

ers from the beginning were on-board with what he was trying to build. "They bought in," Iamurri said. "They were not

dominant, but there was a right mix to be competitive the first year."

Then came national titles in 2021 and 2022. Although the Bucs didn't win the national championship in either 2023 or 2024 they still compiled a 111-15 record in those years.

Everybody wins

Volleyball is obviously the most important sport to volleyball coach Thais Baziquetto-Allen,

But she likes that all the sports do well at FSW and they help fuel each other.

"It's the culture," Baziquetto-Allen said. "I remember right before I took the job, and I was in a place that was successful in volleyball... and there was maybe one other sport that was successful. But when I looked at FSW, everybody was successful, which means you have the support."

That means support from the administration and community. Recruiting in any sport is essential to success.



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“We’re able to recruit players from all over the world,” Baziquetto-Allen said. She instills a certain approach in her athletes. “I think the players really buy in on the culture that we put together of working hard and knowing that even if we’re No. 1, people are going to come after us and try to beat us,” Baziquetto-Allen said. “So we have to be able to be very diligent in our training every day.”

How does a volleyball coach in Fort Myers recruit players from other continents? “It’s just a network,” she said. There’s a network of volleyball people around the world.

“So that you end up getting a lot of emails and then you create connections, create networks, and they end up knowing you and knowing your program and knowing the level of players you have,” Baziquetto-Allen said.

With an international cast, she makes sure language is not an issue. “There is an English requirement to get admitted to FSW,” Baziquetto-Allen said. “And

that’s very strict. Everybody has to pass English.”

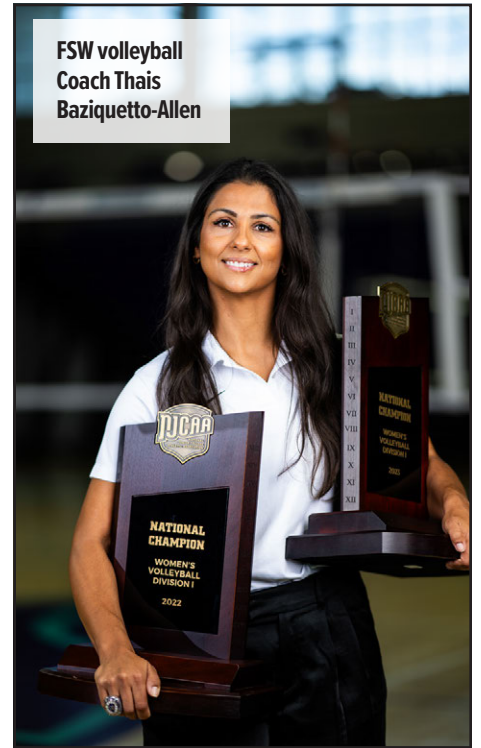
When she came to the U.S. as an 18-year-old to play at St. Petersburg College, the future FSW coach did not speak English. Now, she is fluent and makes sure English is her program’s lingua franca.

“That’s one of the things that unites us,” Baziquetto-Allen said.

“We’re all gonna speak the same language. You know, we have players from Argentina, Peru, and it would be easier for them just to start to speak Spanish, but they have to be very intentional about English and increasing your vocabulary.”

The on-campus arena helps in recruiting. “That is one of the first things that we share with our athletes if we do a video call and then show it to them,” she said. “Whether we send them the pictures, whether our first video call is with the gym background. But that is a top-class facility, and it’s a big selling point of that place that we get to call home.”

It’s a home of champions. ■



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SWFL SHOPPING

LEE COUNTY

Bell Tower

Bell Tower offers a mix of retail options, including daily necessities, unique boutiques and diverse dining and entertainment in an open-air setting. It features shops, eateries and venues for films and live performances to cater to various interests.

13499 S. Cleveland Ave., Fort Myers
239-489-1221 | belltowerfl.com

Coconut Point

This charming outdoor shopping and dining venue boasts more than 140 shops and eateries, accommodating diverse tastes and preferences. Perfectly situated between Naples and Fort Myers, it blends a variety of retail options with stunning surroundings, making it a great location for both shopping and relaxation.

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



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LEE COUNTY VISITOR & CONVENTION BUREAU / COURTESY PHOTO

Edison Mall

The Edison Mall, a fixture for almost six decades, features well-known retailers such as Macy's, JCPenney and Dillard's. It serves as more than just a shopping

destination; it's a vibrant community hub that hosts a range of events, outdoor markets and distinctive activities.

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



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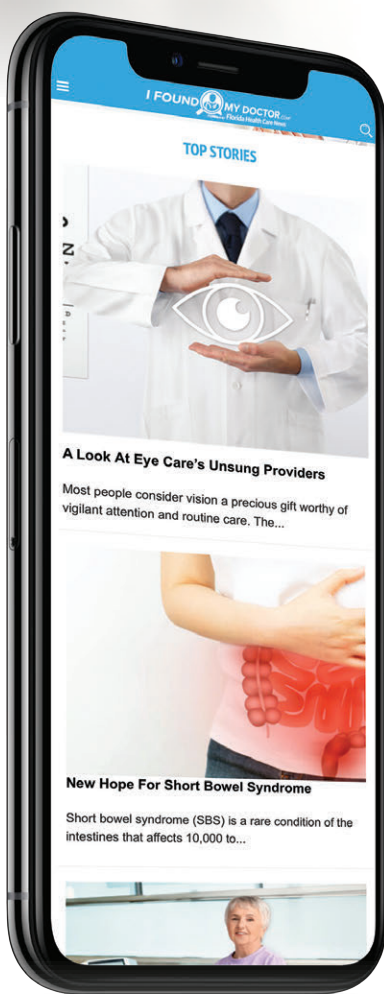
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SWFL SHOPPING

Gulf Coast Town Center

The outdoor shopping center near Florida Gulf Coast University offers a diverse shopping experience with popular stores like Bass Pro Shops, Belk and Costco. It features various dining options, a movie theater, a spa and an open play area and hosts regular events for all shoppers.

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



The Promenade at Bonita Bay is a vibrant outdoor spot for shopping, dining and entertainment, featuring a variety of retail stores, boutiques, salons and restaurants. Additionally, they hold a weekly farmer's market every Saturday.

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

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10801 Corkscrew Road, Estero
239-467-4076 | miromaroutlets.com

Periwinkle Place

Along the main road of Sanibel Island, you'll find places such as the original Chico's, the highly acclaimed Blue Giraffe Restaurant and the Sanibel Day Spa. With fresh shops debuting each month, you have the chance to continuously discover new offerings and support beloved local businesses.

2075 Periwinkle Way, Sanibel
973-579-0411 | periwinkleplace.com

COLLIER COUNTY

Coastland Center

Inaugurated in 1976, Coastland Center features Macy's, JCPenney, Dillard's and more than 130 choices for shopping and dining. This family-oriented spot offers a carousel for children, while adults can discover a range of stores and eateries.

1900 Tamiami Trail N., Naples
239-262-7100 | coastlandcenter.com

Fifth Avenue

Fifth Avenue South in Naples melds sophistication with a laid-back vibe,

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SWFL SHOPPING

showcasing a mix of historic and contemporary buildings. It features unique shopping, a variety of dining options and entertainment, all conveniently located within walking distance of the Gulf beaches.

649 Fifth Ave. S., Naples
239-692-8436 | fifthavenuesouth.com

Mercato

Mercato features an upscale shopping experience, restaurants, luxury condominiums and mainly complimentary events such as live music and festivals, all centered around Whole Foods Market and Alamo Drafthouse Cinema.

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

The Village on Venetian Bay

Situated along the shores of Venetian Bay, this Naples hotspot boasts over 45 high-end boutiques and waterfront dining options, all inspired by Venice's



Mercato in Naples

MERCATO / COURTESY PHOTO

Mediterranean architectural style.

4200 Gulf Shore Blvd. N., Naples
239-261-6100 | venetianvillage.com

Third Street South

Located two blocks from Naples Pier and Gulf beaches, Third Street South is known as the birthplace of Naples. This area features a mix of shops and dining, highlighted by courtyards, antique European fountains and vibrant

floral landscapes, all set against the backdrop of Old Naples' original beach cottages and houses.

Third St. S., Naples
239-649-6707 | thirdstreetsouth.com

Tin City

The waterfront boutiques at Tin City provide guests with more than 30 distinctive shops to explore after enjoying a meal at one of the waterfront dining spots or savoring a tasty sweet treat from the ice cream shop.

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

Waterside Shops

Waterside Shops features over 60 luxury and lifestyle stores, including Gucci, Lululemon, Louis Vuitton and Saks Fifth Avenue, set in a tropical landscape with water features.

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

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CHARLOTTE COUNTY

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150 Laishley Court, Unit 112, Punta Gorda
941-575-0022 | thecreatorsgallery.com

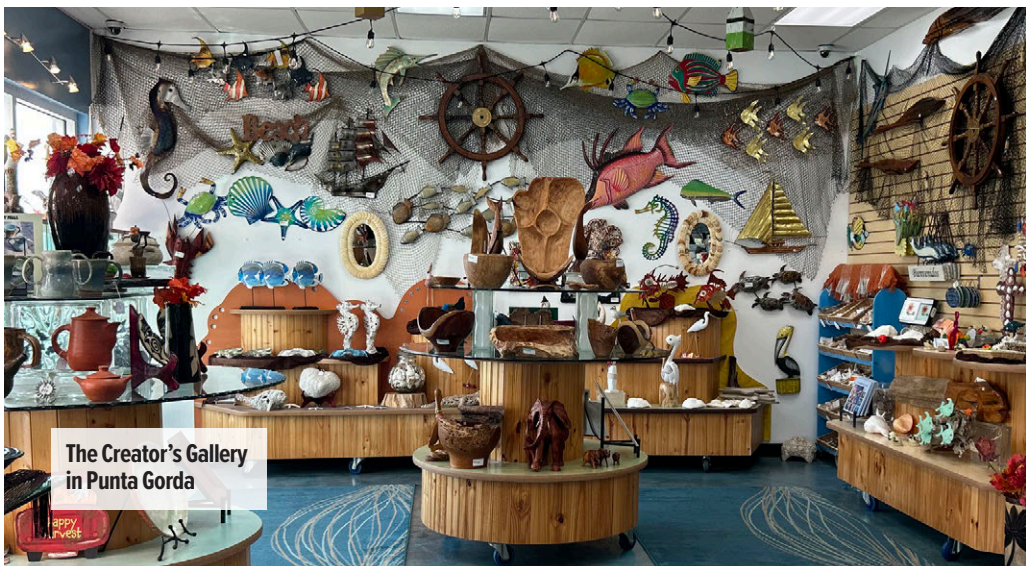
Fishermen's Village

This spot along the Charlotte Harbor shoreline boasts more than 30 boutiques, eateries and services alongside a resort and marina, making it ideal for both brief outings and longer getaways.

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

Port Charlotte Town Center

This Center is a central point for shopping,



The Creator's Gallery in Punta Gorda

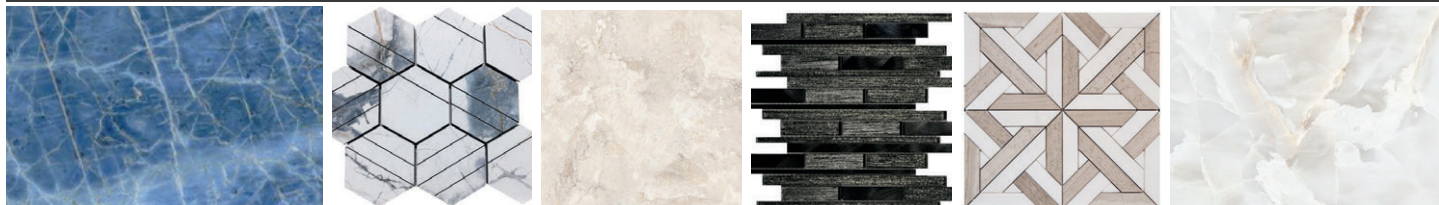
AMANDA TARMAN / COURTESY PHOTO

dining and entertainment, serving the communities of DeSoto, Charlotte and southern Sarasota counties. With more than 100 stores, including prominent retailers, a range of dining choices to fit any budget and entertainment options

like a cutting-edge cinema, it offers a well-rounded experience for those looking to enjoy a quick visit or an entire day of activities.

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Discover the Gulf Coast's charm

Adventures, culture and nature beyond the beach

BY KAREN FELDMAN

Bountiful beaches, golf courses galore and all sorts of water sports. Nature trails, spring training baseball and festivals. Restaurants range from cozy dives to the finest of fine dining. An abundance of arts and culture. And pickleball? Yep. Lots of it.

All that and more await visitors to Southwest Florida, the coastal swath that comprises Lee, Collier and Charlotte counties. The region, home to roughly 1.5 million

residents, has grown by 9.5% since 2020 and is anticipated to grow another 7.4% by 2030, according to U.S. Census figures.

There are countless reasons people choose to visit or relocate to Southwest Florida. Here is a sampling of superlatives that highlight Southwest Florida's many charms.

LEE COUNTY

Baseball central: The region is triply blessed when it comes to Major League Baseball. The Boston Red Sox and Min-

nesota Twins have home stadiums that come to Fort Myers with the Boston Red Sox and Minnesota Twins and Port Charlotte with the Tampa Bay Rays. Games take place from late February through March.

Commune with nature: J.N. "Ding" Darling Wildlife Refuge on Sanibel provides an intimate view of the unspoiled subtropical refuge, home to birds such as the roseate spoonbill, osprey and yellow-crowned night heron. There are plenty of gators, too.



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FOCUS ON SWFL

Southwest Florida population by county

Lee County

- Population: 840,698
- Median age: 48.5 years
- Median household income: \$88,800
- Median home value: \$402,602

Collier County

- Population: 411,104
- Median age: 51.5
- Median household income: \$86,173
- Median home value: \$577,990

Charlotte County

- Population: 199,007
- Median age: 60.8 years
- Median household income: \$59,278
- Median home value: \$332,097

SOURCE: U.S. CENSUS BUREAU; U.S. BUREAU OF LABOR STATISTICS, STATE OF FLORIDA

Catch the Sanibel Stoop: Sanibel beaches are considered among the world's best shelling locations, making them logical places to contract this condition. While walking along the beach, your eyes turn from the beauty of the waters to the ground beneath your feet. The shells are everywhere. It's not long before that downward glance becomes a bend to investigate more closely, ending in a full-out stoop.

Stuff yourself with stone crab claws: Meaty and richly flavored, the claws are sustainably harvested from nearby Gulf waters and are in season from mid-October to May. While pink Gulf shrimp and grouper are better-known delicacies from



SWFL EAGLE CAM / COURTESY PHOTO

area waters, stone crabs are in a class by themselves – and you won't find them in most of the country.

Soar with eagles: Visit the site of the SWFL Eagle Cam broadcast on Bayshore Road in North Fort Myers. From a distance, you can observe the nest of bald eagle M15 (male born in 2015) and his mate F23 (female born in 2023). Bald eagle pairs have nested here since 2006. Bring binoculars or a long-lens camera to watch the bonded, beautiful couple. Check out the eagle etiquette on the website before heading out. (dickpritchettrealestate.com/southwest-florida-eagle-cam).

See turtles: We are talking about really big sea turtles, which return to beaches all along the Southwest Florida coast at night to make nests, bury their eggs and then

return to sea. Two months later, the hatchlings emerge and crawl their way to the gulf. The best beaches for observing this vary, but Bonita Beach, Fort Myers Beach and Sanibel generally have nests monitored by local organizations that protect them. You can join in on their nighttime patrols. In Collier, Vanderbilt Beach, Naples, Marco and Keewaydin islands have had nests. In Charlotte, Englewood Beach is a sea turtle nesting territory.

COLLIER COUNTY

Retire in style: U.S. News & World Report rates Naples as the best place to live and to retire, citing its choice location between the Everglades and the Gulf of Mexico, its beaches and bounty of shopping, golf courses and restaurants. The

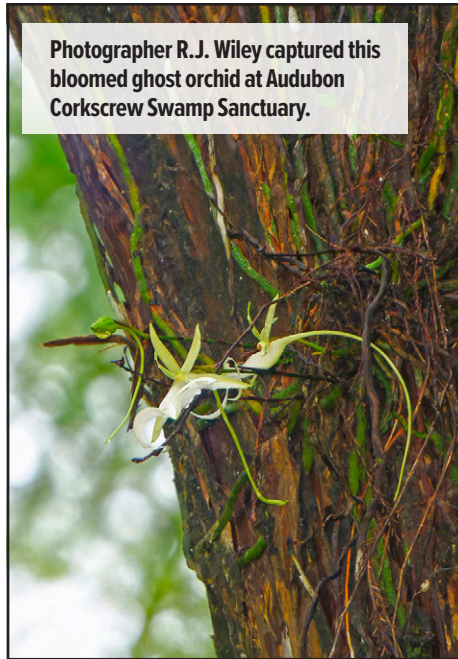
FOCUS ON SWFL

publication also noted another plus: the extensive agricultural industry – tomatoes, vegetables and cattle – in Immokalee, east of Naples.

Golf paradise: With 80-plus championship golf courses – and the most holes per capita of any place worldwide – Naples is an excellent choice for golfers, according to Golfpass, a golf membership service. Lee and Charlotte counties have their share of courses, too.

Pickleball central: Organizers of the Minto U.S. Open Pickleball Championships (April 26-May 3) call it the largest event of its kind. Whether you go to watch the competition or to take to the courts yourself, the National Pickleball Center in East Naples Community Park contains 59 courts, including six championship courts. Because of the fervor and facilities for the sport there, Naples has been dubbed “the pickleball capital of the world.”

Sling some mud: Or watch the pros do it. If your timing is right, you may be able to take in one of the periodic Swamp Buggy Races, in which the rugged bug-



COURTESY PHOTO

gies compete on the Mile ‘O’ Mud at Florida Sports Park. The races have taken place since the early 1900s.

Airboat adventure: Explore the Big Cypress National Preserve in an airboat with a guide who will explain the many fascinating types of flora and fauna.

Take a hike: Fakahatchee Strand Preserve State Park, situated in Big Cypress, is home to the rare ghost orchid, the endangered flower featured in Susan Orlean’s “The Orchid Thief.” Or stroll the 2 ¼-mile boardwalk through the Audubon Corkscrew Swamp Sanctuary to get an up-close look at the various habitats, plus loads of birds, gators and possibly other critters, plus the world’s largest forest of old-growth bald cypress trees.

Cultural riches: Naples offers an abundance of cultural activities, starting with Artis—Naples, with its world-class lineup of plays and performers. It’s also the home of the Naples Philharmonic. The Baker Museum, which emphasizes contemporary and modern art, is also nearby. Other cultural highlights include two opera companies, community theater troupes and dozens of art galleries throughout the city.



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FOCUS ON SWFL

CHARLOTTE COUNTY

It's good for you: Punta Gorda bats above its weight regarding appeal. Besides its historic downtown district, situated along Charlotte Harbor, it offers 18 miles of bike and walking paths, 55 miles of canal-front homes, plenty of golf and water sports, plus a thriving ecosystem boasting 600 bird species, assorted land critters and abundant marine wildlife. Punta Gorda was named among the top five "Best Healthy Place(s) to Retire" by U.S. News & World Report and was fifth among "Great Places to Retire in Florida" by the editors of Kiplinger's Personal Finance. Countywide, there are 830 miles of shoreline, including that on the Peace and Myakka rivers, with more than 80% preserved to protect marine life and the overall environment.

Paddle for miles: The Charlotte County Blueway Trails system offers nearly 200 miles of paddling trails for kayaks, canoes and stand-up paddleboards in fresh and salt water.

Visit the first solar-powered town:



Every Friday and Saturday, Founder's Square in Babcock Ranch comes alive with Food Truck Friday and live performances by local bands like The Poelker Brothers.

STEPHEN MITSKAVICH / FLORIDA WEEKLY

The rapidly developing Babcock Ranch community in southern Charlotte County is powered by its 870-acre solar farm. The community's downtown, Founder's Square, offers places to dine and shop. This young and growing community has been featured on "60 Minutes" and national newscasts for

its sustainable development approach and resilience during hurricanes.

Tackle a tarpon: Boca Grande Pass is among the best places in North America to catch tarpon, hard-fighting silver game fish. (April to October is prime time, but they can be caught year-round.) ■



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Discover Wonder Gardens in Bonita Springs – a vibrant sanctuary for rescued birds and reptiles. Explore hands-on animal encounters, engaging educational programs and events to interest every member of your family!

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27180 Old 41 Road | Bonita Springs, Florida | 239.992.2591 | WonderGardens.org

SWFL ATTRACTIONS



A peacock and a baby alligator — residents at Wonder Gardens in Bonita Springs.

WONDER GARDENS / COURTESY PHOTOS

LEE COUNTY

The Bailey-Matthews National Shell Museum & Aquarium

This museum is the sole accredited institution in the United States focused on shells and mollusks. Its purpose is to inspire, educate and foster a community centered around a passion for shells, wildlife and the environment. Through a variety of exhibits, educational initiatives and library resources, discover more about mollusks, shells and their habitats.

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

Calusa Nature Center & Planetarium

For over 50 years, this community center has inspired people to connect with nature through holistic environmental education programs covering astronomy, ecology and zoology. Enjoy captivating planetarium shows in a state-of-the-art facility alongside attractions like a butterfly

garden, a raptor aviary and nature trails on the expansive 105-acre property.

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

Gator Mike's Family Fun Park

This family fun park in Cape Coral is the perfect spot for a day of excitement. With ziplining, rock climbing, go-karts, mini golf and arcade, there's plenty to keep everyone entertained.

35 NE Pine Island Road, Cape Coral
239-574-4386 | gatomikes.com

IMAG History & Science Center

This family-friendly destination offers engaging aquariums, interactive displays and innovative programs that inspire creativity while promoting STEM education. Enjoy attractions such as Science on a Sphere, the Google Earth Wall and the USS Mohawk Aquarium, among others.

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



Southern Fresh Farms

A dedicated educational farm that embraces sustainable agriculture through innovative vertical hydroponic methods developed by Verti-Gro. This system maximizes crop yields while keeping plants above ground, preventing flooding during the rainy season. Visitors can enjoy a vibrant selection of fresh produce, local honey and colorful flowers, making it a unique agro-tourism destination.

8500 Penzance Blvd., Fort Myers
239-633-7705 | southernfreshfarms.com

SWFL ATTRACTIONS

Sun Splash Family Waterpark

This top-notch water park features a variety of thrilling slides and relaxing attractions tailored for adventure seekers and families. Guests can enjoy everything from exhilarating rides like the Drop Slides and Cape Fear to leisurely experiences such as the Main Stream River Tube Ride and Pirate’s Cove.

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

Wonder Gardens

The gardens are a lively, safe space for many rescued animals, such as Florida alligators, flamingos, macaws, pythons, turtles and tortoises. They also feature a beautiful variety of plants. This botanical garden not only cares for these animals but also highlights Old Florida’s history while promoting modern conservation efforts.

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



Naples Botanical Gardens

ANDREA STETSON / FLORIDA WEEKLY

COLLIER COUNTY

CMON Golisano Children’s Museum of Naples

This lively museum serves as Southwest Florida’s first dedicated space for children and families, promoting fun and learn-

ing in a safe environment. Spanning two stories and 38,000 square feet, it features interactive exhibits developed by child psychology experts to foster creativity, curiosity, empathy and self-esteem.

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

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SWFL ATTRACTIONS

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Experience year-round excitement at the expansive 92,000-square-foot indoor water park, featuring attractions for all ages, from thrilling slides to relaxing lazy rivers. Families can play together in the interactive water playground, enjoy the wave pool, or unwind in the hot tub after a day of adventure.

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

Naples Botanical Garden

This exceptional tropical garden offers an exploration of diverse ecosystems, from lush rainforests and succulent displays to tranquil pools adorned with waterlilies and strikingly colorful flowering trees against a backdrop of vibrant greenery.

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

Naples Zoo at Caribbean Gardens

This nationally accredited zoo goes beyond a simple walk-through experience; it combines conservation and recreation with a full day of engaging activities for all ages. Enjoy a nearly mile-long paved path winding through a historic tropical garden, home to a variety of animals, including lions, giraffes and rare species like the giant anteater, while also discovering ways to support wildlife conservation.

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

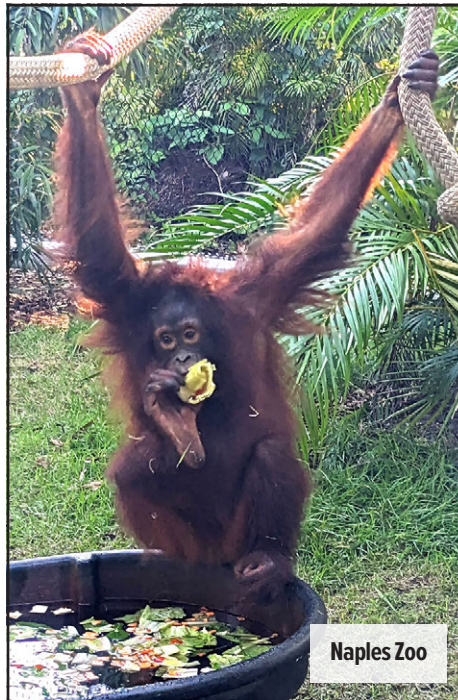
Paradise Sports Complex

Paradise Coast Sports Complex features professional-level synthetic turf fields, on-site recreation and entertainment options including The Cove Outdoor Bar and food truck pavilion, set alongside a lake that provides the kind of sunset views that make Southwest Florida famous. Throughout the year, the complex hosts tournaments, including youth travel soccer, lacrosse, football and more.

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

Revs Institute

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ANDREA STETSON / FLORIDA WEEKLY

and devoted enthusiasts of automotive history. The active facility houses the Miles Collier Collections, showcasing over one hundred remarkable vehicles produced between 1896 and 1995.

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

Rookery Bay Environmental Learning Center

Discover engaging hands-on activities suitable for all ages at the Nature Center,

which features interactive exhibits, an art gallery, scenic trails, and picnic spots. Rookery Bay invites you to explore its vast 110,000 acres along the Southwest Florida coastline, where adventure awaits on your next boat or kayak eco-tour.

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

CHARLOTTE COUNTY

Babcock Ranch Eco-Tours

Experience the true essence of Florida on a thrilling 90-minute eco-tour through Babcock Ranch, where you can spot alligators, birds, deer and more in their natural habitats. Guided by passionate experts, you'll explore four diverse ecosystems, including the captivating Telegraph Cypress Swamp.

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

Charlotte Harbor Environmental Center

Spanning 46,000 acres of protected land, this center features more than eight miles of hiking trails and various recreational opportunities, including kayak tours, wading excursions and an alligator pond. Since 1987, it has been dedicated to offering environmental education, recreation, research and land conservation services in the greater Charlotte Harbor area.



CHARLOTTE HARBOR ENVIRONMENTAL CENTER / COURTESY PHOTO

SWFL ATTRACTIONS

Alligator Creek: 10941 Burnt Store Road, Punta Gorda | 941-575-5435
Cedar Point: 2300 Placida Road, Englewood 941-475-0769 | checfloirida.org

Iguanaland

Founded in February 2022 by herpetologist and conservationist Ty Park, this center operates as a reptile zoo, education hub and conservation facility. Its mission is to promote awareness of the importance of reptiles and amphibians while supporting scientific research and training initiatives.

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

The James & Barbara Moore Observatory

Join observation sessions starting about 30 minutes after sunset and explore celestial wonders through a 16-inch telescope and several smaller ones. Engaging astronomy discussions will also take place throughout the evening. Free public sessions are on the fourth Friday of each month and are scheduled for March 28, April 25 and May 23, weather permitting.

26300 Airport Road, Punta Gorda
 941-637-3518, 941-637-5652
 fsw.edu/charlotte/observatory

Octagon Wildlife Sanctuary

The sanctuary provides a refuge for abandoned exotic animals and allows for engagement from a distance through guided tours. Octagon leases the land for \$1 a year, and a dedicated director and volunteers manage it. Students can earn



Peace River Botanical & Sculpture Gardens in Punta Gorda.

PEACE RIVER BOTANICAL & SCULPTURE GARDENS / COURTESY PHOTO

school credits and badges.

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

Peace River Botanical & Sculpture Gardens

The sanctuary spans 30 acres and features five distinct ecosystems and vibrant gardens interconnected by over 15,000 square feet of boardwalks showcasing impressive sculptures. It attracts approximately 40,000 visitors each year and is supported by a dedicated membership of

over 2,000 individuals.

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

Redneck Mud Park

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

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







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AMAZING MUSEUMS



BOB RAUSCHENBERG GALLERY / COURTESY PHOTO

More than a pretty face

Dig into local art, cars, history and shells

BY KAREN FELDMAN

It's not surprising that Southwest Florida is largely viewed as a beach destination. With miles of sand stretching from Marco Island north to Englewood and the Gulf of Mexico lapping alluringly along the shoreline, it's obvious why they garner a lot of attention – pretty things always do.

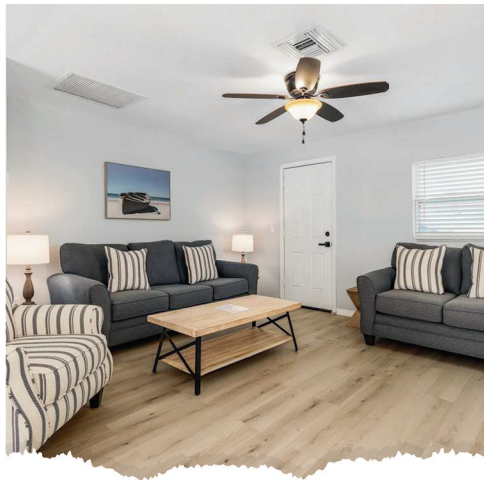
But if you delve deeper, lots of treasures will reveal themselves. Knowing what you are looking at makes the experience more rewarding. That's why local tour guides are invaluable in sharing the area's history, abundant flora, fauna and

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AMAZING MUSEUMS

traditions that contribute to the region's quirky charm. On occasion, that may require heading indoors, at least temporarily. Here are some of the museums in the area that can help you see beyond the beaches.

Bailey-Matthews National Shell Museum & Aquarium

What is it? This museum and aquarium offer a scientific approach to shells with exhibits devoted to everything associated with shells, mollusks and their ecosystems.

What's there? In addition to exhibits within the museum and the aquarium, there are lectures, classes (including one that helps you obtain Shell Ambassador certification), field education and monthly after-hours aquarium experiences, including a tour, light snacks and beverages.

Hours: 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. every day

Admission: \$12 for 18 and older; \$10



BAILEY-MATTHEWS NATIONAL SHELL MUSEUM & AQUARIUM / COURTESY PHOTO

for veterans and those 65 and older; \$5 for children 5-11; free for members, those under 5 and active military.

Etc.: 3075 Sanibel Captiva Road, Sanibel; 239-395-2233; shellmuseum.org.

The Baker Museum

What's there? Three stories of American modern and contemporary, and ancient Chinese art, a glass-dome conser-

vatory and an extensive outdoor sculpture garden. Tours are available to visit the sculpture garden and the museum.

2025 highlights: Don't miss the mind-bending glass sculptures of the Dale Chihuly Collection. The museum is home to four of his dynamic, large-scale works, including "Blue Icicle Chandelier," "Red Chandelier," "Red Reeds" and "Persian Seaform Ceiling." Through June 15: "Rafael Lozano-Hemmer" showcases the works of the Mexican Canadian artist who integrates art, science,

architecture and technology in his creations. "Obra Sonora" is Spanish for "sound work." March 8-Sept. 21: "Entangled in the Mangroves" focuses on 10 Florida-based artists who explore aspects of the Everglades with a focus on climate change. The exhibition aims to heighten awareness of the critical situation we find ourselves in. It also aims to foster connections among artists, activists, Indigenous





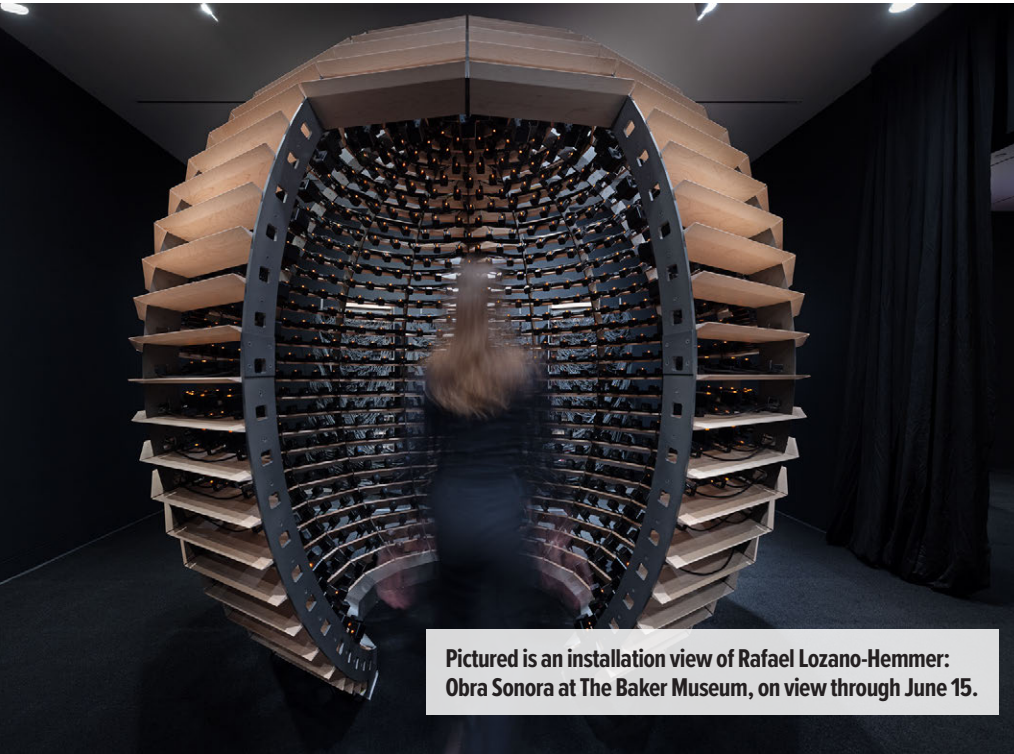
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AMAZING MUSEUMS



Pictured is an installation view of Rafael Lozano-Hemmer: *Obra Sonora* at The Baker Museum, on view through June 15.

ARTIS—NAPLES, THE BAKER MUSEUM / ROSEBUDZ PRODUCTIONS / COURTESY PHOTO

communities, scientists and scholars to develop solutions that benefit all.

Hours: 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. Tuesday through Saturday; noon to 4 p.m. Sunday.

Admission: \$10 for adults; \$5 for full-time students and active military (with ID); \$1 for those receiving SNAP EBT benefits; free for children 17 and younger and Friends of Artis-Naples.

Etc.: 5833 Pelican Bay Blvd., Naples; 239-597-1111; artisnaples.org/baker-museum.

Bob Rauschenberg Gallery at Florida SouthWestern State College

That Bob Rauschenberg? Yes, the world-renowned artist Robert Rauschenberg lived and worked in Southwest Florida. His complex on Captiva Island was a mecca for fellow artists and aspiring ones. The college operated The Gallery of Fine Art, which opened in 1979. Over 25 years, the artist built a relationship with the Florida SouthWestern gallery, result-

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AMAZING MUSEUMS

ing in 15 Rauschenberg exhibits there. The gallery was renamed in his honor in 2004.

What's there? Modern and contemporary artists and their works. The "David BRADSHAW & William S. BURROUGHS: Propagation" exhibit continues through April 12. Propagation means the act or process of spreading, although it's often taken to mean the spread of damaging messages and dangerous ideologies, viruses and other negative acts. Beyond the propagation of self, form or concepts are challenging societal norms and confronting personal demons. The works in this show illustrate how the artists used unconventional tools (including dynamite, firearms and a bowling ball canon) and chance-based operations to bring about new artistic forms.

Hours: 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. Monday through Friday; 11 a.m. to 3 p.m. Saturday. The gallery is closed on Sundays, federal holidays and when there is no exhibit.

Admission: Free
Etc.: 8099 College Pkwy., Fort Myers; 239-489-9313; rauschenberggallery.com.

CMON Golisano Children's Museum of Naples

What is it? An experiential space where children take an active role in whatever exhibit they visit. That means the ubiquitous phones and tablets get stored. Help kids prepare for kindergarten and participate in an art workshop.

2025 highlights: Through May 11: Italy comes to Naples (Florida) in "Ciao Bambini!" an immersive educational experience designed to transport children and their families to Italian life, history, culture and art. Young chefs can learn to cook in a ristorante, learn about pasta making in a charming Italian home, toss a coin into the wishing fountain, learn basic Italian phrases and more.

Hours: 10 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. Thursday through Tuesday; closed Wednesday.
Admission: \$25 for general; \$18 for

Florida residents; \$13 for military and first responders; \$3 for EBT, SNAP and WIC cardholders. Children younger than 1 year and teachers admitted without charge.

Etc.: 15080 Livingston Road, Naples; 239-514-0084; cmon.org.

— Fort Myers' children's museum is the IMAG History & Science Center at 2000 Cranford Ave. just east of downtown off Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Boulevard; theimag.org.

Holocaust Museum & Cohen Education Center

What is it? A chronological journey through the nightmare of the Holocaust, illustrating Jewish life between the two world wars, the rise of the Nazi party and the ethnic cleansing using concentration and slave labor camps. The trial leads to liberation by the Allies and the aftermath of the Nuremberg trials. The museum houses more than 1,000 photographs and artifacts related to

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AMAZING MUSEUMS

World War II and the Holocaust.

2025 highlight: Through June 1: “Convincing the Masses: Propaganda at Home and Abroad” explores the use of Nazi propaganda during World War II and how to recognize what may be biased information by checking on the information source.

Hours: 1 to 4 p.m. Tuesday through Sunday

Admission: \$13 online; \$15 at the door.

Etc.: 975 Imperial Golf Course Blvd., Naples; 239-263-9200; hmcec.org.

Wonder Gardens

What is it? Colorful kitsch and a glimpse into Old Florida, as well as seeing the rescued non-releasable birds and reptiles for whom it serves as a refuge.

Highlights: This almost 90-year-old roadside attraction in Bonita Springs began as The Reptile Gardens, later changing to the Everglades Wonder Gardens but the Everglades part was dropped

since it's near the Everglades but not in them. Now operated by a not-for-profit board, the focus is on caring for rescued, rehabilitated animals that cannot survive in the wild. That includes roughly 300 residents, including flamingos, macaws, Florida alligators, turtles and tortoises. There are educational programs and field trips. Then, the lush gardens, towering banyans and other flora make a stroll on the grounds seem wonderful.

Hours: 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. daily

Admission: \$15 for those 13-64; \$10 for children 3-12; \$10 for ages 65 and older; free for children younger than 3.

Etc.: 27180 Old 41 Road, Bonita Springs; 239-992-2591; wondergardens.org.

— *Naples Botanical Garden also celebrates and protects Southwest Florida's native flora (and other subtropical and tropical flora around the world), as does the Peace River Botanical & Sculpture Gardens in Punta Gorda. Find out more at naplesgarden.org and peacrivergardens.org.*



The Wonder Gardens in Bonita Springs features rescued birds and reptiles in lush gardens, along with educational programs.

ANDREA STETSON / FLORIDA WEEKLY

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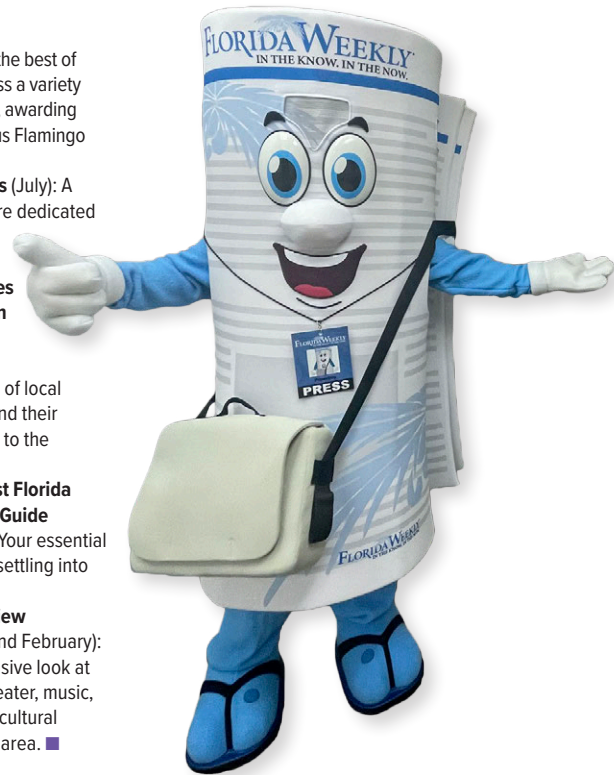
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 - **Destination SWFL** (March): The ultimate guide to the region’s communities, attractions, shopping and insider tips for visitors and new residents.
 - **Florida Weekly’s Best** (May): Our editors and writers explore South Florida

to recognize the best of the best across a variety of categories, awarding the prestigious Flamingo Awards.

- **Pet Lovers** (July): A special feature dedicated to our furry friends.
- **Businesses of Distinction** (September or October): A celebration of local businesses and their contributions to the community.
- **Southwest Florida Newcomers Guide** (November): Your essential resource for settling into paradise.
- **Arts Preview** (November and February): A comprehensive look at upcoming theater, music, festivals and cultural events in the area. ■



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BEACHES & PARKS



Lovers Key State Park in Bonita Springs

LEE COUNTY VISITOR & CONVENTION BUREAU / COURTESY PHOTO

LEE COUNTY

Bonita Beach

This 2.5-acre beachfront park between Bonita Springs and Fort Myers Beach includes a swimming area, a gazebo and pic-

nic shelters within beautiful sand dunes and coastal vegetation. Easily access the park via bus and trolley, and there is a \$2 per hour parking fee. Facilities also include restrooms, offering convenient access for beachgoers and paddle craft enthusiasts.

27954 Hickory Blvd., Bonita Springs | 239-229-0632

Bowditch Point Park

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BEACHES & PARKS

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50 Estero Blvd., Fort Myers Beach | 239-823-1447

Bowman’s Beach

Known for its excellent shelling and convenient amenities, Bowman’s Beach is definitely worth the brief five-minute trek from the parking area. Adventurous beachcombers can stroll for miles along the unspoiled white sand, which is beautifully scattered with shells. Unlike other areas of the island that have seen significant development, the shoreline at Bowman’s Beach remains largely untouched, preserving its natural beauty.

1700 Bowmans Beach Road, Sanibel | 239-472-6397

Cayo Costa State Park

Cayo Costa Island can only be reached by boat or kayak. This tranquil destination features nine miles of untouched beaches

ideal for swimming, snorkeling and other activities. It’s a sanctuary for wildlife, offering opportunities for birdwatching as well as chances to see manatees and sea turtles. To visit, you’ll need to obtain a single-use day pass online.

Four nautical miles west of Pine Island (26.685789, -82.245381) | 941-759-2007

Estero Bay Preserve State Park

Estero Bay Preserve presents an opportunity to discover its natural beauty along rugged trails, making it ideal for hiking—just remember your gear, as it’s dog-friendly too. The preserve showcases varied ecosystems that can be accessed via the Estero River Scrub. To enhance your experience, it offers amenities like pavilions and restrooms and activities like wildlife viewing, boating and bicycling.

4940 Broadway W., Estero | 239-992-0311

Fort Myers Beach

Fort Myers Beach features seven miles of sandy shorelines and boasts 29 public access points, such as Newton Beach Park

and Seven Seas Cottage. This vibrant destination is home to an array of shops and cultural attractions.

FMB Town Hall - 2731 Oak St., Fort Myers Beach 239-765-0202

Gasparilla Island State Park

The historic Port Boca Grande Lighthouse has been a public beacon since 1890 and is located on the island. Guests can partake in various activities, including swimming, snorkeling and fishing. Additionally, Boca Grande Beach offers a peaceful retreat with its pristine sandy shores and vibrant waters, all amidst beautiful tropical vegetation.

880 Belcher Road, Boca Grande | 941-759-2007

J.N. “Ding” Darling National Wildlife Refuge

Famous for its pristine mangrove habitats and an impressive variety of migratory birds, this wildlife destination provides numerous activities such as biking, hiking and kayaking. Begin your exploration at



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BEACHES & PARKS

the complimentary Visitor and Education Center, where you can check out interactive exhibits before setting off on a wildlife adventure along picturesque trails or through guided tours.

1 Wildlife Drive, Sanibel | 239-472-1100

Koreshan State Park

The area showcases the captivating history of 19th century pioneers known as the Koreshans, highlighted by restored historic structures and vibrant natural landscapes in Fort Myers. Engage in various activities like camping, canoeing and wildlife observation, making it an inviting destination to discover a distinctive part of history while enjoying outdoor recreation.

3800 Corkscrew Road, Estero | 239-992-0311

Lighthouse Beach Park

This location features a historic, operational lighthouse situated at the eastern edge of Sanibel, overlooking the bay. Here, you'll find a fishing pier with a T-dock, as well as a boardwalk nature trail that meanders through the native wetlands.

1 Periwinkle Way, Sanibel Island | 239-472-6397

Lovers Key State Park

The park provides tram rides to the beach and options for renting paddling equipment and beach necessities. Additionally, it features various activities, including canoeing, hiking and observing wildlife. Amenities available at the park include a boat launch, a gift shop and a Discovery Center.

8700 Estero Blvd., Bonita Springs | 239-707-6328



PUNTA GORDA/ENGLEWOOD BEACH VISITOR & CONVENTION BUREAU / COURTESY PHOTO

Tarpon Bay Beach

This popular beach, near Bailey's Grocery Store in the center of the island, offers a lively atmosphere and easy access. Just a short walk away, there is a public parking lot that can accommodate 75 vehicles. Enjoy the walking paths, nature trails and convenient amenities such as restrooms and showers.

111 Tarpon Bay Road, Sanibel Island | 239-472-6397

CHARLOTTE COUNTY

Audubon-Pennington Nature Park

Located near downtown Port Charlotte, Audubon-Pennington Nature Park offers a peaceful spot for picnicking, hiking and nature photography. Managed by the Peace River Audubon Society, the park includes parking and a nature walk, allowing visitors to explore trails like Sandhill and Gator Hole.

1153 Alton Road, Port Charlotte | 941-625-7529

Charlotte Harbor Preserve State Park

Charlotte Harbor Preserve State Park covers over 42,000 acres of vital ecosystems, including mangrove forests. It offers activities like boating and fishing, protects five aquatic preserves and contains significant cultural resources, including evidence of prehistoric human activity.

12301 Burnt Store Road, Punta Gorda | 941-575-5816

Don Pedro Island State Park

Don Pedro Island State Park, situated between Knight Island and Little Gasparilla Island, offers activities like boating, hiking and snorkeling on its beautiful one-mile sandy beach and mangrove bays. Accessible only by private boat or ferry, the park includes amenities such as a kayak launch, fishing dock and picnic areas within its 100-acre expanse on the Cape Haze Peninsula.

8450 Placida Road, Cape Haze | 941-759-2007

Englewood Beach

Covering 12.67 acres, this beach is famous for its pristine white sands, crystal-clear waters and breathtaking sunsets. It boasts a 900-foot boardwalk along with viewing pavilions, sports amenities and playgrounds. Enjoy features such as barbecue grills, basketball and volleyball courts, birdwatching opportunities, fishing areas, picnic shelters and restroom facilities.

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

Gilchrist Park

Gilchrist Park spans 11 acres along the

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waterfront between downtown and Fishermen's Village, offering amenities like a playground, sports courts, a fishing pier and picnic pavilions, as well as hosting smaller events. Named after Governor Albert Gilchrist, a prominent figure in Punta Gorda's history, the park includes the Bayfront Center, which the YMCA operates for community programs and rentals.

400 W. Retta Esplanade, Punta Gorda | 941-575-3367

Ollie's Pond Park

A beautiful nature preserve in Port Charlotte that offers birding, fishing and serene nature trails, making it a perfect spot for dog walkers and nature enthusiasts.

18235 Avon Ave., Port Charlotte | 941-625-7529

Peace River Preserve

Peace River Preserve encompasses 450 acres of diverse ecosystems, including scrubby flatwoods, mesic flatwoods and mangrove swamps, providing crucial habitat for scrub jays and other species. Management efforts, such as prescribed burning and thinning overgrown oaks, aim to enhance habitat quality while addressing the effects of historical fire suppression and improving water drainage issues in the area.

28000 Sandhill Blvd., Punta Gorda | 941-613-3220

Port Charlotte Beach Park

Founded in 1972 and refurbished in 2012, this 16.08-acre coastal park features sandy beaches and calm waters. It comes equipped with BBQ grills, sports courts and pavilions suitable for events. This location is ideal for weddings, picnics and diverse recreational pursuits. Its picturesque landscapes and beautiful sunsets throughout the year offer a tranquil setting for any occasion.

4500 Harbor Blvd., Port Charlotte
Park: 941-627-1628, Pool: 941-629-0170

Punta Gorda Nature Park

Punta Gorda Nature Park, a 21-acre oasis in the Punta Gorda Isles neighborhood, features pine palmetto forests and salt marsh habitats. It includes a multi-use trail, an observation deck and outdoor recreational areas. The park staff works with volunteers to enhance the space, offering educational outdoor training and nature lectures.

1623 Aqui Esta Drive, Punta Gorda



PUNTA GORDA/ENGLEWOOD BEACH VISITOR & CONVENTION BUREAU / COURTESY PHOTO

COLLIER COUNTY

Audubon Corkscrew Swamp Sanctuary

Corkscrew Swamp Sanctuary is a vital 13,000-acre wetland in Southwest Florida. It is home to the largest remaining bald cypress forest and numerous endangered species, including the wood stork and Florida panther. The sanctuary's mission is to protect and restore natural ecosystems while supporting biodiversity, providing essential habitat connections and ensuring the sustainability of local water resources.

corkscrew.audubon.org | 239-348-9151

Barefoot Beach Preserve

Barefoot Beach Preserve spans 342 acres and is one of the few remaining untouched barrier islands along Florida's Southwest coast. It serves as a refuge for various species and a tranquil retreat.

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

Big Cypress National Preserve

Spanning 729,000 acres, Big Cypress National Preserve has been dedicated to preserving natural landmarks since 1916 and attracts millions of visitors each year. The preserve offers a variety of activities, including scenic drives, hiking and ranger-guided programs, encouraging exploration of its diverse ecosystems and cultural heritage.

Nathaniel P. Reed Visitor Center
33000 Tamiami Trail E., Ochopee

Oasis Visitor Center
52105 Tamiami Trail E., Ochopee | 239-695-2000

Clam Pass Park

Covering 35 acres, Clam Pass Park showcases a beautiful coastal environment with a three-quarter-mile boardwalk that leads visitors to its lovely sandy beaches. The park features several amenities, such as beach wheelchairs, bike racks, showers, a complimentary tram service, guided nature walks, a life jacket borrowing program, an attended parking booth and onsite dining and restroom facilities.

465 Seagate Drive, Naples | 239-252-4000

Collier-Seminole State Park

Collier-Seminole State Park covers over 7,271 acres, featuring distinctive wildlife, towering royal palms and expansive mangrove swamps. The park also highlights historical elements, including the Bay City Walking Dredge, which played a vital role in constructing the Tamiami Trail Highway. Enjoy a range of activities such as camping, canoeing, hiking and wildlife observation.

20200 Tamiami Trail E., Naples | 239-393-7306

Conservancy of Southwest Florida

The Conservancy of Southwest Florida's 21-acre Nature Center includes various indoor and outdoor exhibits highlighting the region's unique ecosystem, featuring a revamped Discovery Center with galleries on invasive species and climate change. The center also offers electric boat tours along the Gordon River and educational programs on diverse wildlife topics.

1495 Smith Preserve Way, Naples | 239-262-0304

Delnor-Wiggins Pass State Park

Delnor-Wiggins Pass State Park, a

BEACHES & PARKS

stunning 166-acre tropical landscape featuring a mile-long stretch of beautiful beach, offers a variety of activities such as sunbathing, fishing, boating and wildlife viewing. Take advantage of amenities like beach wheelchairs and a beach shuttle service from Conner Park, which is available due to limited parking. There is also an accessible boat launch area for easy access to Turkey Bay.

1135 Gulfshore Drive, Naples | 239-409-0637

Everglades National Park

The unique ecosystem of Everglades National Park is home to various endangered species, such as the Florida panther, manatee and American crocodile. For those looking to experience the park's natural beauty, a boat tour through the Ten Thousand Islands from Everglades City offers an excellent opportunity to navigate the mangrove islands and observe the diverse wildlife that inhabits the area.

Gulf Coast Visitor Center
815 Oyster Bar Lane, Everglades City
305-242-7700

Fakahatchee Strand Preserve State Park

Florida's largest state park features diverse landscapes, including scenic boardwalks, canoe-friendly rivers and tranquil lakes, with trails perfect for hiking and biking. Focused on conservation, it offers opportunities for wildlife observation and water activities. This park is also home to unique plant and animal species found nowhere else in the continental U.S.

137 Coast Line Drive, Copeland | 239-961-1925

Fred W. Coyle Freedom Park

Occupying roughly 50 acres at the Northeast corner of Goodlette-Frank Road and Golden Gate Parkway, Freedom Park includes a five-acre lake and about 3,500 feet of boardwalk. The site's wetlands have been restored by eliminating invasive species and planting native plants. Collier County Parks & Recreation offers educational programs in the facility, which is also available for evening meetings.

1515 Golden Gate Pkwy., Naples | 239-252-4062

Lowdermilk Park

Lowdermilk Park is a premier beachfront destination in Naples, offering amenities like metered and unmetered parking, sand volleyball courts, a children's playground, picnic tables, benches and restroom facilities. The park features two rental gazebos and accessible beach paths with ADA beach access mats, along with a concession stand for snacks and refreshments.

1301 Gulf Shore Blvd. N., Naples | 239-213-3020

Nancy Payton Preserve

The Nancy Payton Preserve, spanning 71 acres in Collier County, serves as an essential sanctuary for endangered species, including Florida panthers and bobcats. This area is particularly dedicated to improving habitats for gopher tortoises and red-cockaded woodpeckers within its pine flatwoods. With 147 plant species thriving here, the preserve offers smooth hiking trails that facilitate wildlife observation, making it a vital contributor to the protection of biodiversity.

1540 Blue Sage Drive, Naples | 239-252-2961

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25 12th Ave. S., Naples | 239-213-1800

Picayune Strand State Forest

Picayune Strand State Forest is a revitalized 50,000-acre region vital to the ecology of the Everglades. It enhances water quality and provides a variety of recreational opportunities such as hiking, biking and horseback riding. Formerly a failed subdivision, the area now safeguards wildlife habitats and facilitates outdoor activities, including camping, fishing and seasonal hunting.

2121 52nd Ave. SE, Naples | 239-348-7557

Vanderbilt Beach Park

Vanderbilt Beach Park, situated in the sought-after North Naples region, is known



Clam Pass beach in Naples

NAPLES, MARCO ISLAND & EVERGLADES CONVENTION & VISITORS BUREAU / COURTESY PHOTO

for its beautiful white sandy beaches. This park is conveniently close to luxury hotels and provides various amenities, including bike racks and beach wheelchairs.

100 Vanderbilt Beach Road, Naples | 239-252-4000

South Marco Beach

South Marco Beach features a public parking area on Swallow Ave., granting ac-

cess to one of the island's two public beaches. This beach has 70 parking spots and offers restroom facilities. A Beach Parking Permit is needed for access. The area is open from sunrise to sunset, and parking on the street or swales in the South Beach vicinity is prohibited.

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

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