

2025

# FLORIDA WEEKLY Newcomers

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THINGS TO DO,  
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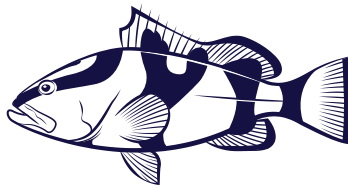
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# 2025 Newcomers Guide to Lee, Collier and Charlotte Counties

# Newcomers

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# Let's Chat About Real Estate!

## Denise Henry,

GRI, RENE

Broker Associate

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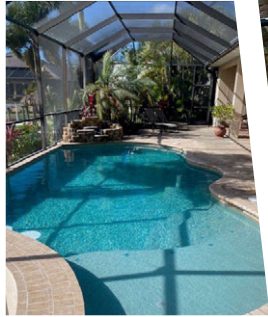
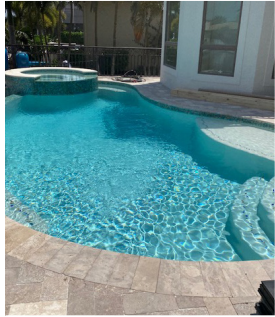
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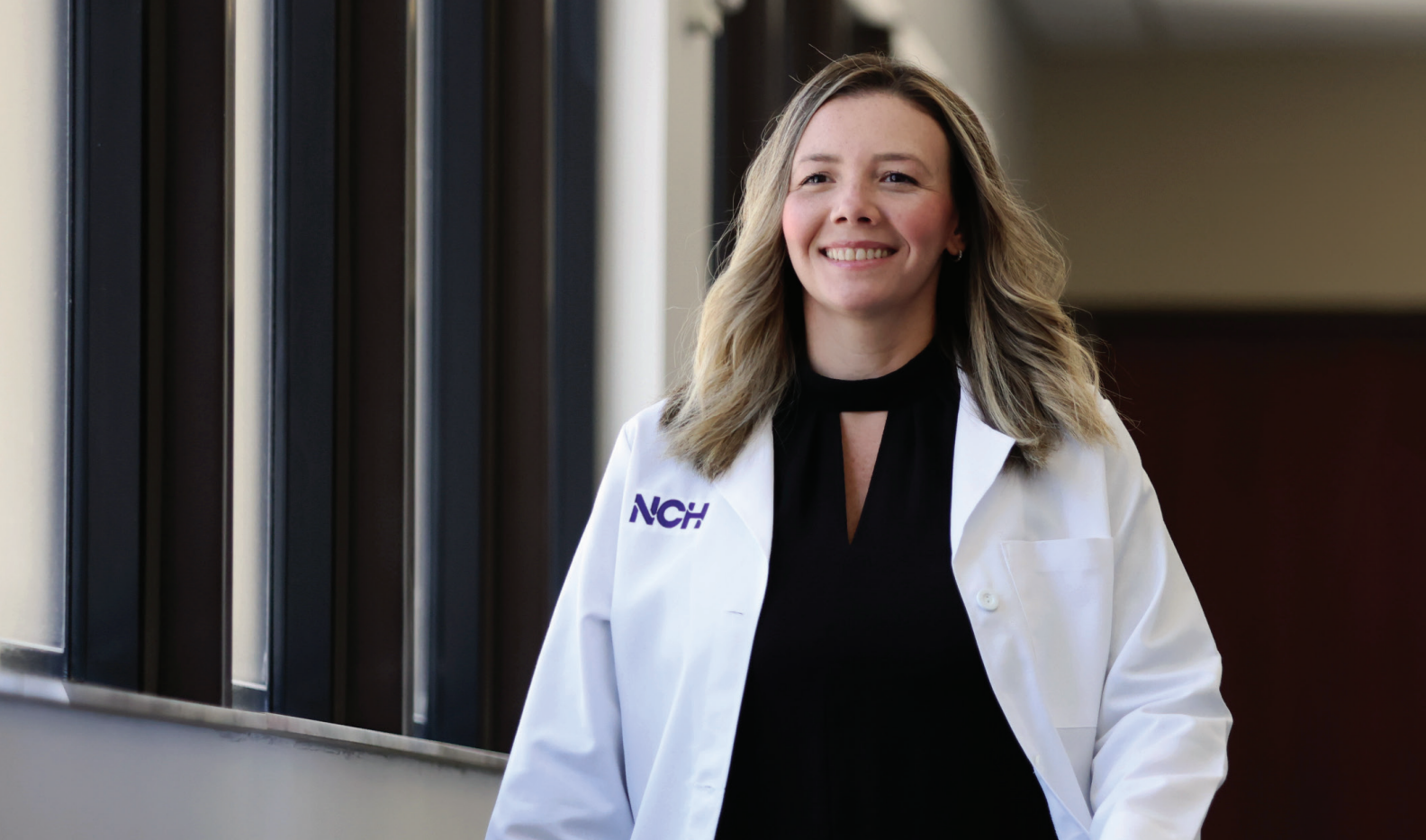
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## LOCAL FLAVOR 38

EVERY BITE AND SIP: SAVOR THE SPIRIT OF SOUTHWEST FLORIDA



## 66 HISTORIC DISTRICTS

ENDLESS NOSTALGIC ADVENTURES THROUGH TIME AND CULTURE



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# SIGNATURE EVENTS

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### Downtown Fort Myers Art Walk

#### First Friday of every month

An eclectic group of local crafters and artists showcase their unique art made from different mediums on First and Hendry Street.

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

### Downtown Fort Myers Music Walk

#### Third Friday of every month

This free public event offers a professional venue for local and regional artists aged 17 and over to showcase their talent through an evening of street dancing and a one-night concert featuring musicians of all talent levels across various styles.

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

### Sanibel Art Festival

#### Nov. 29-30, Jan. 26-27

A two-day juried event featuring high-quality artwork from local and national artists, including paintings, sculptures and jewelry. The event supports local causes and offers visitors a chance to enjoy art in the scenic setting of Sanibel Island.

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

### Coconut Point Art Festival

#### Dec. 28-29, Feb. 15-16

The festival will feature life-size sculptures, paintings, jewelry and more among Coconut Point Mall's 1.2 million square feet of retail space.

23181 Via Villagio Drive, Estero  
561-746-6615 | artfestival.com

### Fort Myers Seafood & Music Festival

#### Jan. 3-5

The Fort Myers Seafood & Music Festival, produced by Paragon Festivals in partnership with the Fort Myers River District Alliance, features live music across various genres and a selection of fresh seafood and other dishes. Admission is free. The event includes a marketplace

for arts, crafts and specialty products.

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

### Bonita Springs National Art Festivals

#### Jan. 11-12, Feb. 8-9, March 1-2

The 25th anniversary of the Bonita Springs National Fine Art Festival is set to be a landmark event, offering national and international artists unparalleled exposure to large crowds and media coverage. The festival supports emerging artists through scholarships and arts education, making it a critical event for artists and the community.

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

### Southwest Florida Wine & Food Fest

#### Jan. 17-18

SWFL Children's Charities' signature event unfolds over two days, starting with Chef Vintner Dinners in private homes on Friday and culminating in a Grand Tasting and live Auction on Saturday. These gatherings spotlight unique themes and bring together community and cuisine.

5001 Coconut Road, Bonita Springs  
239-433-4260 | swflwinefest.org

### Bonita Springs Art Festival

#### Jan. 31 – Feb. 1, Feb. 22-23, March 29-30, April 19-20

Come to The Promenade at Bonita Bay for a weekend of fine art and crafts, featuring original works from talented artists. Enjoy the lively atmosphere with evening dining and the popular Saturday Farmers Market.

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

### ArtFest Fort Myers

#### Jan. 31 – Feb. 2

An unparalleled celebration held on the Fort Myers waterfront, marking its 25th anniversary, features an artistic journey with over 200 selected artists, live

entertainment, culinary experiences, children's art activities, live art demonstrations and specialty lighting. Set against the backdrop of Downtown Fort Myers, this event blends vibrant entertainment, fine food and drinks in a relaxed, intimate setting.

1375 Monroe St., Fort Myers  
239-768-3602 | artfestfortmyers.com

### Bonita Springs Seafood & Music Festival

#### Feb. 7-9

This festival features live music, a marketplace for arts, crafts, fine products and a variety of food options.

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

### Edison Festival of Light Grand Parade

#### Feb. 15

The Grand Parade, honoring Fort Myers winter resident Thomas Edison, stands as the largest night parade in the Southeast and one of the country's most significant nighttime parades. This two-hour extravaganza showcases national participants, local marching bands, floats, government and law enforcement officials, clowns and numerous other attractions.

2310 Edwards Drive, Fort Myers  
239-334-2999 | edisonfestival.org

### Southwest Florida Agriculture Expo

#### Feb. 27 - March 9

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## SIGNATURE EVENTS

Agriculture Exposition, has celebrated local agriculture, horticulture and crafts. It features carnival rides, games, food booths, a livestock show, entertainment and a petting zoo.

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

## Southwest Florida Reading Festival

March 1

Authors of diverse backgrounds meet to share their creative journeys and celebrate literature with fans, providing insights into their recent works and inspirations. Attendees have the opportunity to buy signed books and enjoy activities like crafts, readings and interactions with writers from the Florida Writers Association, Gulf Coast Writers Association and Southwest Florida Fiction Writers.

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

## Sanibel Shell Art Festival

March 6-8

In collaboration with The Sanibel Shell Festival now in its 88th year, The Sanibel Shell Art Festival attracts art lovers and shell enthusiasts eager to discover unique shell crafts and art pieces.

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

## Cape Coral Music & Arts Fusion Walk

March 15

Organized by the Cape Coral Parks and Recreation Department, the Cape Coral Music & Arts Fusion Walk promotes local businesses through an evening filled with live music and pop-up shops from local artists showcasing items ranging from handmade jewelry to paintings, all in a family-friendly atmosphere.

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

## ECHO's Global Food & Farm Festival

March 16-22

This festival offers a variety of activities such as interactive workshops, live cooking shows and demonstrations on sugar cane crushing, moringa cultivation



Edison Festival of Light Parade,  
Downtown Fort Myers

LEE COUNTY VISITOR & CONVENTION BUREAU

and seed saving. With limited tickets, attendees will have the chance to enjoy farm-fresh lunches and learn about sustainable living and food production.

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

## Fort Myers River District Music Festival

March 21-23

A festival of a wide variety of fresh, delicious foods, including seafood from Florida's coasts. It also offers live music from top regional talents in genres like R&B and reggae. Attendees can enjoy an assortment of beverages and desserts alongside the diverse culinary options.

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

## Sounds of Jazz & Blues

March 22

An annual gathering organized by the Cape Coral Parks and Recreation Department, celebrated for its exhibition of exceptional local jazz and blues music talents. This event, renowned as the city's foremost musical festival, combines exquisite culinary offerings with captivating entertainment.

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

## Fort Myers Film Festival

May 14-18

This annual film festival is a key event for independent filmmakers, offering a platform to showcase their work in a variety of venues, including the Sidney & Berne Davis Art Center and the Calusa

Planetarium. Known for its support of local talent and its ability to attract a discerning, edgy audience, the Fort Myers Film Festival has become a pivotal gathering for indie film enthusiasts in the region.

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

## Fringe Fort Myers

May 29 - June 1

Fringe Fort Myers upholds the Fringe traditions of being entirely uncensored, unjuried and inclusive, with all ticket sales proceeds going directly to the artists. The 2025 edition emphasizes supporting independent artists and fostering diverse community engagement in groundbreaking theatre and live performances, all accessible through a lottery system for performer selection.

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

## COLLIER COUNTY

### Evening on Fifth

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5th Ave. S, Naples  
239-692-8436 | naplesgov.com

### Art In The Park

Nov. 30, Feb. 1, April 5 at 755 8th Ave. S, Naples

Initiated in 1957, this celebrated tradition in Naples comprises a series of juried outdoor fairs that afford the community



# GRANDVIEW

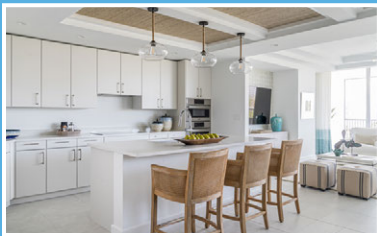
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## SIGNATURE EVENTS

access to a diverse array of fine arts and crafts. These premier gatherings exhibit a wide range of mediums including ceramics, glass, painting and sculpture, showcasing the talents of local artists from across the state.

Feb. 1 at 1600 Fleischmann Blvd., Naples  
239-262-6517 | naplesart.org

**Uptown Naples Fine Art Festival****Nov. 30-Dec. 1, Feb. 1-2**

Artist booths featuring life-size sculptures, spectacular paintings, unique jewelry, photography and ceramics will line the intersection of US Hwy 41 and Laurel Oak Drive, inviting everyone to explore and engage with local and national artists about their inspirations and processes.

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

**Swamp Buggy Races****Dec. 8, Jan. 26, March 2**

The World Famous Swamp Buggy Races feature custom-built vehicles racing through water-filled tracks. Since 1949, they have showcased the region's unique culture and history. The races include the tradition of crowning a Swamp Buggy Queen.

8520 Rattlesnake Hammock Road, Naples  
239-774-2701 | swampbuggy.com

**New Year's Art Fair****Jan. 4-5**

The Naples Art Institute will showcase works from over 250 artists from 30 states and beyond, in a top-ranked event that has earned accolades from Sunshine Artist Magazine and the Art Fair Source Book. This event will offer a diverse array of art mediums, ensuring an engaging experience for visitors.

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

**Naples Seafood & Music Festival****Jan. 14-26**

The Naples Seafood & Music Festival is a three-day event filled with a variety of live music performances, delicious seafood and veggie dishes from local vendors, and an arts and crafts marketplace.

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

**National Art Fair****Feb. 21-23**

The National Art Fair, showcasing artists' work in 17 categories, is a top-rated event, recognized by Sunshine Artist Magazine and Art Fair Source Book. It attracts over 20,000 people annually, celebrated for its high-quality art and festive atmosphere.

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

**Downtown Art Fair****March 22-23**

An annual two-day festival that attracts artists, collectors and art enthusiasts globally, it showcases a diverse array of artistic styles and mediums. Attendees can explore various artworks, interact with creators and immerse themselves in a vibrant cultural experience.

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

**Naples Artcrafters****Jan. 11 at 1600 Fleischmann Blvd., Naples**

Celebrating their 55th anniversary, Naples Artcrafters hosts monthly art shows, featuring a diverse range of original and handcrafted art by local artists who have undergone a rigorous jury process.

Dec. 14, Feb. 1, March 8 and April 12 at  
755 8th Ave. S, Naples

dusty.beck@gmail.com | naplesartcrafters.com

**Marco Island Center for the Arts' Art and Craft Fair****Jan. 25-26, March 22-23, April 12-13**

It features a wide variety of handmade crafts, fine art and creations from local and regional artists, providing attendees with an opportunity to shop and enjoy Marco Island's vibrant artistic community.

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

**Cars as Art****April 5**

Magnificent vintage cars, judged by professional artists rather than car experts, are a highlight of a must-attend event for car lovers in Southwest Florida, with a suggested donation of \$5 per person.

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

**Everglades Seafood Festival****Feb. 7-9**

The 55th annual festival offers live country music, carnival rides, and a wide array of seafood, including shrimp, fish, stone crab, and fried gator, alongside arts, crafts, and over 100 food and refreshment vendors.

102 Copeland Ave. N., Everglades City  
seafoodfestboard@gmail.com |  
evergladeseafoodfestival.org

**Naples St. Patrick's Day Parade****March 15**

Over 40 years ago, a group of Neapolitans started a St. Patrick's Day parade that has grown into the state's largest privately funded parade. It draws over 40,000 attendees annually to celebrate Irish culture and has donated over \$200,000 to local schools in the last five years.

Starts at the intersection of 3rd St. S and 10th Ave. S  
info@naplesparade.com | naplesparade.com

**Naples Flower Show****March 14-15**

The Naples Flower Show, the largest juried flower show in Southwest Florida, offers an array of floral designs, exotic plants, and more, in a collaboration between the Naples Garden Club and Naples Botanical Garden, complete with gardens, photography, and educational displays. Admission to the Flower Show is included with the standard entry fee to the Naples Botanical Garden.

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

**Collier Fair & Exposition****March 20-30**

This fair offers a mix of family-friendly entertainment, agricultural exhibits,



CHRIS TILLEY PHOTOGRAPHY



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## SIGNATURE EVENTS

carnival rides, games and live music. It celebrates the local community and agriculture with activities like 4-H competitions, animal exhibits and displays of the area's farming heritage.

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

## CHARLOTTE COUNTY

**Sarasota Fine Art Festival**

**Nov. 16-17, Jan. 11-12 and March 1-2**

The outdoor gallery will exhibit a wide variety of art forms, including paintings, sculptures, jewelry and ceramics. These pieces are crafted by skilled artists from local, regional and national backgrounds. Visitors can also commission custom artworks if they do not find an existing piece that meets their preferences within the gallery's diverse collection.

199 Bayfront Drive, Sarasota  
941-487-8061 | paragonfestivals.com

**Sarasota Seafood & Music Festival**

**Nov. 29 – Dec. 1, Jan. 10-12**

This event combines the enjoyment of fresh, diverse culinary options with the ambiance of live music across various genres, providing a comprehensive experience of relaxation and entertainment. It also features a marketplace for arts, crafts and specialty food items.

3000 Ringling Blvd., Sarasota  
941-487-8061 | paragonfestivals.com

**Sullivan Street Craft Festival**

**Nov. 30 and Dec. 1, Jan. 18-19, March 8-9**

Discover the nation's top crafters in the charming downtown of Punta Gorda, by the Peace River and the Gulf of Mexico. This beautiful location is considered the heartbeat of Charlotte County and a must-visit on Florida's West Coast.

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

**Punta Gorda Seafood & Music Festival**

**Jan. 17-19 and April 18-20**

Enjoy a weekend filled with delicious food options, including seafood, meat and vegetarian dishes, live music from regional artists and a marketplace offering

arts, crafts and specialty products, with free general admission to the event.

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

**Englewood Seafood & Music Festival**

**Jan. 31 – Feb. 2**

Experience a weekend of live music from Florida's top bands across genres alongside a diverse selection of seafood, meat and vegetarian dishes from local restaurants utilizing fresh, sustainable Florida Gulf Coast ingredients. A marketplace will also be filled with fine arts, crafts and food items.

348 W. Green St., Englewood  
941-487-8061 | paragonfestivals.com

**Charlotte County Fair**

**Jan. 31 - Feb. 9**

The Charlotte County Fair, established in 1989, is a vibrant showcase of education, agriculture and livestock, aimed at enriching the community through engaging fairs and expositions.

2333 El Jobean Road, Port Charlotte  
941-629-4252 | thecharlottecountyfair.com

**Babcock Ranch Seafood & Music Festival**

**Feb. 14-16**

The Babcock Ranch Seafood & Music Festival promises fresh seafood delicacies from local vendors, accompanied by a diverse lineup of live music from top local and regional bands. Attendees can also explore an arts and crafts marketplace for unique finds, making it a perfect event for community fun, delicious food and entertainment.

42850 Crescent Loop, Punta Gorda  
941-487-8061 | paragonfestivals.com

**Wellen Park Fine Art Festival**

**Feb. 15-16**

An outdoor gallery at Wellen Park, where you can discover many art forms ranging from paintings and sculptures to jewelry and ceramics, all crafted by gifted artisans from Florida and beyond. This festival offers a chance to admire and purchase unique art pieces and an opportunity to get artwork pieces commissioned.

19725 Wellen Park Blvd., Venice  
941-487-8061 | paragonfestivals.com



CHRIS TILLEY PHOTOGRAPHY

**Dearborn Street Seafood & Music Festival**

**Feb. 28 – March 2**

The Englewood weekend festival combines the enjoyment of fresh, local seafood, meat, and vegetarian dishes with live performances from Florida's top bands across genres like R&B, blues, jazz, and rock. It also features a marketplace offering arts, crafts and specialty food items.

325 West Dearborn St., Englewood  
941-487-8061 | paragonfestivals.com

**Annual Taste of Punta Gorda and Beyond**

**March 2**

A major culinary event features over 20 local restaurants presenting their signature dishes with live music, arts, crafts and a Kids' Zone included. Visitors can explore a variety of desserts, food products, and beverages across more than 60 booths.

100 Nesbit St., Punta Gorda  
TasteofPG2024@gmail.com | tasteofpuntagorda.org

**Peace River National Art Festival**

**March 15-16**

Experience artistic celebration along the Peace River in historic Punta Gorda, curated by the Visual Arts Center. Accomplished artists from across the nation will showcase their skills in diverse mediums, such as art glass, fiber arts, jewelry, leather goods, metalwork, oil paintings, photography, pottery, stone sculptures and watercolor.

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



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# SWFL BEACHES & PARKS

## LEE COUNTY

### Bonita Beach

Located between Fort Myers Beach and Bonita Springs, this 2.5-acre beachfront park offers a boardwalk, swimming area, gazebo and picnic shelters amidst sand dunes and coastal vegetation. With bus and trolley access and a \$2 per hour parking fee, it provides convenient beach and paddle craft access along with restroom facilities.

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

### Bowditch Point Park

Bowditch Point Regional Park, spanning 17 acres at Estero Island's northern tip, offers a mix of recreational spaces and a natural preserve, complete with tranquil bays, walking trails, and amenities for picnicking and beach activities. It's recognized for its accessibility and bird-watching opportunities.

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

### Bowman's Beach

This picturesque beach on Sanibel is renowned for shelling and unspoiled natural beauty, offering amenities such as grills, fishing, and hiking just a short walk from the parking area. Its pristine white sand stretches provide a serene escape for beachcombers and adventurers alike.

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

### Cayo Costa State Park

Cayo Costa Island is a secluded paradise accessible only by boat or kayak. It offers a natural retreat with 9 miles of pristine beaches for swimming, snorkeling and more. It's a wildlife haven where visitors can enjoy everything from birdwatching to spotting manatees and sea turtles. Access requires an online single-use day pass.

4 Nautical Miles West of Pine Island  
(26.685789, -82.245381)  
941-759-2007

### Estero Bay Preserve State Park

Estero Bay Preserve offers a chance to explore its natural wonders through rugged trails, perfect for hiking with necessary gear and is dog friendly. It

features diverse ecosystems accessible via the Estero River Scrub, with amenities like pavilions and restrooms to enhance your visit, offering activities such as bicycling, boating and wildlife viewing.

4940 Broadway W., Estero  
239-992-0311

### Fakahatchee Strand Preserve State Park

Fakahatchee Strand Preserve State Park offers a variety of natural landscapes for visitors to explore, including scenic boardwalks, canoe-accessible rivers, tranquil lakes, and extensive trails suitable for hiking and biking. The park is focused on conservation, providing opportunities for visitors to engage with the natural environment through activities such as hiking, wildlife viewing and water sports.

137 Coast Line Drive, Copeland  
239-961-1925

### Fort Myers Beach

Fort Myers Beach, located on Estero Island's southwest Florida coast, boasts 29 public beach accesses, including Newton Beach Park and Seven Seas Cottage, along with seven miles of sandy beaches, vibrant shops, and unique cultural spots, demonstrating remarkable resilience and recovery from one of the world's top five most catastrophic natural disasters.

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

### Gasparilla Island State Park

Gasparilla Island State Park features the historic Port Boca Grande Lighthouse, a unique public beacon since 1890, and offers activities like swimming, snorkeling, and fishing. Boca Grande Beach provides a serene escape with pristine shores and vibrant waters amid lush tropical flora.

880 Belcher Road, Boca Grande  
941-759-2007

### J.N. "Ding" Darling National Wildlife Refuge

J.N. "Ding" Darling National Wildlife



LEE COUNTY VISITOR & CONVENTION BUREAU

Refuge, renowned for its untouched mangrove ecosystems and spectacular migratory bird populations, offers a plethora of activities including biking, hiking and kayaking. Start your adventure at the free Visitor and Education Center to explore engaging exhibits before embarking on wildlife discovery through scenic trails or guided tours.

1 Wildlife Drive, Sanibel  
239-472-1100

### Koreshan State Park

Koreshan State Park reveals the intriguing story of 19th-century pioneers, the Koreshans, through restored historic buildings and lush natural surroundings in Fort Myers. The park offers a range of activities such as camping, canoeing and wildlife viewing, inviting visitors to explore a unique chapter of history and enjoy outdoor leisure.

3800 Corkscrew Road, Estero  
239-992-0311

### Lighthouse Beach Park

This is the site of a historic, functioning lighthouse. It is located on the eastern tip of Sanibel, wrapping around the bay side. The t-dock-fishing pier is here, and a boardwalk nature trail winds through native wetlands.

1 Periwinkle Way, Sanibel Island  
239-472-6397

### Lovers Key State Park

The park offers tram services to the beach and rental options for paddling gear

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and beach essentials. It also offers a range of activities like canoeing, hiking, and wildlife viewing. The park is equipped with amenities such as a boat ramp, gift shop and Discovery Center.

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

**Tarpon Bay Beach**

This popular beach near Bailey’s Grocery Store at the island’s center offers a lively atmosphere and easy access. It is just a short walk from a public 75-space parking lot, restrooms and showers. There are also walking and nature trails.

111 Tarpon Bay Road, Sanibel Island  
239-3472-6397

CHARLOTTE COUNTY

**Audubon-Pennington Nature Park**

Close to downtown Port Charlotte, Audubon-Pennington Nature Park offers a tranquil setting for picnicking, hiking and nature photography from sunrise to sunset. With trails like the Sandhill and Gator Hole, visitors can explore diverse landscapes and encounter Florida’s wildlife.

1153 Alton Road, Port Charlotte  
941-625-7529

**Charlotte Harbor Preserve State Park**

Charlotte Harbor Preserve State Park extends over 42,000 acres, guarding a vast 70-mile shoreline that spans across Charlotte and Lee counties. This area, skirting the scenic Charlotte Harbor, is ideal for numerous outdoor activities. Boating, canoeing and kayaking stand out as popular pursuits, inviting enthusiasts to explore the tranquil waters. Additionally, the park offers exceptional fishing opportunities, catering to anglers seeking both relaxation and the thrill of the catch.

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

**Don Pedro Island State Park**

Don Pedro Island State Park, located between Knight Island and Little Gasparilla Island on Florida’s Gulf Coast, offers a range of activities including boating, hiking and snorkeling on its secluded 1-mile white sandy beach and mangrove-lined bays. Accessible only by private boat

STATE AND NATIONAL PARKS

or ferry, the park features amenities such as a kayak launch, fishing dock and picnic shelters, alongside a 100-acre land base on the Cape Haze Peninsula.

8450 Placida Road, Placida  
941-759-2007

**Englewood Beach**

Spanning 12.67 acres, this beach is renowned for white sands, clear waters and spectacular sunsets, featuring a 900-foot boardwalk, viewing pavilions, sports facilities and playgrounds. It offers amenities like BBQ grills, basketball and volleyball courts, bird watching, fishing spots, picnic shelters, and restrooms, catering to visitors’ every need.

2100 N Beach Road, Englewood  
941-681-3742

**Gilchrist Park**

This waterfront park offers various amenities, including a large playground, sports courts, a fishing pier and picnic pavilions. It also hosts smaller events like weddings and concerts. The Bayfront Center located there offers YMCA programs and event rental opportunities.

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

**Peace River Preserve**

Peace River Preserve spans 450 acres, showcasing diverse ecosystems from scrubby flatwoods to mangrove swamps, and supports scrub-jay habitats as well as high marsh and mangrove communities. Management efforts like prescribed burns are in place to improve habitat quality and address environmental challenges.

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

**Port Charlotte Beach Park**

Established in 1972 and revitalized in 2012, this 16.08-acre beach park offers sandy shores, sheltered waters, and amenities like BBQ grills, sports courts, and pavilions for events. It is a perfect spot for weddings, picnics and various recreational activities. Its scenic beauty and year-round sunsets provide a serene backdrop for any gathering.

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

**Punta Gorda Nature Park**

The 19-acre Punta Gorda Nature Park, a unique urban oasis acquired in the 1990s, offers a serene escape with preserved areas for walking, bird watching and wildlife observation in the heart of Punta Gorda. Connected by bicycle and pedestrian pathways, it features amenities such as benches, an observation deck and picnic tables, among diverse habitats like palmetto forests and salt marshes.

1623 Aqui Esta Drive, Punta Gorda  
941-575-5050

COLLIER COUNTY

**Barefoot Beach**

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 for visitors. It is accessible from Bonita Beach Road and the preserve is bordered by Barefoot Beach Access to the north and Bonita Beach Park.

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

**Big Cypress National Preserve**

Big Cypress has been protecting natural landmarks since 1916, attracting over 318 million visitors yearly to connect with America’s essence. It collaborates with various stakeholders to preserve cultural heritage and natural treasures for future generations, offering activities like canoeing, hiking and tours.

**Nathaniel P. Reed Visitor Center**  
33000 Tamiami Trail East, Ochopee  
**Oasis Visitor Center**  
52105 Tamiami Trail East, Ochopee  
239-695-2000



Englewood Beach

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## STATE AND NATIONAL PARKS

**Clam Pass Beach**

Spanning 35 acres, Clam Pass Park offers a pristine coastal environment with a three-quarter-mile boardwalk leading to its beautiful sandy shores. This makes it ideal for those who appreciate the great outdoors and beach activities. The park is equipped with amenities such as beach wheelchairs, bike racks, showers, a complimentary tram service, educational nature walks, a life jacket borrowing service, an attended parking booth, onsite dining and restroom facilities.

465 Seagate Drive, Naples  
239-252-4000

**Collier-Seminole State Park**

Collier-Seminole State Park spans 7,271 acres, showcasing unique wildlife, royal palms, and vast mangrove swamps, alongside historical explorations like the Bay City Walking Dredge crucial for the Tamiami Trail Highway. It offers various activities such as camping, canoeing, hiking, and wildlife viewing, with special programs from December through March to deepen visitors' understanding of its natural and historical significance.

20200 Tamiami Trail East, Naples  
239-393-7306

**Delnor-Wiggins Pass State Park**

Delnor-Wiggins Pass State Park, a 166-acre tropical paradise with a mile-long stretch of pristine beach, has reopened for limited day use. Visitors can enjoy a variety of activities such as sunbathing, boating, fishing, and wildlife viewing in this coastal haven. The park offers amenities like beach wheelchairs, a beach shuttle from Conner Park due to limited parking and an accessible boat launch area into Turkey Bay.

1135 Gulfshore Drive, Naples  
239-409-0637

**Everglades National Park**

Everglades National Park offers a unique ecosystem that is home to several endangered species, including the manatee, American crocodile and Florida panther. Visitors can embark on a Ten Thousand Islands boat tour from Everglades City to explore the park's mangrove islands and potentially spot diverse wildlife.

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

**Freedom Park**

Spanning 50 acres, Freedom Park offers a tranquil retreat with a Conservation Collier portion, boardwalk and trails, alongside a memorial to 9/11 and war heroes, emphasizing habitat preservation. Open daily from 8 a.m. to dusk, it features amenities like free parking and restrooms, set amid freshwater marshes, native plants and diverse wildlife.

1515 Golden Gate Parkway, Naples  
239-252-4062

**Lowdermilk Park**

Lowdermilk Park features amenities such as parking (both metered and unmetered), a playground, picnic areas, volleyball courts, restrooms, showers, two gazebos available for rental and accessible beach paths. Located at the northern tip of Naples City Beach, it also offers a concession stand for snacks and refreshments.

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

**Nancy Payton Preserve**

The 71-acre Nancy Payton Preserve, home to 147 plant species and a space for endangered wildlife like Florida panthers and bobcats, focuses on habitat enhancement for the red-cockaded woodpecker and gopher tortoise among its pine flatwoods. This vital refuge in Collier County, featuring smooth hiking trails for wildlife viewing, plays a crucial role in safeguarding biodiversity.

1540 Blue Sage Drive, Naples  
239-252-2961

**Naples Beach & Pier**

Naples Municipal Beach and its iconic Naples Pier, renowned for their white sandy shores and 1,000-foot pier into the Gulf of Mexico, are popular attractions near downtown Naples. However, due to Hurricane Ian, visitors should be aware that while efforts are ongoing to repair significant damage to the Naples Pier and several beach accesses, some areas remain closed for safety.

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



Marco Island Sunset, Naples

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**Picayune Strand State Forest**

Picayune Strand State Forest in Naples is a restored 50,000-acre area critical to the Everglades' ecology. It offers improved water quality and diverse recreational activities like hiking, biking and horseback riding. Once a failed subdivision, it now protects wildlife habitats and supports outdoor adventures, including camping, fishing and seasonal hunting.

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

**Vanderbilt Beach**

Vanderbilt Beach Park, located in the desirable North Naples area near upscale hotels, offers white sandy beaches and amenities like beach wheelchairs, bike racks and a parking garage. To secure parking during the busy tourist season from January to March, it's recommended to arrive before 10 a.m.

100 Vanderbilt Beach Road, Naples  
239-252-4000

**South Marco Beach**

South Marco Beach provides a public parking lot on Swallow Avenue, leading to one of the island's two public beaches. The beach is equipped with 70 parking spaces and restroom access and requires a Beach Parking Permit. It is accessible from sunrise to sundown, and parking on the streets or swales in the South Beach area is not allowed.

930 S. Collier Blvd., Marco Island  
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# LOCAL FLAVOR

## EVERY BITE AND SIP: SAVOR THE SPIRIT OF SOUTHWEST FLORIDA

BY CARLIE ADMIRE

Carlie.admire@floridaweekly.com

Southwest Florida is celebrated for blending the vibrant essence of the citrus state while reeling in unique dining experiences. Residents and visitors can indulge in the region's charm, with local hotspots radiating tropical vibes and a relaxed ambiance. Mixologists of beloved eateries share their culinary secrets and narratives, showcasing the perfect pairing of entrees and cocktails that capture the area's "spirits" and signature "Local Flavor."

### Florida Boy Burger Co. 4480 Fowler St., Fort Myers

Florida Boy Burger Co. brings back the authentic flavors of old Florida straight from its swamp roots. It reels in the state's cattle legacy with high-stacked burgers and handcrafted grub. With a backyard setting atmosphere, the burger joint is decked out in true Florida fashion with gator skins and historical wood paneling from Moody Farms.

Roger Lolly, the owner of Florida Boy Burger, highlights his favorites: the Alligator Alley Burger and the classic beer, Pabst Blue Ribbon.

"There is something special about beer and burgers. Beer is the ultimate tenderizer and naturally enhances the flavor of your meal," said Lolly. "For us, nothing pairs better with the Alligator Alley than an ice-cold Pabst Blue Ribbon on a hot Florida day. Beer is just \$2."

Each burger is inspired by iconic locations across South Florida, such as The Alligator Alley. This burger features the hub's twist on the In-N-Out style, humorously noting that once you



COURTESY PHOTOS

venture deep into the alley, there's no easy way to escape.

"The Alligator Alley is our classic burger. It features two 4-oz beef patties, sautéed onions, lettuce, tomato, dill pickle, American cheese and our secret fancy sauce, all on a toasted bun," said Lolly.

Burgers can be served with upgraded and signature specialties of truffle fries, mac and cheese or fresh greens.

"What makes our beef patties special is that they are crafted from a 100 percent beef short rib blend. All our sauces are made in-house by our Chef Dominick Cioffi," said Lolly.

He continued, "Florida Boy Burger Co proudly salutes the history of Old Florida while Pabst Blue Ribbon is America personified. Put them together, and it's hard to beat."

### 5 O'clock Somewhere Bar & Grill at Compass Hotel

408 Tamiami Trail N, Naples

It is always "5 O'clock somewhere" when you navigate to the bar and grill at the Compass Hotel in Naples. Known for pouring "frozen concoctions" and "booze

in a blender," the spot serves vacations on a plate accompanied by live music and stunning views—all infused with the iconic Jimmy Buffett vibe.

"Nothing says 'Southwest Florida paradise' like sipping on a cold, refreshing cocktail at our poolside and tiki-style restaurant while enjoying fresh blackened grouper," said Cassie Pollio, bartender at 5 O'clock Somewhere Bar & Grill at Compass Hotel by Margaritaville.

Since its opening, Pollio has been known for her craft cocktails, which feature sultry flavors. Her favorite combination is the signature Blackened Grouper Sandwich paired with the Sunburn cocktail, which offers a delightful taste of harmony.

"These two favorites are perfect first mates and truly indicate Margaritaville-cool. The Grouper Sandwich is fresh, delicious and never overstated. The Sunburn perfectly complements the sandwich with its light, fruity flavor and citrus undertones," said Pollio.

The Blackened Grouper Sandwich is served with lettuce, tomato, red onion and tartar sauce. It can be ordered any way you want it: fried, grilled or

blackened. "I like it blackened because it highlights the freshness of the fish with a subtle touch of heat," said Pollio.

"The Sunburn is light and refreshing, with a splash of the tropics. It can be served on the rocks with 1800 Silver Tequila, Deep Eddy Lemon Vodka, strawberry puree and our house-made lemonade. "It's like sunshine in a cup!" said Pollio.

### M'Xuma Tacos – Mexican Grill

42091 Cypress Parkway,  
Babcock Ranch

M'Xuma Tacos is a family-owned Mexican grill offering a menu rich in authentic recipes and unique cocktails served in hand-painted mugs, all set against the backdrop of two fully stocked bars.

"My favorite drink is our Leslie Bonita Margarita because it's refreshing, and the elderflower liqueur gives it the perfect sweetness," said bartender Leo Ramirez.

The Leslie Bonita Margarita is the latest addition to the drink menu. It is garnished with edible flowers that enhance its visual appeal as much as its flavor. Elderberry flowers have a slightly sweet and earthy flavor with woody and dark fruit zest notes.

"My favorite entree to pair the drink with is our Tampiquena. The dish is flavorful, hearty and brimming with variety," said Ramirez. "At its center is a tender, juicy cut of grilled carne asada, perfectly seasoned with a smoky blend of spices. Surrounding it are vibrant sides: refried beans, fluffy Mexican rice and two semi-sweet red mole enchiladas."

He continued, "A side of creamy guacamole adds a cool contrast, while the warm enchi-



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ladas allow you to create your own savory bites. Each element of the dish brings bold, distinct flavors that come together to create a satisfying and genuine Mexican experience.”

**Old Vines**

**9105 Strada Place, Naples**

Old Vines Naples at the Mercato offers the perfect mix of fine dining and casual character in the heart of the town. It pours signature cocktails and wines and has happy hours and late-night specials.

Troy Davis, Bar Director of Old Vines, is a renowned mixologist, pairing the Duck Confit and Outlawed Orchards as his top culinary duo.

“The acidity of the apples in the cocktail helps cut through the mouthwatering richness of the duck. It cleanses the palate and encourages a fresh bite

full of flavor. Additionally, the smoky Mezcal and fall spice flavors complement the subtle heat from the mole sauce on the duck,” said Davis.

The Outlawed Orchards cocktail, topped with a dangerously delicious apple cider foam, is made with Illegal Mezcal, Pierre Ferrand 1840 cognac, house-made apple cider, lime and apple blossom bitters.

“Originally from New England, apple cider was always a staple in my house growing up. I knew I wanted to include that in our cocktail program, so I started Outlawed Orchards by making my own cider,” said Davis. “I begin with various apples, orange segments, cinnamon sticks, all-spice, clove and a dash of brown sugar. Then, all the ingredients are reduced to a slow simmer and strained, resulting in a rich, warm, fresh apple cider.”

Davis continued, “Cognac was an obvious choice due to its subtle notes of sweet apple, pear and everything ‘fall.’ Adding Mezcal offers more depth to the cocktail, complementing the rich cider flavors with a touch of smokiness. The cider foam adds more body, more fun and more flavor.”

Davis noted that the Duck Confit is a mixture of savory, spicy and subtle notes of sweetness. The duck leg is slowly cooked in duck fat, making it fall off the bone tender. It’s topped with dark chocolate mole, which brings a kick of spice and concentrated flavor, along with charred scallions and tart cherries for a well-balanced dish.

“When pairing cocktails with food, I always pay attention to the origin of the ingredients. Chef Brooke’s unique Duck Confit combines Mexican cui-

sine (mole) and French cuisine (Duck Confit) lines up perfectly with our Outlawed Orchards cocktail as it combines Mexico’s smoky Mezcal and France’s historic cognac,” said Davis. “The pairing celebrates two cultures famously known for their extraordinary cuisine.”

**JWB Grill at Margaritaville Resort**  
**1170 Estero Blvd., Fort Myers Beach**

Experience coastal cuisine on the water with local flavors and international favorites at the laid-back yet refined JWB Grill at Margaritaville, located on the shoreline of Fort Myers Beach.

Bartender and team member Brett Werner of the beach spot shares his favorites, including the Bone-in Ancho Chili Rubbed Pork Chop and drink forte, Ridin’ in the Slow Lane.

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“The ancho chili and chipotle flavors from the pork chop pair perfectly with the smoky hints from Elijah Craig bourbon. The cocktail and the pork chop make you want to slow down and truly appreciate the flavors and the company around you,” said Werner.

He continued, “The pork chop is served with truffle parmesan fingerling potatoes and green beans. This flavorful and impressive dish is a fan favorite at JWB Grill, and for good reason. The stunning Gulf views from the restaurant set the scene for enjoying this masterpiece of a meal.”

Ridin’ in the Slow Lane is crafted with Elijah Craig Bourbon, Zirbenz “Stone Pine,” Demerara syrup and splashes of Dashfire J Thomas Decante Bitters. The signature cocktail is garnished with filthy Luxardo

black cherries, trimmed orange peels and fresh rosemary. The cocktail is shaken over ice and served on a handcrafted ice ball.

“This duo inspires a laid-back enjoyment that might make you want to stay a little longer. Ridin’ in the Slow Lane lives up to its name. It’s a perfect excuse to sit back, relax and enjoy the finer things in life, like a Southwest Florida sunset from JWB Grill,” said Werner.

Werner added a dessert swill recommendation, the Espresso Martini, to finish the night and pairing.

“Our Espresso Martini has been dubbed ‘the best on the island’ by guests, and it’s been our top-selling cocktail since opening. Here is how we make it: Skyy Espresso Vodka, Kahlua, espresso and either white or dark chocolate liquor, depending on whether you like it more dark or

creamy. I shake it in a tin, strain it over the chilled glass, and sprinkle it with hand-ground espresso beans,” said Werner.

**Del Mar Naples**  
494 5th Ave. S, Naples

Del Mar Naples offers rotating, made-from-scratch menus that showcase the vibrant flavors of the Mediterranean, drawing inspiration from Greece, Spain, Turkey and Morocco.

Michael Persian has been a bartender for the elegant spot for the past three years and has recommended pairing the Beach Party cocktail with Red Snapper Ceviche.

“If you’re looking for a cool refreshment on a hot Southwest Florida day, this is the duo for you,” said Persian.

Persian explained, “The Beach Party is pineapple-infused Aperol, which is then topped with a sparkling rosé to give the cocktail the right amount of refreshment.”

The praised beachy cocktail is also served in the Del Mar’s lounge during Happy Hour, Monday through Friday between 4 and 6 p.m. With \$5 off the specialty drink.

The Red Snapper Ceviche is \$14 and featured on the main dinner menu, alongside the restaurant and bar’s acclaimed selection of chill seafood offerings.

“The Red Snapper Ceviche is the perfect combination of red snapper, lime juice, radish, pickled red onions and cilantro. It creates a tangy and refreshing dish,” said Persian.

Persian described the combination as “pair beautifully,” with the cocktail complementing and balancing the dish’s natural acidity created through the revitalizing orange segments.

**Ocean Prime**  
699 5th Avenue South, Naples

Ocean Prime, the recipient of the Open Table’s “Diner’s Choice of 2024” award, features an up-



Ocean Prime, Naples

COURTESY PHOTO

scale menu of steaks, seafood, and cocktails. The restaurant offers a main dining area, a relaxing lounge, a social bar and private and seasonal rooms overlooking the Sugden Theater on Naples’ lively Fifth Avenue.

Order this duo if you’re looking to have a memorable experience on 5th Ave with Naples’ favorite bartenders and the most exquisite fish dish of your life,” said bartender Tayla Kuehne.

Kuehne combines the Teriyaki Salmon entrée with the Pineapple Picante cocktail as the perfect pairing for an elegant night out that is full of vibrant flavors.

“The dish and cocktail pair well due to the complementary character of the spicy Serrano simple syrup and the Asian flavors of the teriyaki marinade, which emphasizes the juicy orange citrus notes of the cocktail. The fresh tart lemon juice of the cocktail cuts through the savory soy butter and decadent salmon,” said Kuehne.

The signature drink is crafted with pineapple-infused Don Julio Blanco tequila, fresh lemon juice, orange bitters and picante – a hot and spicy sauce blend.

“The Pineapple Picante is a slightly spicy, citrus-forward cocktail highlighted by a house-made intoxicating (literally and metaphorically) pineapple-infused tequila,” explained Kuehne.

She added, “The pineapple-infused tequila can be made

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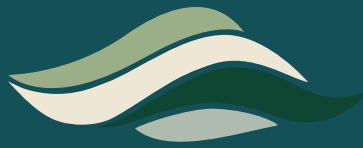
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LOCAL FLAVOR

by anyone, at home for any cocktail they like, by soaking one pineapple in one liter of tequila for 28 days.”

The Teriyaki Salmon, located in the seafood section of the menu, combines citrus hints with savory undertones.

“The dish is seared Teriyaki Salmon over sticky rice topped with Asian-inspired vegetables, finished with a rich, sweet soy butter sauce,” said Kuehne.

**Point 57 Kitchen & Cocktails**

**3522 Del Prado Blvd. S, Cape Coral**

Point 57 is a modern American restaurant that draws inspiration from Florida’s coastal cuisine. It offers a menu that is both casual and sophisticated, with made-from-scratch dishes. Specializing in steaks and seafood, the restaurant emphasizes

using fresh, local ingredients. Point 57 Kitchen & Cocktail is proud of its extensive craft drink offerings, featuring house-made infusions and a curated selection of wines and regional craft beers.

“I have been working at Point 57 for four years,” said Kayti Burns. “If you live in Cape Coral, then you probably have already had one of our local famous ‘House Old Fashions’ cocktails. Everyone needs to try it.”

“This cocktail has been around since the 1800s and has had many different variations and recipes. These vintage-type cocktails have become more present than ever, which I think is great. What sets our Old Fashioned apart from the others is the addition of apple-flavored brandy and black walnut bitters. This adds a subtle note of nutty and sweet to an already delicious cocktail,” said Burns.



COURTESY PHOTO

Burns paired the classic cocktail with the Crusted Grouper, noting that the apple brandy hints in the Old Fashion strikingly complement the fresh seafood.

“My favorite dish on our menu is our Crusted Grouper. It is my favorite because the grouper is fresh and so delicious. The abundance of fresh seafood in

this area is just one of the perks of living in Southwest Florida, our own little paradise,” said Burns.

The grouper is expertly seared in a pan before being finished in the oven, ensuring that all its juicy flavors are sealed in. It’s presented atop a bed of creamy shrimp risotto, then crowned with a crunchy apple slaw enhanced with lemon butter.

Burns added, “I believe an Old Fashioned can pair with any entrée, but this one with the apple brandy goes very well with my favorite grouper entrée. We also use hickory wood chips to smoke a glass skull and serve our House Old Fashioned in that skull to add a depth of flavor that is like no other.”

“Also, if you are not partial to smoked drinks, just ask for it without the smoke. It is just as delicious,” said Burns.

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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*

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*“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*

*“Sharon works with you consistently on the status of your progress in the sale of your home. She is professional and knowledgeable in all aspects of her job. I have used Sharon in the past, present and if a future sale happens I will use Sharon again. I have referred to many people and all have been happy with their outcome. She is also a fantastic person to know” –MS*



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# ARTFUL SIDE

## CONNECTING WITH THE ARTS OF SOUTHWEST FLORIDA

Discover the vibrant arts culture of Southwest Florida, from breathtaking galleries showcasing local talent to captivating performances. This artful community is pulsing with creativity, creating a space for education and imagination for people of all ages. Explore the dynamic arts scene that fosters collaboration and innovation. Whether you're an artist or an admirer, there's something for everyone to enjoy.

### Alliance for the Arts

Since the 1970s, the Alliance for the Arts has been a staple in the Fort Myers area, connecting the community through art and theater and opening a creative space for expression, imagination and beauty. Alliance's mission is to transform lives and improve the community through the arts, inspiring artists of all ages. For winter, spring and summer break, Alliance runs art camps featuring all mediums and projects for young artists to enjoy.

"Marian, Or the True Tale of Robin Hood" offers a fresh and gender-bending twist on the classic Robin Hood story, showing from Dec. 6-8, between 7:30 and 9:30 p.m. The Outdoor Bluegrass Concert Series welcomes the Flatlanders, one of North Florida's premier bluegrass and gospel bands, known for their tight harmonies and robust traditional sound, on Jan. 12 from 3 to 5 p.m. The Youth Theatre will captivate audiences with Disney PIXAR's "Finding Nemo KIDS" on Feb. 1-2 at 7:30 p.m., a 30-minute musical adaptation that promises enchantment for all ages. The ACMA Concert Series will be presenting The Honey Badgers and Fred Ball, bringing a sincere Americana sound to the stage on March 23 from 3 to 5 p.m. And not to be missed, "6 Guitars" by Chase Padgett on April 25 at 7:30 to 9:30 p.m. is a two-act, one-man show blending music and comedy, where Chase Padgett masterfully embodies six distinct guitar-playing characters, each representing their own music genre.

10091 McGregor Blvd., Fort Myers  
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Alliance for the Arts, Fort Myers

COURTESY PHOTO

### Artis—Naples

Artis—Naples, one of the premier destinations for visual and performing arts, aims to inspire, educate and entertain. In addition to the theatre, the Naples Philharmonic, a chamber orchestra and the Baker Museum, which showcases modern and contemporary art, are part of Artis—Naples. A vast array of programs are offered at Artis, including music, film, dance, comedy and exhibitions featuring talented artists.

The holiday season begins with "The Nutcracker" on Dec. 1, presented by the Naples Ballet and the Naples Philharmonic, featuring Tchaikovsky's enchanting music in performances at 2 and 7 p.m. Art lovers

will appreciate Becky Suss' "The Dutch House" exhibition, inspired by Ann Patchett's novel, which explores memory and perception through art until Jan. 5. The beloved musical "Mama Mia!" takes the stage from Feb. 4 to 9, promising a heartwarming tale of love, family and friendship. On March 9, the Naples Philharmonic Youth Jazz Orchestra, led by Brandon Robertson, will delight jazz enthusiasts with a selection of timeless tunes. Finally, "Revolution: The Music of the Beatles," from April 15 to 19, offers a unique rendition of the legendary band's hits, performed by the Naples Philharmonic Pops and six top vocalists and musicians.

5833 Pelican Bay Blvd., Naples  
239-597-1111 | artisnaples.org



"The Nutcracker" presented by the Naples Ballet

COURTESY PHOTO

### Arts Bonita

Arts Bonita offers programs to serve the educational and cultural needs of the community, focusing on visual and performing arts. Its mission is to create a space for artistic expression, education and appreciation for the arts. Arts Bonita offers both youth and adult classes for ceramics, dance, painting and drawing, glass, pottery and much more.

Upcoming events include the "Winter Serenade: Magic Holiday Memories" on Dec. 13 at 7:30 p.m. in Hinman Auditorium, featuring a blend of classic beauty,





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ARTFUL SIDE

jazzy sophistication and heart-warming American hits. Celebrating Broadway with Mark Sanders will take place on Jan. 3 at 7:30 p.m. in Moe Auditorium, where the music of Broadway comes alive. Love Letters, a Pulitzer Prize finalist, tells the story of lifelong correspondence between two childhood friends and will be performed on Feb. 14 from 6 to 9:30 p.m. in Moe Auditorium. Gulfshore Opera presents Rusalka, Dvořák’s enchanting take on the Little Mermaid fairy tale, on March 25 from 7 to 9 p.m. Finally, Marlow Rosado: Encore Fiesta Latin Season Highlights on April 26 from 7:30 to 9:30 p.m. will encapsulate the essence of each previous performance in one unforgettable night of Latin music extravaganza.

Performing Arts Center, 10150 Bonita Beach Road  
 Visual Arts Center, 26100 Old 41 Road  
 239-495-8989 | artcenterbonita.org



Celebrating Broadway with Mark Sanders, Arts Bonita, Jan. 3.

COURTESY PHOTO

BIG ARTS

BIG ARTS on Sanibel Island was created by and for the community and will endure forever as a warm and welcoming cultural center that celebrates the artist in all of us. Its principle remains to experience and celebrate the artist in everyone and to remind people of our shared humanity. BIG ARTS offers workshops and

programs for artists of all ages.

From now through Dec. 15, the Dunham Family Gallery will feature “Ghost Horizons: Poetry and Printmaking,” a collaborative exhibition between poet Chanda Jamieson and visual artist Andy Owen, exploring themes related to the waters of Southwest Florida. Concurrently, Sanibel artist Lacy McClary will present a mural and 3D installation in The West Gallery, inviting viewers to find beauty amidst brokenness, through Jan. 31.

The new year brings the Young Concert Artists on Tour on Jan. 21, showcasing classical music’s rising stars in a dynamic chamber ensemble performance. On Feb. 13, the Jupiter and Jasper Quartets will grace the stage with their award-winning artistry in a program of classic and contemporary octets. Finally, the Gulf Coast Symphony will perform on March



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## ARTFUL SIDE

7, offering a rich blend of dynamic performances and unique collaborations.

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

### Marco Island Center for the Arts

Founded in 1970, Marco Island Center for the Arts has brought art and culture to Marco for over 50 years, including art exhibitions, music, theater, comedy, film, adult art education, free children's workshops, artist and author talks and events. The center and theater aim to inspire artistic expression, advance education and appreciation of the arts.

A call to artists will be running from Dec. 3-5 from 10 a.m. to noon for the Festival of Trees. Additionally, Musical Interludes will feature *The Undercovers* on Jan. 29 at 5:30 p.m., offering an evening where Luke McMaster, Kevin Pauls and Joel Parisien reimagine timeless songs that have become the soundtrack of our lives. The exhibition "Transparency" will be running from Jan. 13 to Feb. 25, showcasing the work of Carol Wareing, Nan LaRosa, Conrad Williams, Giampaolo Curreri and Judi Heller. Neil Simon's classic comedy, "The Odd Couple," directed by Paula Keenan, will be exploring complicated friendships and reconciling differences from Feb. 5-23. Finally, "Four Old Broads" by Leslie Kimball, directed by Christi Lueck-Sadiq, adds a mix of mystery, suspense, and cruise ships to the lineup from April 2-13.

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

### Naples Art Institute

Naples Art Institute fosters creativity, curiosity and dialogue through contemporary art exhibitions, classes, workshops and art fairs. The institute aims to unite the community by championing inclusivity, pro-



Naples Art Institute

COURTESY PHOTOS

moting learning and enriching lives with art's transformative power. To honor the 25-year anniversary, the institution's exhibition features works by contemporary artists like James Rosenquist, Elsie Dorey Upham, self-taught artists and former students.

"An Adventure In The Arts: The Guild Hall Collection" will be on display from now through Jan. 2, showcasing highlights from Guild Hall's extensive permanent collection, one of the nation's first multidisciplinary cultural centers. The 29th Annual New Year's Art Fair, occurring on Jan. 4-5 in Cambier Park, will exhibit the works of over 250 professional artists from 30 states and abroad, across a wide variety of unique mediums. Following that, the 46th Annual National Art Fair, a competitive juried event, will take place from Feb. 21-23 in Cambier Park, featuring a fine arts and crafts show in 17 different categories. The 37th Annual Downtown Art Fair is scheduled for March 22-23 in Cambier Park, where attendees can explore the creations of over 200 exhibitors and vendors. Additionally, Art In The Park

will run from now through April, offering a series of juried art fairs known for their high-quality art, engaging artists and festive atmosphere.

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

### Visual Art Center

Built from the ground up by the community, the Visual Art Center offers open studios, on-site classes and three main exhibits featuring local art in downtown Punta Gorda. Artistic expression spans from drawing, painting, portraits, jewelry, glass, pottery, photography and sculpture. The center features a 12,000-square-foot facility with three galleries, six classrooms, a pottery studio, a glass studio, an art supply store and a gift gallery showcasing members' artwork.

Get ready to unleash your creativity at the Canvas & Cabernet Create & Sip Art Social on Dec. 4, where a fun evening awaits with wine and painting essentials provided. Tune into the "Partnership for the Arts Radio Talk Show" on Jan. 22 to hear Victor Gartner discuss global art. Don't miss "Dreamings - The Art of Aboriginal Australia" from Feb. 7 to April 4, showcasing an exquisite collection of Aboriginal art by Mary and Robert Harbour. Lastly, join the Fiber Arts Studio session on April 25 to work alongside fellow art enthusiasts on your project of choice.

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



Marco Island Center for the Arts gallery

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# CULTURAL VENUES

## LEE COUNTY

### Alliance for the Arts

This dynamic hub has been a cornerstone for visual and performing arts since the 1970s, providing various events, such as exhibitions, classes and theater productions.

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

### Arts Bonita

The Performing Arts Center, featuring the Hinman and Moe Auditoriums, hosts a variety of live performances and classes. Meanwhile, the Visual Arts Center offers an immersive experience with its galleries, studios and classes.

**Performing Arts Center** -  
10150 Bonita Beach Road, Bonita Springs  
**Visual Arts Center** -  
26100 Old 41 Road, Bonita Springs  
239-495-8989 | artcenterbonita.org

### Barbara B. Mann Performing Arts Hall

Located at FSW, Barbara B. Mann Performing Arts Hall boasts Southwest Florida's largest proscenium stage, seating 1,874 guests and hosting various events, including Broadway shows, concerts, dance performances and private events.

13350 FSW Parkway, Fort Myers  
239-481-4849 | bbmannpah.com

### The Belle Theatre

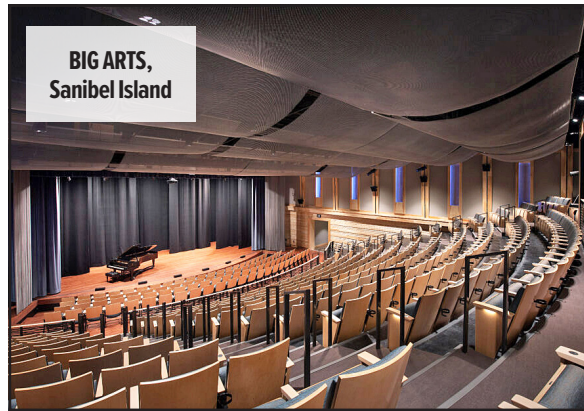
The Belle Theatre is dedicated to offering quality live performances and educational programs for various age groups, ranging from full-scale musicals to workshops and community events like open mic nights.

2708 Santa Barbara Blvd. #13, Cape Coral  
239-323-5533 | thebelletheatre.com

### BIG ARTS

BIG ARTS offers various entertainment and educational programs, including high-quality arts workshops, enlightening lectures by leading thinkers, and top-notch visual and performing arts presentations.

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



CHRISTENSEN HALL IMPRESSIONS PHOTOGRAPHY

### Bob Rauschenberg Gallery at FSW

A contemporary art gallery, named after the renowned artist Robert Rauschenberg, that showcases innovative exhibitions and provides cultural enrichment through talks, workshops and events.

8099 College Parkway, Fort Myers  
239-489-9313 | bobrauschenberggallery.com

### Bower School of Music & the Arts at FGCU

A central figure in FGCU campus culture, hosting over 150 events annually and equips students for success in arts careers. It also engages in unique collaborations blending academic fields, like the Crossroads of Art and Science Residency.

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

### Broadway Palm Dinner Theatre

For the past 30 years, Broadway Palm has entertained over 170,000 guests annually with a variety of performances, including eight main-stage musicals and over 200 community events. The venue features a 382-seat dinner theatre, an 86-seat black box theatre, and various amenities like a gift shop and art gallery.

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

### Caloosa Sound Amphitheater

An outdoor entertainment venue located in downtown Fort Myers that hosts concerts, festivals and events. It offers waterfront views of the Caloosahatchee River and modern facilities for live performances.

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

### Cultural Park Theater

Since its establishment in 1963 by Herb Strauss, Cultural Park Theatre has evolved from a small community theater into a premier cultural hub, offering a wide array of productions and educational programs.

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

### Florida Repertory Theatre

With 27 years of history in regional theatre, Florida Repertory Theatre attracts over 87,000 visitors annually from September to May. It showcases a variety of comedies, dramas and musicals at the historic Arcade Theatre in Fort Myers River District.

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

### Fort Myers Theatre

A performing arts venue offering musicals, plays, youth performances, homeschool shows and events like Theatre Drop-In Day, where kids can explore skits, musical numbers, costumes and theater games.

16120 San Carlos Blvd. #5, Fort Myers  
239-323-6570 | ftmyertheatre.com

### Harbour View Gallery

This artist-owned cooperative gallery highlights local talent through juried exhibitions and is managed by the artists themselves. Harbour View Gallery is a part of Cape Harbour, a lively waterfront area offering dining, shopping and leisure activities.

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

### Hertz Arena

A multi-purpose sports and entertainment venue, with seating capacity of up to 8,000, that hosts concerts, ice hockey games (home to the Florida Everblades), family shows and more.

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

### Laboratory Theater of Florida

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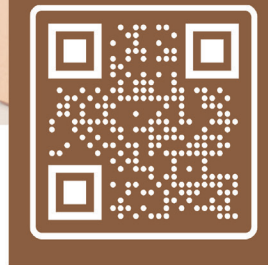


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CULTURAL VENUES

Wigglesworth, the Laboratory Theater of Florida has grown into a professional teaching theater known for its innovative plays and educational programs and for fostering numerous community partnerships.

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

**Lee County Civic Center Complex**

A versatile venue that hosts the Southwest Florida Ag Expo (formerly the Southwest Florida & Lee County Fair), equipped with an arena, exhibition halls and outdoor areas for concerts, trade shows, fairs, festivals, and various community events.

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

**Music & Arts Community Center**

Housed in the Unitarian Universalist Church of Fort Myers, this center functions as both a dynamic performance venue and the administrative hub for the Gulf Coast Symphony, which also brings its concerts and educational efforts to

various locations across Lee County.

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

**Players Circle Theater**

A professional black box venue offering Broadway-level entertainment founded by Southwest Florida theater veterans Carrie Lund Cacioppo and Robert Cacioppo, who have been pivotal in Lee County's theater scene for over three decades, including establishing the region's first professional theater and the nationally acclaimed Florida Repertory Theater.

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

**The Ranch Concert Hall & Saloon**

The Ranch combines a nightclub with a live music venue, featuring a 25,000 sq ft Western saloon, over 400 ft of bar, a custom 1,800 sq ft stage for top performers and a 4,500 square foot dance floor open for dancing on

Wednesdays, Fridays and Saturdays.

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

**Sidney & Berne Davis Art Center**

Housed in a historic building that was originally designed as a United States Post Office in the early 20th century, the Sidney & Berne Davis Art Center now serves as a venue for art exhibitions, concerts, film screenings, educational programs and other community events. On Wednesday, Thursday, and Friday nights, venture up



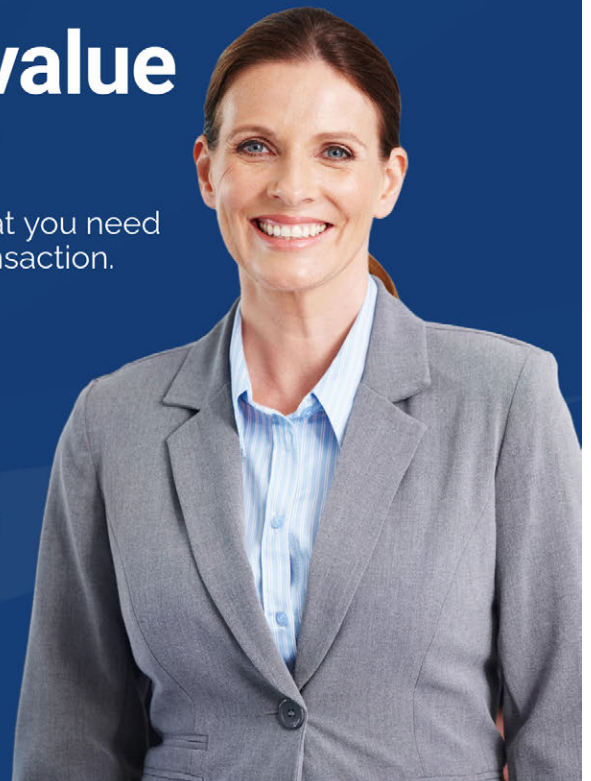
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CULTURAL VENUES

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239-333-1933 | sbdac.com

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

**Southwest Florida Symphony**

The Southwest Florida Symphony performs series of Masterworks concerts, spanning from the Baroque era to the 21st century, complemented by educational pre-concert lectures. Beyond these performances, the Symphony enriches the community with Pops Concerts, TinyConcerts chamber programs and a robust Youth Orchestra program.

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

**Tribby Arts Center**

Located in the Shell Point Retirement Community, the Tribby Arts Center is a 44,000-square-foot facility that includes a 400-seat auditorium, three art galleries and several studios for activities such as music and crafts. Additionally, there is the

CHARLOTTE COUNTY

**Charlotte Harbor Event & Conference Center**

The Charlotte Harbor Event and Conference Center, with 44,000 sq ft of space, hosts concerts, plays and other various events. It offers 7 flexible spaces



Charlotte Harbor Event & Conference Center

PUNTA GORDA/ENGLEWOOD BEACH VISITOR & CONVENTION BUREAU

**Charlotte Performing Arts Center**

The Charlotte Performing Arts Center, a state-of-the-art facility located within Charlotte High School, hosts school productions, community theater, concerts and nationally recognized shows.

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

**Charlotte Players**

Since 1961, the Charlotte Players, a community theatre in Charlotte County, has presented over 300 theatrical productions and numerous live shows. They also offer acting classes, run the “Kids Onstage” program and partner with the Dolly Parton Imagination Library to support the arts and community.

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



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## CULTURAL VENUES

**Englewood Art Center**

The Englewood Art Center, a branch of Ringling College of Art and Design, offers educational programs, exhibitions and other events. Located in south county Sarasota, it houses four galleries, multiple studios, including ceramics and digital media and a lending library.

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

**Florida Studio Theatre**

Established in 1973, Florida Studio Theatre in Downtown Sarasota features five small theatres and is led by Richard Hopkins. FST aims to make the arts accessible, attracting over 230,000 attendees yearly with mainstage productions, children's theatre and improv programs.

1241 North 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, offering a range of events from lectures to performances, 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 community theater dedicated to providing quality live performances in a range of genres, including drama, comedy and musicals. Established in 1987, it offers a platform for local talent and volunteers to participate in theatrical productions.

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

**Sarasota Opera**

The Sarasota Opera is renowned for its diverse repertoire of operatic works, staging performances at the historic Sarasota Opera House. Founded in 1960, it is celebrated for presenting operas in their original form and for its long-running Verdi Cycle, performing every work composed by Giuseppe Verdi.

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

**Sarasota Players**

The Sarasota Players offers a blend of live theatre and educational programs, fostering growth and creativity in performers of all ages and skills on Florida's Cultural Coast. With a commitment to accessibility and local talent, this non-professional theatre not only celebrates the arts but also builds a supportive environment for anyone looking to explore their potential on stage.

3501 South Tamiami Trail, Suite 1130,

Sarasota

941-365-2494 | theplayers.org

**Urbanite Theatre**

Urbanite Theatre is an intimate venue known for its bold, contemporary productions that tackle socially relevant themes. Founded in 2015, it focuses on innovative plays and emerging voices, offering a unique alternative to traditional theatre.

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

**Venice Theatre**

Founded in 1950, Venice Theatre offers a wide range of productions, including musicals, dramas and comedies, and hosts educational programs for all ages.

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

**Visual Arts Center**

The Visual Arts Center offers art classes, workshops, galleries and studios for various media. It is a comprehensive facility that includes an arts library and supply store, catering to all skill levels and ages.

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

**Westcoast Black Theatre Troop**

Founded in 1999, Westcoast Black Theatre Troop is a professional theater company that emphasizes African American arts, celebrating Black culture through a diverse array of performances like musicals, dramas, and comedies.

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



COURTESY PHOTO

## COLLIER COUNTY

**Artis—Naples**

Focusing on inspiration, education and entertainment, Artis—Naples provides a wide array of artistic and cultural programs. It is home to The Baker Museum, known for its art collections and exhibitions, and Hayes Hall, a contemporary performance venue that hosts concerts, Broadway shows, dance performances and more.

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

**Cambier Park Bandshell**

Cambier Park Bandshell is a venue for outdoor concerts, featuring performances by the Naples Big Band and Naples Concert Band, among others.

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

**Gulfshore Playhouse**

Gulfshore Playhouse produces professional theatre and provides educational opportunities. It aims to enrich the cultural landscape by focusing on high artistic standards and inclusion across diverse communities.

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

**Marco Island Center for the Arts**

The Marco Island Center for the Arts offers a broad range of art exhibitions, educational initiatives for all ages and various events. It acts as a vital resource for visual and performing artists and educators by providing opportunities for exhibitions, performances, and teaching, while also



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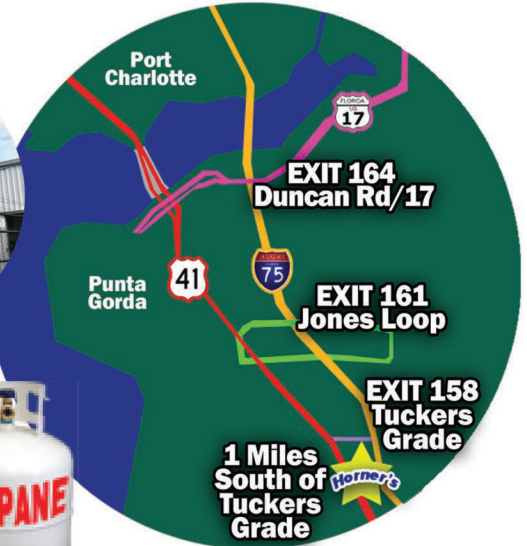
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239-394-4221 | marcoislandart.org

**Naples Art Institute**

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

**Naples Performing Arts Center**

The Naples Performing Arts Center offers a range of arts education programs in dance, drama and music. It aims to support personal development and provide opportunities for students from various backgrounds, including those with special needs and from underserved communities.

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

**The Naples Players**

Established in 1953, The Naples Players is a well-known community theater in Florida. It aims to enhance community connections by providing exceptional theater experiences. Through its performances, classes and outreach programs, TNP engages with more than 80,000 individuals each year.

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

**Norris Community Center**

The Norris Community Center features a versatile space, including an auditorium, dance studio, art gallery and more. It hosts a range of cultural and recreational activities, such as watercolor, dance, acting classes and special holiday events for families.

755 8th Ave. S., Naples  
239-213-3049 | naplesgov.com

**Seminole Casino Hotel Immokalee**

The Seminole Casino Hotel in Immokalee,

managed by the Seminole Tribe of Florida, offers a variety of gaming options, including table games and slots. It also features amenities such as a hotel, outdoor pool, fitness studio and event spaces. The hotel also hosts live entertainment, including concerts and comedy shows, catering to a variety of interests.

506 South 1st St., Immokalee  
239-658-1313 | casino.hardrock.com/Immokalee

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13275 Livingston Road, Naples  
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■ Punta Gorda MSA  
**\$370,325**  
Year-over-year change: -2.5 Percent

Source: Florida Realtors, floridarealtors.org/newsroom/market-data





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# HISTORIC DISTRICTS

ENDLESS NOSTALGIC ADVENTURES THROUGH TIME AND CULTURE

BY CHELLE KOSTER WALTON  
FLORIDA WEEKLY CORRESPONDENT

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



Downtown Naples

KATHLEEN ELIZABETH PHOTOGRAPHY

## 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, where today glamour shops sell jewelry, fashions, home accessories and other wares in historic buildings.

The neighborhoods, too, are known for their fashionable sidewalk restaurants and cultural venues. Famed downtown Naples has spread in recent years to include the Naples Design District. 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 luxury.

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## HISTORIC DISTRICTS

**Downtown Bonita Springs**

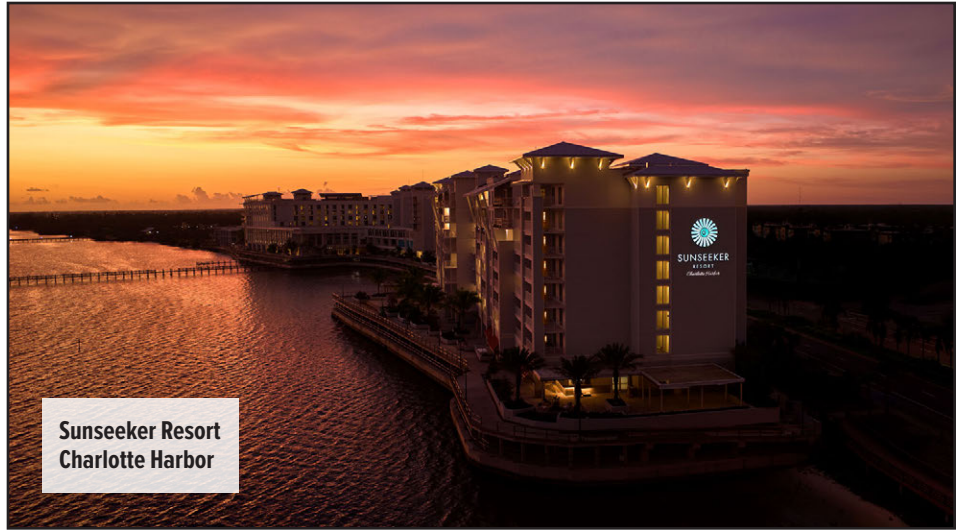
Old 41 Road has seen heydays come and go ever since its youthful tourism era. Today, its magnetism has returned, built on the very foundation of historic hotels and the nature attraction that brought the Everglades wilds to a main street in the 1930s, it's now undergoing a rejuvenation as Wonder Gardens.

Today, Shangri-La Hotel stands as a symbol of Bonita Springs' healthful reputation and 20s alluring 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 here Bonita Springs' deep roots at Riverside Park, devoted to olden days and new waves of festivity and vigor. 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.

**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



Sunseeker Resort  
Charlotte Harbor

COURTESY PHOTOS

an art center, a vaudeville house circa 1915, and a 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.

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

**Downtown Punta Gorda**

The wide and placid Peace River separates old from new in Charlotte County, where Punta Gorda dates to the 19th cen-

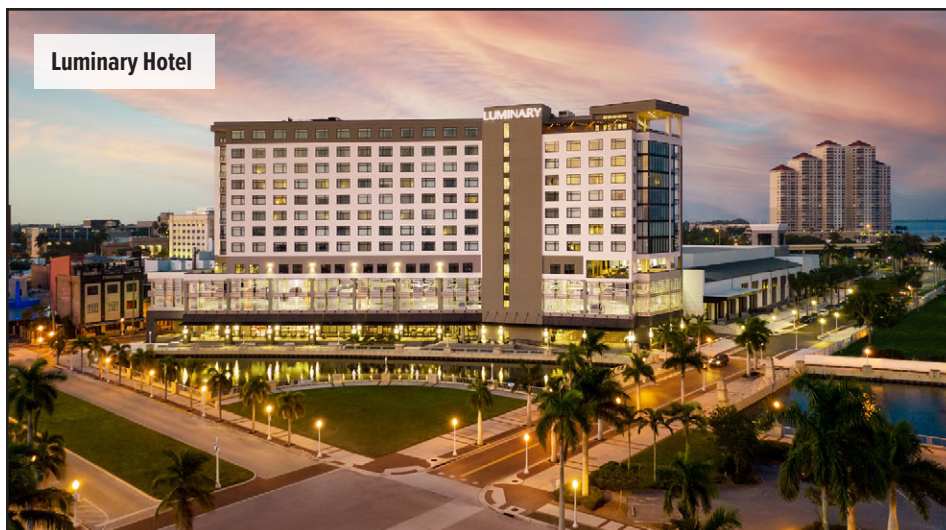
tury and tells its story through a series of vibrant murals. Marion Avenue, the pretty and picturesque main street, lines up eclectic shops and eateries like The Perfect Caper and Celtic Ray Public House, each with its unique charm. It overlooks the river and the county's newest attraction on the opposite shore – Sunseeker Resort Charlotte Harbor, a vital entertainment center for visitors and residents alike.

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 extensive bike trails along the river.

**Boca Grande**

The railroad, tarpon fishing and the grande dame Gasparilla Inn first brought captains of industry to tiny, island 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.



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# HURRICANE TIPS

## HOW TO ALWAYS BE PREPARED



BY MARLA OTTENSTEIN

marla@ProfessionalOrganizerFlorida.com

Living in Florida for the past 25 years, I've experienced way too many Category 4 and Category 5 hurricanes to count, including Hurricanes Mitch (1998), Ivan and Charley (2004), Wilma (2005), Irma (2017), Ian (2022) and Milton (2024). And that's not counting the smaller hurricanes and tropical storms that wreak havoc in between the big ones.

Hurricanes are unpredictable. You never know when one will change its course at the last minute and come right at you just when you breathe a sigh of relief. Take, for example, Hurricane Michael, which took a last-minute turn from Southwest Florida heading north to literally flatten Mexico Beach and parts of Panama City in 2018.

It's not a matter of if but when disaster will hit. Sadly, hurricanes aren't our worst enemy; it's our complacency and disregard for the inevitable that will probably harm us the most. In other words, if you're not smart, not realistic and not prepared, you'll have no one but yourself to blame if you're not organized when disaster hits.

Following is the only hurricane checklist you'll ever need. Yes, it's long. And yes, there are some items that might seem a bit eccentric, such as dry shampoo, but trust me, if you were here and experienced the physical devastation and mental distress brought on our beautiful community by the ravages of Hurricane Irma in September of 2017 and Hurricane Ian in September of 2022, you know first-hand that you can never be too organized or too prepared.

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27110 Jones Loop Rd  
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**941-575-6220**  
VenturaLakes.net

### HURRICANE TIPS

#### Standard essentials

- Frill-free landline phone and basic phone service (not cable)
- Regular (not rechargeable) batteries
- Manual can opener, scissors, sharp knife
- Wine key and bottle opener
- Heavy-duty hammer, double-sided screwdriver
- Portable grill w/plenty of propane or charcoal
- Disposable plates, napkins, cups, utensils
- Ice trays and pre-cut aluminum foil sheets
- Quart and gallon-sized Ziploc bags
- LED lanterns (amazon.com)
- Flashlights and headlamps (LED ones are best)
- Several battery-operated fans (handheld and others)
- Plastic tarps, duct tape, bungee cords



- Whistles
- Bleach
- Emergency drinking water system (Water-BOB.com)
- Silicone pot cover for tub drain
- Several gallon-size jugs to fill with water for flushing toilets
- One large watertight file box for important files
- One large watertight container for garbage
- Well-stocked first aid kit (replenish this annually)
- Bug repellent, insect bite ointment and sunscreen
- Matches and multi-purpose lighters
- Rubber boots, heavy-duty work gloves and face masks
- Large coolers with wheels and lots of freezer packs
- Automobile jumper cables
- Tape measure
- Portable mobile phone chargers/battery packs with cords
- Solar-powered mobile phone

- chargers/ battery packs with cords
- Unscented dry shampoo (you'll be glad you did)
- Metal, spill-proof, UL-approved "safety" gas cans
- Blankets, pillows and inflatable mattresses

- Always secure pets with harness and leash
- Microchip all pets and have current ID on collar
- Puppy "pee-pee" pads
- Collapsible pet cages (essential for evacuation, shelters and hotels)

#### Pet owners

- Keep pet food, medications and anti-anxiety pills stored in a watertight container (two-week supply)
- Copy all current vaccines/licenses and store in a container
- Secure animals in crates with toys and long-lasting rawhide bones during and after the storm

#### Optional

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



#### As far in advance as possible

- Review all insurance coverages
- Set up an online insurance account with a hotline number in your phone
- Inventory and photograph all personal property
- Create a master list of accounts and emergency numbers

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## HURRICANE TIPS

- Service/repair hurricane shutters
- CASH (small bills are best)
- Non-perishable food (seven days)
- Toilet paper and paper towels (seven days)
- 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 and doormats, etc.
- Purchase boxed milk, oranges, grapefruits and apples
- Turn on government alerts (mobile phone) and register with Alert Collier
- Set aside rubber boots and a rain jacket with a hood
- Fill lots of gallon-sized Ziploc 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 in the garage
- If you decide to evacuate, do not wait.

### Three days before the storm

- Wash all dirty laundry
- Change bed linens and clean home/ apartment



COURTESY PHOTO

- Balance bank statements
- Pay all credit card bills and estimated taxes
- Be sure everyone in your family carries detailed identification and medical information at all times
- 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 icemaker 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 to 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)
- Tell family and friends to limit calls/texts (set up group text)
- Clear all voicemail then all deleted voicemail messages from your mobile phone.
- Put hurricane supplies in one place (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

- 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 Ziploc bag and place next to your raincoat for quick retrieval
- Keep an extra set of car and house keys in a Ziploc bag
- Turn the TV off and unplug 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 water is clean
- Run two or three full icemaker 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

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Weekly editions covering: Fort Myers, Naples, Bonita Springs, Punta Gorda/ Port Charlotte and Palm Beach Gardens/ Jupiter. Monthly editions: Key West, Babcock Ranch Telegraph and Town Chronicle, covering Sarasota County. Bi-monthly edition: Ave Maria Sun.

■ **At Home** (monthly on the first Thursday) – Charlotte County's guide to everything about the home.

■ **Healthy Body** (monthly on the third Thursday) – Charlotte County's guide to your health.

■ **Health Trends featuring Best Doctors** (January) – A comprehensive guide to doctors and medical services in Southwest Florida.

■ **Destination SWFL** (March) – All about the region's communities, attractions, shopping and events to make a visit the best it can be. We also share some insider secrets to help visitors and new residents experience SWFL like a local.

■ **Arts Preview** (November and February) – Our definitive guide to what's coming up in theater, music, festivals and more.


■ **Florida Weekly's Best** (May) – Florida Weekly's intrepid writers and editors scour South Florida looking for the best of everything and bestow dozens of Flamingo awards.

■ **Pet Lovers** (July) – A salute to our furry companions.



■ **Businesses of Distinction** (September or October depending on market) – Our nod to the local business community.

■ **Southwest Florida Newcomers Guide** (November) – Everything you need to know to settle down in paradise. ■







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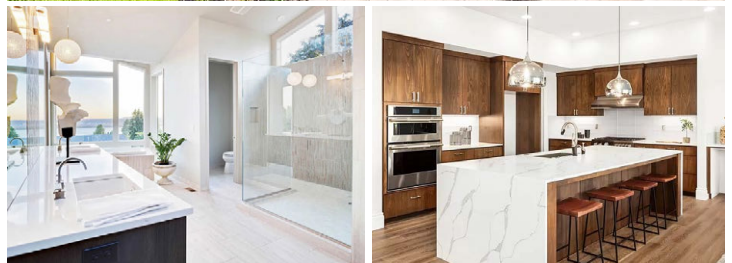
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# SWFL TOP 60 EMPLOYERS

NAME	EMPLOYEES	NAME	EMPLOYEES
1 Lee Memorial Health System	13,558	31 Millennium Physician Group	1,021
2 Lee County Public Schools	11,174	32 Truist Financial	1,019
3 Lee County Local Government	9,377	33 Hendry County Public Schools	989
4 Publix Super Market	9,362	34 South Seas Island Resort	980
5 Collier County Public Schools	5,810	35 Walsh Group	971
6 Collier County Local Government	5,045	36 Suncoast Credit Union	908
7 Arthrex	3,983	37 Pacific Tomato Growers	872
8 Chicco Fas Inc.	3,903	38 US Sugar	843
9 Walmart	3,689	39 Marriott International, Inc.	833
10 NCH Healthcare System	3,288	40 Subway	828
11 Charlotte County Local Government	2,655	41 Dillard's	826
12 Herc Rentals	2,400	42 Salus Care	811
13 Charlotte Country Public Schools	2,333	43 Bank of America	806
14 Amazon	2,200	44 Burger King	774
15 Gartner	2,100	45 Downing-Frye Realty Inc.	767
16 Gargiulo	2,082	46 Wells Fargo Bank	738
17 McDonald's	2,065	47 News-Press	730
18 Florida Gulf Coast University	1,778	48 7-Eleven	723
19 Home Depot	1,770	49 Hendry County Local Government	718
20 Walgreens	1,440	50 Heartland Health Care Center Fort Myers	707
21 Shell Point Retirement Community	1,401	51 Community Health Systems Inc.	700
22 Radiology Regional Center	1,377	52 Moorings Park	697
23 Bayfront Health	1,342	53 Lee County Electric Co-op	687
24 Florida SouthWestern State College	1,245	54 Family Health Centers of Southwest Florida	644
25 HCA Florida Fawcett Hospital	1,162	55 U-Haul	641
26 CVS Pharmacy	1,100	56 WCI Communities	633
27 Winn-Dixie	1,098	57 Fifth Third Bank	603
28 Hertz	1,073	58 Outback Steakhouse	602
29 Ace Hardware	1,048	59 Lowes Home Improvement	588
30 Hope Hospice	1,035	60 Bonita Bay Club	579
		61 Wendy's	579

SOURCE: RERI ANALYSIS OF DATA OBTAINED FROM BUREAU OF LABOR STATISTICS AND DATABASEUSA, OBTAINED THROUGH LIGHTCAST, FGCU.EDU/COB/RERI/RESOURCES/TOP-100

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## Alva

This rural, unincorporated, quiet town on the Caloosahatchee River is in Lee County, east of Fort Myers. Alva is known for its citrus groves, cattle, oak trees and woodland trails, which are ideal for horseback riding. Although many assume Alva is named after Thomas Alva Edison, an American inventor and businessman, the town was actually named after Peter Nelson, a sea captain who discovered small white flowers called alvas in the late 1800s. The quaint, modest town has preserved its charm by devoted residents who want to keep Alva a special place, full of nature, without any large condos or shopping centers. Alva continues to be just as beautiful as when Capt. Nelson ventured up the river, full of lush and vibrant vegetation.

## Ave Maria

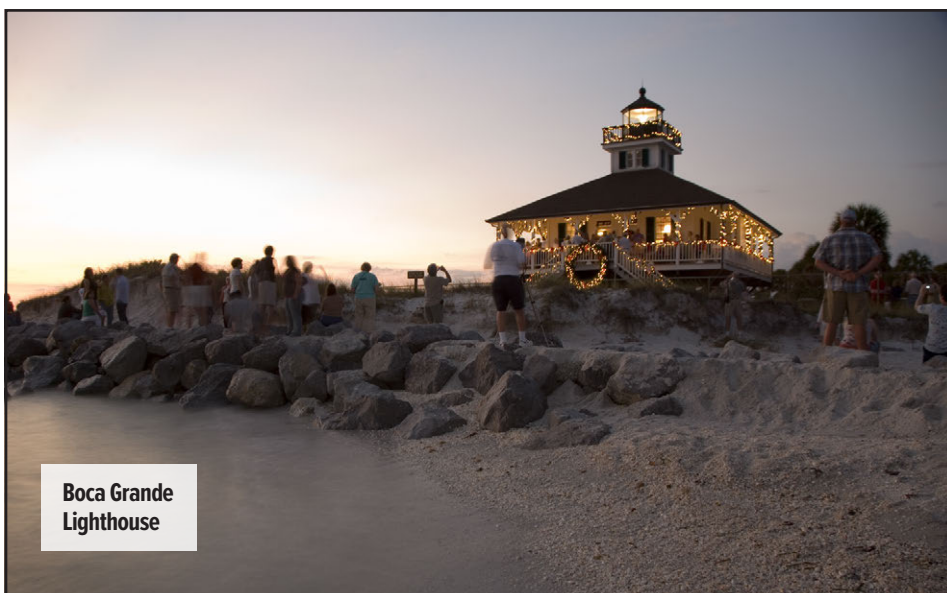
One of Southwest Florida's fastest-growing areas is the town of Ave Maria, about a half-hour drive east of Naples. Ave Maria was founded in 2005 by Ave Maria Development Company, Barron Collier Companies and Roman Catholic philanthropist Tom Monaghan, founder of Domino's Pizza. This unincorporated community officially opened in July 2007, and Ave Maria University welcomed students in August for the 2007-2008 school year. The Ave Maria Catholic Church is the focal point of this up-and-coming town as the distinctive steel structure and architecture were heavily influenced by the American architect Frank Lloyd Wright. With affordable housing, a good community and excellent education, Ave Maria is attracting many to move to this hidden treasure.



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**Babcock Ranch**

America's first solar-powered town, Babcock Ranch, is passionate about living a well-balanced life full of fun, wellness and environmental appreciation. The town, in southeastern Charlotte County and northeastern Lee County, is designed to aid residents in living their happiest, healthiest lives in its vast array of outdoor adventures in a walkable urban landscape. In addition to great education in the area within walking distance, Babcock Ranch plans to build trails to connect the neighborhoods. The social hub of this town is Founder's Square, with residents and visitors bustling about during community events, music and celebrations, enjoying a stroll through boutiques or grabbing a bite with friends at one of the eateries.



LEE COUNTY VISITOR & CONVENTION BUREAU

**Boca Grande**

This small residential community on Gasparilla Island was named "the preppiest place on earth" by The Wall Street Journal. Boca Grande, a beautiful

coastal town, oozes charm, class and wealth. The clear blue waters are perfect for fishing, shelling and snorkeling. A picturesque bike path stretches over six miles across the island and offers

a perfect way for visitors to immerse themselves in the Old Florida charm. One of the main attractions in Boca Grande is the grand Gasparilla Inn, built in 1911. The inn offers various activities

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to guests and residents, such as a pristine golf course, a relaxing spa and salon, boating and fishing excursions, a sparkly white beachfront and local restaurants. The inn is also a popular wedding venue with scenic views, exceptional service, and fine dining.

**Bonita Springs**

This town in southern Lee County is just 15 miles from Naples and is known for its pristine golf courses, open-air shopping and white sandy beaches. Lovers Key State Park is a popular destination loved by visitors and residents. It is home to breathtaking vegetation and wonderful wildlife, such as bald eagles, dolphins and manatees. The Center for the Arts Bonita Springs offers fun for all ages with various performances, festivals and art classes. The historic hotel, Shangri-La Springs, built in 1921, provides a full-service organic spa, beautiful gardens, and a highly sought-after venue for weddings and events. The Wonder Gardens is home to a diverse mix of rescued and rehabilitated wildlife,



10th Street, Naples

KATHLEEN ELIZABETH PHOTOGRAPHY

perfect for a family day learning about nature and animals native to Florida.

**Cape Coral**

In the late 1950s, two visionary Baltimore businessmen, brothers Leonard and Jack Rosen, founded Cape Coral, promoting the town as a “waterfront

wonderland.” Cape Coral, the largest city in Southwest Florida, has one of the world’s most extensive waterways, with more canals than Venice, Italy. The city offers many opportunities for all nature and water lovers, with more than 1,500 acres of parks great for hiking, camping, fishing and water activities. The city’s



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premier family adventure park, Gator Mike's Family Fun Park, offers thrilling excursions for all ages, such as go-cart tracks, miniature golf, batting cages and a zipline. Every Saturday in South Cape, local vendors are featured in the farmer's market, offering everything from fresh produce to baked goods.

**Englewood**

Founded in 1896 by three brothers from Illinois, Englewood became one of the first winter resorts in Florida known for its excellent fishing, hunting and aquatic activities. This classic beach town straddles two counties, Charlotte and Sarasota, and is home to 11 picturesque golf courses. Englewood also offers many notable artistic events, such as live theatre, musical performances and museums. Manasota Key has four breathtaking beaches that dwell in this artsy town. All waterways and beaches are protected, ensuring visitors enjoy the beauty of sparkling white sands and the Gulf of Mexico in these natural

habitats all year round. From kayaking to enjoying the theatre, there is much to do in this unique beachfront community.

**Estero**

Before major developers and communities swarmed to inhabit Estero, this unincorporated village in Lee County was previously occupied by the Koreshans. The religious cult held many beliefs that are no longer practiced today. However, their history remains in the Koreshan State Park, where visitors can tour the grounds and learn about communal utopia. Estero, back in the day, was a hotspot for citrus farming and fishing. This town, nestled between Naples and Fort Myers, has abundant outlet stores at Miromar Outlets, 140 retailers and eateries at Coconut Point and an impressive stadium to catch a hockey game at Hertz Arena. Whether visitors fish, explore state parks or enjoy the arts, Estero has much to offer for everyone.

**Fort Myers**

Fort Myers has long been a desired

location for communities from the Calusa to the Seminole Indians. With excellent visibility and access to the beachfront, it's understandable why the U.S. Army chose it for a military fort twice. With a population of 349, Fort Myers was incorporated in 1885, later becoming the county seat of Lee County two years later. Along the Caloosahatchee River, the River District is speckled with architectural gems such as the Sidney & Berne Davis Art Center, the Burroughs Home and the Lee County Courthouse. The city's diverse art scene includes the Florida Repertory Theatre, the Broadway Palm Dinner Theatre, the Barbara B. Mann Performing Arts Hall and the Laboratory Theater of Florida. Fort Myers also hosts the Boston Red Sox and Minnesota Twins during spring training.

**Fort Myers Beach**

Located on Estero Island, Fort Myers Beach is known for its seven miles of white sandy beaches and waterfront resorts full of island adventures for friends and family. Its fresh coastal cuisine boasts a vibrant fishing



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community. Visitors can enjoy the water by seeing dolphins and other wildlife native to Florida, sightseeing or sunset cruises. Fort Myers Beach stands resilient as this beloved beach community rallied to rebuild, restore and recover its precious gem after Hurricane Ian. Long before the first Europeans reached the area in the 1500s, the native Calusa resided on the island. Remains of the Calusa culture can be found at the Mound House, an early 20th-century cottage built atop one of the Calusa mounds with an active archeological dig site.

**Immokalee**

In the northwest corner of Collier County is the town of Immokalee, meaning “my home” in the Seminole language. With a thriving agricultural industry, Immokalee produces 90% of the nation’s winter tomatoes along with other crops such as cucumbers, bell peppers and citrus. Immokalee has abundant wildlife in the many open acres of natural habitats. The Seminole Casino and Hotel is owned and operated by the Seminole Tribe of Florida, which also has



LEE COUNTY VISITOR & CONVENTION BUREAU

various other casinos across South Florida. The casino offers multiple fun activities for visitors, such as trying the local Seminole cuisine and classic games like poker and

blackjack, along with performances and music concerts. For history lovers, visitors can learn tales of how Immokalee came to be at the Pioneer Museum.

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**Lehigh Acres**

Similar to Cape Coral, Lehigh Acres was created by visionary Northern businessmen from Chicago in the 1950s. As one of Florida's most prominent residential communities, Lehigh Acres offers affordable housing within close proximity to major cities such as Naples and Fort Myers. Lehigh Acres remains a census-designated place, with around 124,000 residents calling this quaint, vibrant place their home. Many family-friendly activities are available to visitors, such as exploring parks and preserves, scenic golfing at Westminster Golf Club and aquatic activities. Visitors and residents can also discover and view wildlife at Hickey Creek Wildlife and Environmental Area and Frank Mann Preserve. Aquatic adventures can be found at the Caloosahatchee River, accessible through the Alva Boat Ramp.

**Marco Island**

Marco Island is the largest barrier island in the Ten Thousand Islands and a four-

hour boat ride from Key West to Fort Myers, the Key West Express. It is the perfect place for all sorts of water sports, from kayaking and standup paddleboarding to fishing and sailing. From superb hotels, such as the Olde Marco Island Inn & Suites, to the six miles of sparkling white beaches, Marco Island residents and visitors call this special gem paradise. Tigertail Beach is a popular destination for bird watching, shelling, tidal pool exploration and beautiful, serene sunsets. Visitors can learn about the history at the Marco Island Historical Museum, which features famous sculptures like the Key Marco Cat crafted by the Calusa people who originally inhabited the island.

**Naples**

It comes as no surprise that this tropical paradise, full of sunshine and miles of beautiful beachfront, was named the No.1 place to live by U.S. News & World Report this year. A city full of arts and culture, local fine dining cuisine, high-end shopping and luscious vegetation, Naples is beloved by all residents and visitors. Enjoy a delicious,

sweet treat from Kilwins, a popular local ice cream spot, while strolling down Fifth Avenue, which features many shops and local boutiques. Naples's historic Tin City is a hidden gem on Fifth Avenue South, showcasing local vendors on the waterfront. Lowdermilk Park and Clam Pass are premier beachfronts with soft white sand and blue waters that people and manatees can enjoy.

**Pine Island**

Surrounded by mangroves and coral rock, Pine Island is the largest island on the Gulf Coast of peninsular Florida. Known for its abundant tropical fruits such as mangos, papaya, and jackfruit, Pine Island is mainly agricultural land that offers the small-town feel of a classic Old Florida fishing village. Boating and water activities are popular in this area and visitors have the option to take a ferry and explore the beautiful beach at Cayo Costa State Park. Visitors can also learn more about the island's history and the Calusa Indians who first inhabited Pine Island 2,000 years ago at the Museum

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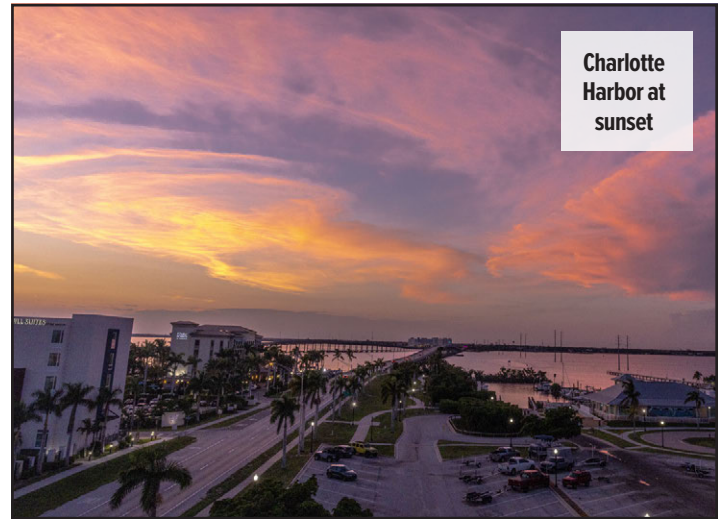
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Charlotte Harbor at sunset

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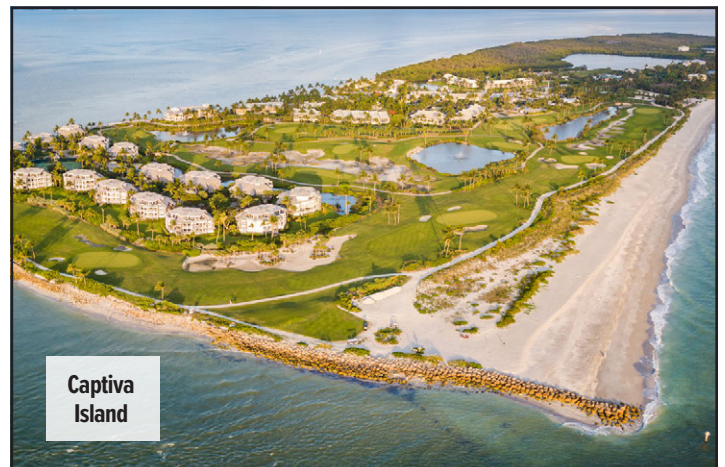
of Islands and Calusa Heritage Trail. Tarpon Lodge, a four-star restaurant, offers exquisite fine dining featuring local cuisine and wine-tasting events.

### Port Charlotte

This small coastal community is nestled along the southwest coast, where Peace River joins with Charlotte Harbor. Home to 165 miles of man-made waterways, Port Charlotte is popular for its vast recreational activities, such as boating, fishing, sailing, kayaking and many more. Visitors can rent jet skis for a fun day on the water or relax and see the dolphins and manatees in the harbor. Visitors and residents can hike and explore wildlife at Tippecanoe Environmental Park, a 380-acre preserve. Local eateries feature the coastal community's fishing with a catch of the day at Brother's Fish House or seafood boils at Captain Crab Seafood. Baseball fans can visit Charlotte Sports Park to see the Tampa Bay Rays during spring training.

### Punta Gorda

Along where the Peace River meets Charlotte Harbor, Punta Gorda remains a place to embrace the Old Florida charm. Just 30 minutes from Fort Myers, Punta Gorda is full of freshwater and saltwater adventures, including prime fishing



Captiva Island

COURTESY PHOTO

SWFL COMMUNITIES

of largemouth bass, grouper and tarpon. Visitors can stroll the 2.5-mile Harborwalk, taking in the beautiful views of the Charlotte Harbor shoreline leading to Fisherman's Village, where visitors and residents enjoy coastal cuisine, local shops and boutiques and stunning scenery. Beauty, art and culture are abundant in Punta Gorda, with destinations such as Peace River Botanical & Sculpture Gardens, Iguanaland and Octagon Wildlife Sanctuary. Charlotte Harbor Environmental Center is a great opportunity to learn about the wildlife and ecosystems in Punta Gorda.

**Sanibel-Captiva**

Awarded for having the best shelling beach in Florida, Sanibel-Captiva Island is a wonderful gem of the Gulf of Mexico with abundant wildlife, sparkling white sandy beaches and 25 miles of picturesque bike paths. In a place where Key lime pie is served at many restaurants, this secluded hideaway has much to offer, such as the Lighthouse Park Beach, the Bailey-Matthews Shell Museum and the Bubble Room, which are known for their memorable dining experiences. Visitors and residents have various aquatic activities to choose from for a fun day in the sun, like paddleboarding, snorkeling and kayaking. Avid birdwatchers can see over 245 species at the "Ding" Darling National Wildlife Refuge and many other animals native to the area.

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# SWFL SPORTS

## THE EVOLVING LANDSCAPE OF PROFESSIONAL TEAMS AND TOURNAMENTS

BY GLENN MILLER

Florida Weekly Correspondent

The landscape of professional sports in Southwest Florida has been marked by pivotal milestones, notably in the years 1925 and 2025.

Tracing back to 1925, the region made headlines when it became the spring training ground for the Philadelphia A's, a Major League Baseball team, at Terry Park in Fort Myers.

Fast forward a century, in 2025, the area once again steps into the spotlight with the debut season of FC Naples in the USL League One, making the Para-



dise Coast Sports Complex in Naples its esteemed home.

FC Naples is in its formative stages. Open tryouts in early September attracted 60 job candidates from around Florida and beyond, eager to show they have what it takes.

The season begins in March when baseball's Grapefruit League season will be in full swing.

Unlike spring training games, which are tune-ups for the real thing, FC Naples and its opponents will be playing for real for slots in the USL playoffs.

For now, FC Naples staff and coaches have been preparing for the inaugural season. A two-day fan fest was held in September.

The open tryout was a significant step



Paradise Stadium

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in turning FC Naples from concept to reality. It was the first time balls were kicked under the FC Naples banner on the home pitch. FC Naples CEO Roberto Moreno liked the energy he witnessed.



MORENO

“We saw the passion and the work ethic from all the players throughout the tryouts,” Moreno said.

As in all pro sports, many have the dream, but few have the talent. FC Naples will carry a roster of 23 and only 18 will be active on game days.

Another open tryout is slated and then a more select tryout near the end of the year is scheduled. That will be an invitation-only event. The best from that group will be invited to a pre-season camp.

“We have a database of over 200 players,” FC Naples coach Matt Poland said.

Moreno enjoyed the atmosphere of the fan fest.



Matt Poland, FC Naples coach

COURTESY PHOTOS

“It was great to see people of all ages, all walks of life just coming out to have a good time,” Moreno said.

The good times will continue to roll into 2025.

FC Naples is in League One of the USL. It is one of six new clubs in the division, going into the league with teams such as the Portland (Maine) Heart of Pines, Santa Barbara Sky FC and Westchester SC.

Although the schedule has not been announced, Moreno and his staff on the club’s business side of the club have been preparing. They held a fan fest and fans selected seats in the 5,000-seat stadium. At the fan fest, the beer garden was open for the first time and FC Naples Blond Ale was available.

Moreno said more than 1,000 season tickets had been sold since late September.

The Southwest Florida sports landscape is as diverse as its population involving all sorts of sports. That diversity now includes pro soccer.

The pro sports landscape includes but is not limited to soccer, baseball, hockey, golf and pickleball. Pickleball didn’t exist in 1925 but is huge in 2024.

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**The Pros**

Southwest Florida is the spring training home of four Major League Baseball franchises.

The Boston Red Sox are at JetBlue Park and the Minnesota Twins are at Hammond Stadium. Both facilities are in Lee County off I-75's Exit 131, 30 miles north of the exit for FC Naples and the Paradise Coast Sports Complex.

The Tampa Bay Rays call the Charlotte Sports Park their spring home and a short drive away is CoolToday Park in North Port, the spring home of the Atlanta Braves.

Hertz Arena is located adjacent to I-75 in Lee County and is the home of the Florida Everblades of the ECHL. The Everblades won their third consecutive Kelly Cup earlier this year. In Game 5 of the finals, they beat the Kansas City Mavericks 4-3 in overtime before a sellout crowd of 7,910. It was the Everblades' 18th sellout of the season.

Although Pickleball is still relatively

young, it is also clearly an economic force. The 2025 Minto U.S. Open Pickleball Championships will be held from April 26 to May 3 at East Naples Community Park. It's been held there since 2016 and generates an estimated \$14 million in economic benefits for Collier County.

Earlier in the year, the Chubb Classic was played in Collier County. The 2025 stop on the PGA Tour Championship calendar is scheduled for Feb. 10-16 at the Tiburon Golf Club in Naples. Winners of past events include names familiar to even the most casual of golf fans - Bernhard Langer, Fred Couples and Craig Stadler.

Southwest Florida is not the full-time home to big-time professional sports teams such as those found in Miami and Fort Lauderdale and the Tampa Bay Area. Those regions, though, are a short drive away.

The Miami Dolphins, Miami Heat, Miami Marlins, Florida Panthers and Inter Miami CF are roughly a couple hours east on I-75. The Tampa Bay Rays,

Bucs and Lightning are about two hours to the north on I-75.

**The Colleges**

Florida Gulf Coast University is located between the Paradise Coast Sports Complex and the Fort Myers spring training venues.

The campus is 27 miles from the Paradise Coast Sports Complex and 8.6 miles from JetBlue Park.

FGCU does not have a football



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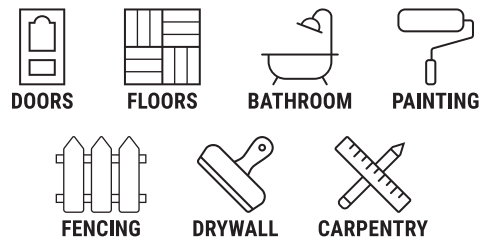


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program, but it offers a variety of sports including basketball, softball, baseball, soccer, tennis, swimming and golf.

The program's signature team is women's basketball, coached by Karl Smesko, the only coach the program has ever had.

The Eagles have won seven consecutive ASUN titles. Over those seasons, the Eagles have an overall record of 207-48 and 108-4 in conference play.

Since 2014, the Eagles have won 11 ASUN titles.

The most prominent former FGCU athlete is not a basketball player. That is likely pitcher Chris Sale of the Atlanta Braves. Sale was a first-round draft choice of the Chicago White Sox in 2010 out of FGCU.

The 6-foot-6 lefty enjoyed a banner 2024 season. By late September, as the regular season neared its conclusion, his record was 18-3 with a 2.38 earned run average, .857



FGCU Basketball  
LINWOOD FERGUSON

winning percentage and 225 strikeouts. All those statistics led the National League.

A short drive from FGCU, about 12 miles, is Florida SouthWestern State College. It is a juggernaut on the world of JUCO sports and has built its success since reviving the school's sports programs in 2016.

The softball team won national titles in 2021, 2022 and 2023.

The volleyball team is two-time national champions and in September was ranked

No. 1 in the nation. It compiled a 58-2 record over the 2022 and 2023 seasons.

FSW's baseball program has sent 22 players into the pros and pitcher Carlos Rodriguez debuted this past summer with the Milwaukee Brewers.

The FSW men's basketball team has sent 14 players into pro leagues around the world. Keon Ellis went on to play for the NBA's Sacramento Kings. The school's women's basketball program won five consecutive conference titles from 2017 to 2022.

FC Naples is new, but it has a great tradition of excellence on which to build.

What about those 1925 Philadelphia A's?

They became a juggernaut within a few years of moving to Fort Myers for spring training. The A's won the American League pennant in 1929, 1930 and 1931 and won the World Series the first two years of that run.



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88th Annual Shell Festival - March 6-8th 9 am - 3 pm.

50th Anniversary of Sanibel Holiday Tree Lighting - Join us after the tree lighting at 5 pm on Nov 30th, for light refreshments, cookies, crafts, and photos with Santa.

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# SWFL INSIDER

## SPREADING OUR WINGS OF RESILIENCE

BY CHELLE KOSTER WALTON

Florida Weekly Correspondent

Like the zebra longwing, which holds the honor of Florida's official butterfly, the state's lower left wing (aka Southwest Florida) has metamorphized in the past few years on its way to becoming a thing of beauty, a symbol of resilience. As coastal areas continue to reinvent themselves and shake off the impact of 2022's destructive Hurricane Ian and Milton in 2024, they introduce fascinating new facets to redefine their wild, natural, sunny cultural character.

### Culinary explosion

The most robust growth of the region reflects in its ever-compounding gustatory delights. The latest trend brings indoor-outdoor entertainment complexes where neighbors gather to eat, drink, dance and socialize. Celebration Park in Naples and Rooftop Riverside in Bonita Springs started the upswing of food truck dining coupled with bars and live music.

More recently, Backyard Social in Fort Myers brings its rendition with eight food trucks circling a 300-person capacity hall for drinking and playing games -- from cornhole to duckpin bowling. It attracts the student crowd from nearby Florida Gulf Coast University. Then came Bay Street Yard in downtown Fort Myers, with



Blossom & Brie

COURTESY PHOTOS

its stage and Jumbotron screen to keep the entertainment large and lively. Food trucks and repurposed shipping containers update the definition of food court in this outdoor space.



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In Bonita Springs, watch for the genesis of Sugarshack Downtown, an outgrowth of music-making that will bring regional and national acts to the stage. Its partnership with Maine's Brickyard Hollow brand of food and drink ensures another entirely fresh way to party day and night.

Out on the islands, fans cheer the return of longtime culinary institutions along with new-to-the-scene gems. Like old friends, Lighthouse Café, Gramma Dot's, Sanibel Café and The Original Cheeburger Cheeburger are back on Sanibel Island, showing off facelifts and, in the case of iconic Lighthouse Café, a new and bigger location. In a delicious game of musical chairs, Wickies Lighthouse Restaurant, a mash-up of the old Mad Hatter and Island Cow restaurants, has remastered the original Lighthouse Café location for an entirely delightful outcome.

Fort Myers Beach, too, welcomes back longtime favorites like Island's Pancake House and Snug Harbor Waterfront Restaurant. At the same time, Margaritaville Beach Resort injects new vital-



Margaritaville Fort Myers Beach Resort

COURTESY PHOTO

ity with Jimmy Buffett-inspired beach hangouts like the Lah De Dah Beach Bar and Grill and It's Five O'clock Somewhere. JWB Grill takes the tropical vibe up a notch with fine coastal cuisine and a beach overlook.

Yucatan Beachstand Bar & Grill once more juices up the lively vibe around FMB's Times Square, and Yucatan Waterfront Bar & Grill has made a Matlacha comeback on Pine Island.

Like Margaritaville, Sunseeker Char-

lotte Harbor resort has elevated the foodie cred in Port Charlotte with options ranging from a classy food court to sit-down topnotch restaurants such as Stretto, serving Coastal Italian, and Maury's steakhouse – all overlooking the expansive, cobalt blue beauty of the waterfront.

One of the best culinary surprises to make the scene this past year, Blossom & Brie opened a field-to-plate wonder on the grounds of the former Rosy Tomorrows Farm in North Fort Myers. The



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happy, specially tended farm animals are still there, plus the owners have added hydroponic produce to its field-grown repertoire.

**Playgrounds and getaways**

Of course, the huge news this year on the topic of Southwest Florida accommodations is Great Wolf Lodge, a 20-acre resort and waterpark complex east of south Naples. Newly opened this fall, it accepted only overnight reservations at first, but with plans to offer day passes in the future. Non-guests can purchase an activity pass for non-waterpark games and attractions and enjoy any of the resort's several dining outlets.

Elsewhere around the region, the beach is still the best place to stay and most beach resorts have returned in the Naples and Marco Island area. Fort Myers Beach and Sanibel Island beach accommodations are building back and building better. Fort Myers Beach stalwarts like Pink Shell Beach Resort & Marina and DiamondHead Beach Resort have opened



Great Wolf Lodge

JERRY SMITH

their doors and steadily upgraded vacation spots that have survived hurricanes and time. On Sanibel, Sundial Beach Resort & Spa is expected to accept overnight guests this month, and Casa Ybel Resort will open its accommodations by

next year. In the meantime, Sundial offers day passes for access to the beach, dining, pool, and other amenities.

**New in the neighborhoods**

The very concept of day passes is somewhat new to the region, perhaps a product of hurricane recovery that kept accommodations closed after certain resort facilities had reopened. Or perhaps the two new destination resorts – Margaritaville Beach Resort on Fort Myers Beach and Sunseeker Charlotte Harbor – ignited the trend with the availability of opportunities to enjoy exclusive amenities, such as an adult pool level and a beach club, without spending the night.



Cape Coral mural

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Other initiatives and developments have given new life to our neighborhoods. One especially colorful project brings the Lee County Visitor & Convention Bureau together with the Fort Myers Mural Society to create street art that defines each of the county's 10 communities. By spring 2025, the mural trail will be complete, a complement to Fort Myers' already rich mural culture and a tradition started decades ago in Punta Gorda.

At Babcock Ranch in the region's northern reaches, The Shoppes at Yellow Pine expands the young community's retail and commercial offerings with eateries specializing in pizza, Asian cuisine, grilled food and ice cream.

On Fort Myers Beach, the rebirth of Bayside Park brings the community together for a free concert series waterfront every Sunday afternoon. North Naples continues to exude youthful energy as it undergoes a makeover at Mercato shopping center that includes the addition of Alamo Draffthouse Cinema with food, drink, luxe theaters and even mini golf.

Events that define

The community of Sanibel Island has a lot to celebrate this season. In November, it threw a 13-month-long party cheering the 50th anniversary of the city's incorporation, a result of a grassroots movement to keep the island a sanctuary for nature and wildlife. A time capsule reveal, holiday tree lighting, Luminary Stroll, historical events, art shows and community festivals fill the calendar. Taste of the Islands even made its return in its original outdoor party format at City Hall.

Another welcome comeback festival, the American Sand Sculpting Championship brings artists, families and other festival-goers to Fort Myers Beach in November to compete, demonstrate and



Alamo Draffthouse Cinema

COURTESY PHOTO

simply admire masterpieces arising from granules on the beach.

Other signature annual festivals across the land include the Florida International Air Show in Punta Gorda, Edison Festival of Lights in Fort Myers, Collier County Fair & Exposition in Naples, and various seafood festivals, art fests and spring training competitions.

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## LEE COUNTY

### The Bailey-Matthews National Shell Museum

This museum remains the only accredited museum in the United States devoted to shells and mollusks. Their mission is to educate, inspire and build a community through the love of shells, animals and nature. Visitors are able to learn about shells, mollusks and their habitats through exhibits, educational programs and library services.

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

### Edison & Ford Winter Estates

The winter homes of Thomas A. Edison and Henry Ford, located along the Caloosahatchee River, stand as some of the greatest historical sites in Southwest Florida. Guests have the opportunity to

explore the homes, gardens and laboratory through guided tours.

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

### Everglades Wonder Gardens

The gardens are home to a diverse mix of rescued and rehabilitated wildlife, such as Florida alligators, flamingos, macaws, pythons, turtles and tortoises. It also features a lush botanical collection, providing a rich experience for all visitors. Serving as a cornerstone of Old Florida, this sanctuary seamlessly blends the narrative of the past with modern conservation efforts.

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

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

**Southern Fresh Farms**

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

**COLLIER COUNTY**

**The Baker Museum at Artis—Naples**

The museum focuses on modern and contemporary art. The museum annually hosts numerous traveling exhibitions to complement and enhance installations of works from their permanent collection and offers educational opportunities.

5833 Pelican Bay Blvd., Naples  
239-597-1111 | artisnaples.org

**Naples Botanical Garden**

The Botanical Garden strives to conserve tropical plants and habitats while cultivating beauty and inspiring the importance of protecting nature. Visitors can travel the tropical world, explore native Southwest Florida habitats and learn more at the daily educational programs.

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



Naples Botanical Garden

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

**Naples Zoo at Caribbean Gardens**

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



COURTESY PHOTO

**Naples Pier**

As a beloved Naples icon, this historic structure, initially established in 1888 for freight and passenger transportation, is undergoing renovation following the aftermath of Hurricane Ian. Stretching 1,000 feet into the Gulf of Mexico, it has been a cherished community landmark

for generations known for fishing, birdwatching, dolphin-spotting and scenic sunset views.

25 12th Ave. South, Naples  
239-213-1800 | naplesgov.com

**The Holocaust Museum & Education Center of Southwest Florida**

The museum's mission is to promote respect and understanding by teaching the history and lessons of the Holocaust. The museum teaches through artifacts that tell individual stories within the larger history of the Holocaust. Special events include touring exhibits and guest lecturers.

975 Imperial Golf Course Blvd., Naples  
239-263-9200 | HMCEC.org

**REVS Institute**

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

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800-500-5583 | babcockranchecotours.com

**Blanchard House Museum**

Established in 2004, the museum is an educational institution dedicated to

preserving, studying and displaying artifacts related to African American history and culture in Southwest Florida. The museum offers an educational scavenger hunt with clues and questions designed to enhance visitors' knowledge about certain places. Due to damages from Hurricane Ian, the museum is closed until further notice.

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

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941-575-5435 | checfloida.org



PUNTA GORDA/ENGLEWOOD BEACH VISITOR & CONVENTION BUREAU

**Iguanaland**

Founded in February 2022 by herpetologist and conservationist Ty Park, the center focuses on educating the public about the vital role of reptiles and amphibians, facilitating scientific research and professional training, and

raising funds for related conservation, education, and research initiatives.

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

**The James and Barbara Moore Observatory**

Visitors have the opportunity to observe celestial objects such as planets, stars, galaxies, nebulas and more. Guests are allowed into the observatory after sunset, enveloped in total darkness, to immerse themselves in the magical wonders of the cosmos.

Florida Southwestern State College  
941-637-3518 | sw.edu/charlotte/observatory

**The Military Heritage Museum**

This museum was built and operated by veterans who volunteer their time to educate visitors on the rich military history of the United States. Southwest Florida's most treasured military museum aims to promote understanding, respect and honor for all who serve and the sacrifices they've made.

900 W. Marion Ave., Punta Gorda  
941.575.9002 | militaryheritagemuseum.org

**Octagon Wildlife Sanctuary**

A nonprofit wildlife sanctuary that provides a home for abandoned and abused exotic wildlife as well as zoo-type animals. Visitors can pack a picnic and spend the day with the animals. High school students can earn credits for a multitude of classes and volunteer interns earn college credit hours.

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

**Redneck Mud Park**

The largest off-road mud camp in the Sunshine State has an oval racetrack, mudding trails, camping, RV parking and mud holes. Coming up on Nov. 8-10, Mud Park will host an event, Back to Our Roots, for three muddy days of fun with scavenger hunts, barrel races, miles of muddy trails, a sound competition and more.

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

# EXPLORE

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239-992-2591  
wondergardens.org

27180 Old 41 Rd.  
Bonita Springs, FL 34135

**Wonder GARDENS**

# HEALTH CARE

## 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 7th 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

### ShorePoint Health operates:

**ShorePoint Health Port Charlotte**  
2500 Harbour Blvd., Port Charlotte  
941-766-4122

**ShorePoint Health Punta Gorda**  
809 East Marion Ave., Punta Gorda  
941-639-3131

### HCA Florida Healthcare operates:

**HCA Florida Englewood Hospital**  
700 Medical Blvd., Englewood  
941-475-6571

**HCA Florida Fawcett Hospital**  
21298 Ocean Blvd., Port Charlotte  
941-629-1181

### Find a physician or caregiver

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# SWFL SHOPPING

## LEE COUNTY

### Bell Tower

This location offers a mix of shopping, including everyday essentials and boutique items, alongside a variety of dining and entertainment options in an open-air setting. It features a range of stores and restaurants, as well as venues for movies and live events, catering to diverse tastes and interests.

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

### Coconut Point

This picturesque outdoor shopping and dining destination offers a wide variety of over 140 stores and restaurants, catering to a range of tastes and preferences. Conveniently located between Naples and Fort Myers, it combines retail variety with



Coconut Point

LEE COUNTY VISITOR & CONVENTION BUREAU

scenic beauty, making it an ideal spot for both shopping and leisure activities.

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

### Edison Mall

Having been around for nearly 60 years, the Edison Mall, with big names like Macy's, JC Penney, and Dillard's, is more than just a place to shop. It's a community hotspot where you can enjoy

a variety of events, outdoor markets and unique activities.

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

### Gulf Coast Town Center

The outdoor mall near Florida Gulf Coast University provides a diverse shopping experience with major retailers such as Bass Pro Shops, Belk, and Costco. It also offers a wide array of dining options, from high-end lounges to casual bars. Additionally, the mall features a cinema, spa, outdoor play area, and regular events, catering to shoppers with a variety of interests.

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

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SWFL SHOPPING

of designer and name brands. This mall has over 140 retailers, dining options and entertainment activities for all ages. In addition to shopping, visitors can enjoy unique attractions such as a chocolate salon, a climbing FunWall and the educational STEMLAB.

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

**Periwinkle Place**

The Lee County Visitor & Convention Bureau selected Periwinkle Place as Sanibel’s top shopping destination. On Sanibel Island’s busiest thoroughfare, it has shops like the original Chico’s, the award-winning Blue Giraffe Restaurant and the Sanibel Day Spa. With new shops opening every month, visitors can frequently explore the ever-evolving selection and support local favorites.

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

**Promenade at Bonita Bay**

The Promenade at Bonita Bay is an open-air destination for shopping, dining and entertainment, hosting an array of retail shops, boutiques, salons and eateries. They also host a weekly Saturday farmer’s market.

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

CHARLOTTE COUNTY

**Fishermen’s Village**

This location on the Charlotte Harbor waterfront features a blend of over 30 shops, restaurants and services, along with



Promenade at Bonita Bay

LEE COUNTY VISITOR & CONVENTION BUREAU

a resort and marina, making it suitable for both quick visits and extended stays.

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

**Port Charlotte Town Center**

This destination serves as a major hub for shopping, dining and entertainment, catering to the communities of DeSoto, Charlotte and southern Sarasota Counties. With over 100 outlets including major retailers, a variety of dining options for all budgets, and entertainment facilities like a state-of-the-art cinema, it provides a comprehensive experience for visitors planning a short stop or a full day out.

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

COLLIER COUNTY

**Coastland Center**

Opened in 1976, Coastland Center has Macy’s, JCPenney, Dillard’s and over 130 shopping and dining options. It’s a family-friendly destination where kids can enjoy the carousel while adults explore a variety of shops and restaurants.

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

**Fifth Avenue**

Naples’ Fifth Avenue South combines glamour with a relaxed atmosphere, offering a blend of historic and modern architecture, local shopping, diverse

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SWFL SHOPPING

dining and entertainment, all within walking distance to the Gulf beaches.

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

**Mercato**

Anchored by Whole Foods Market and Silverspot Cinema, Mercato offers upscale shopping, restaurants, luxury condos and a year-round calendar of mostly free events like live music and festivals.

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

**The Village on Venetian Bay**

Located on the waterfront of Venetian Bay, this Naples destination features a collection of more than 45 luxury shops and waterside restaurants, designed to mirror the Mediterranean architecture of Venice.

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



Fifth Avenue

NAPLES, MARCO ISLAND, EVERGLADES CONVENTION & VISITORS BUREAU

**Third Street South**

Known as the birthplace of Naples and located just two blocks from the Naples Pier and Gulf beaches, Third Street South has a mixture of shops, dining and historical ambiance, characterized by its courtyards, antique European fountains and vibrant floral landscapes. This area, surrounded by the original beach cottages and houses of Old Naples, offers a shopping and dining experience amidst its picturesque setting.

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

**Tin City**

The waterfront shops at Tin City offer visitors over 30 unique boutiques to stroll through after grabbing a bite to eat at one of the two waterfront restaurants or enjoying a delicious cone from the ice cream parlor.

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

**Waterside Shops**

Waterside Shops offers a variety of shopping and dining options, featuring more than 60 luxury and lifestyle stores such as Gucci and Lululemon. The setting includes a tropical landscape with water features. Saks Fifth Avenue is one of the notable stores at the location, contributing to its reputation as a shopping destination on the Gulf Coast.

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

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