



2021 Accolades

[Best Places to Travel in February](#)

MSN & [Travel + Leisure](#)

January 2021

Fort Myers & Sanibel

Fort Myers and Sanibel are popular Gulf Coast destinations, and their beaches are known for their abundant seashells, attracting shell seekers who look for rare and beautiful specimens while they enjoy sea views and dolphin sightings.

[The Best US Destinations for Outdoor Sites and Attractions](#)

Travel Pulse & [MSN](#)

January 2021

Sanibel Island

The Sunshine State certainly isn't short on tourist-friendly places but Florida's Sanibel Island is not to be overlooked. A marquee destination for shelling, Sanibel and nearby Captiva Island provide countless serene beaches and outdoor attractions like the J.N. "Ding" Darling National Wildlife Refuge as well as plenty of photogenic sites like the historic Sanibel Lighthouse.

[25 Best Family-Friendly Beaches](#)

HGTV

March 2021

Sanibel Island

Bowman's Beach, Sanibel Island, Florida

With more than 25 miles of paved trails, Sanibel Island is a fantastic place to explore by bike. Look for warm waters and gentle surf, as well as more than 300 kinds of seashells. Enroll the kids in Sanibel Sea School to learn about marine conservation before hopping a ferry to Cayo Costa State Park. Families will especially love Bowman's Beach, which has a playground and magical sunsets.

[Forget Hawaii. Go to these 10 U.S. Islands Instead](#)

Fodor's Travel

March 2021

Sanibel Island

Visitors to Sanibel Island off the coast of Florida will find themselves surrounded by pristine, uncrowded beaches and lush tropical foliage. Sanibel is known as one of the most bike-friendly islands in America, where guests can pedal along 25 miles of trails for an active explorative experience, hitting a number of local nature preserves and historic landmarks. It's the "seashell capital of the world" due to its unique geography, which means locals and visitors alike will be seen "shelling" along the shores day and night. After embarking on a seaside adventure, wind down at the quaint [Castaways](#)



Cottages, which sits on the tranquil strip of land that separates the Gulf of Mexico from the Pine Island Sound and hosts guests in one, two, and three-bedroom cottages.

[Top Spring Fishing Spots in the US for 2021](#)

FishingBooker

March 2021

Fort Myers Beach

Where better start than Florida? The Sunshine State has some of the best fishing in the world, and Fort Myers Beach is a classic example of this. It all kicks off with Cobia, who cruise up the coast from late March, offering exciting angling and a delicious feast to anyone who hooks one. Speckled Trout are hot on their tails, followed by Permit to keep the bite strong well into summer. Then there's Fort Myers's trump card: Tarpon. The shallows around Fort Myers Beach and Sanibel are home to one of the largest Tarpon migrations in the world. Thousands of fish roll along the beach fronts each spring on their way to the Boca Grande Pass. They're usually followed by an army of anglers, looking to take on the mighty "Silver King" in the heart of his kingdom. The fishing here is outstanding, but it's far from the only thing to do. The area holds festivals celebrating everything from film and music to unicorns and mermaids in spring. You can enjoy delicious food at local eateries and pop-up events. Want to escape it all? Walk for miles along soft sandy beaches or take to the water to explore local wildlife preserves. There's something for everyone.

[15 Top Memorial Day Weekend Getaways](#)

U.S News & World Report

March 2021

Sanibel Island

A small, quiet island located off the southwest coast of Florida, [Sanibel Island](#) is a great spot to soak up some sun in late May's comfortable 80-degree temperatures. You'll likely encounter fewer crowds here than you would at other [beach destinations in the Sunshine State](#). Plus, Memorial Day falls right before hurricane season and the start of Sanibel's rainy season in June, so you'll probably experience dry, sunny weather. Spend the long weekend searching for shells along [Bowman's Beach](#), bird-watching at [J.N. Ding Darling National Wildlife Refuge](#) or settling in for a magnificent sunset on nearby [Captiva Island](#). Consider the Sundial Beach Resort & Spa for a fun-filled stay: Travelers can enjoy direct beach access, a sparkling pool and recreational activities like tennis and pickleball. Or, book an ocean-view condo or cozy beach house with a grill for more seclusion.

[The 10 Best Beach Towns in Florida \(Because You Need a Vacation\)](#)

PureWow

April 2021

Sanibel Island & Captiva



You haven't truly experienced the beauty of Florida until you've visited Sanibel and Captiva Islands. Just off the state's peninsula on the Gulf of Mexico, Sanibel is a perfect seaside vacation spot, replete with miles of crystal-clear waters for boating, fishing and snorkeling—plus thousands of patterned seashells waiting to be collected. With beaches spanning for more than 15 miles, Captiva Island is its own tropical paradise, too. Together, these islands also include more than 25 miles of beachy bike paths, 250 types of unique seashells and 0 (!!!) stoplights. Talk about Florida charm.

[The 10 Most Beautiful Places in Florida](#)

PureWow

May 2021

Sanibel Island

Just off the state's peninsula on the Gulf of Mexico, Sanibel is heaven on a beach. Beyond the miles of crystal-clear waters, there are thousands of patterned seashells waiting to be collected up and down the shoreline. If that isn't quintessential Florida beauty, we don't know what is.

[50 Cheap Tropical Vacations to Take This Year](#)

U.S. News & World Report, MSN

May 2021

Sanibel Island

This underrated [Florida destination](#) will give you a taste of the tropics without having to leave the country. All the money you'll save from international airfare can be put toward staying in one of [Sanibel Island's](#) many luxurious [hotels](#). Plus, with the island's greatest attractions outdoors (and free), you won't have to put aside a whole lot of coin for activities. Free attractions here include Bowman's Beach, Blind Pass Beach, the beaches of nearby Captiva Island and the Sanibel Lighthouse.

[The 20 Best East Coast Beaches from Maine to Florida](#)

PureWow, Yahoo Life, News Break

May 2021

Bowman's Beach, Sanibel Island, Florida

Bowman's Beach is way more than just a beautiful place to pass a few hours. It's one of the best destinations for collecting shells in the country. Beachcombers also flock to the shores of this Sanibel Island idyll in hopes of finding other seaside souvenirs such as coins, rings and other buried treasures.

[15 Cutest Seaside Towns in the South](#)

Country Living Magazine

May 2021

Sanibel Island

Serene and almost too picturesque to feel real, Sanibel Island is a small stretch of beach that allows you to get in touch with nature. The white sand beaches, crystal clear



water, and towering palm trees will make you feel like you're on a Caribbean island. There's so much to do, from seashell-hunting (go to Blind Pass Beach for the best ones) to exploring the rich eco-systems to shopping in the unique stores and galleries in town. Captiva Island is also close by, and is worth the drive for some unique dining experiences.

[The Most Charming Small Towns in Florida](#)

Travel + Leisure

May 2021

Sanibel Island

Sanibel, located on [Sanibel Island](#) in southwest Florida, is known for its picture-perfect Gulf beaches that are a sheller's paradise. And there's good reason for its reputation: It's one of the few islands that runs perpendicular to Florida's coastline (most run parallel), so the shells that wash ashore here are truly one of a kind. Less than 7,500 people call Sanibel home, but this quiet community has great beaches, a fishing pier, a 19th-century lighthouse, a national wildlife refuge, and a boardwalk winding through marshes, so visitors will find plenty to do during a relaxed getaway. Plus, its location on the western coast guarantees spectacular sunsets.

[18 Best Beaches in Florida for Fun in the Sun](#)

ThePlanetD

June 2021

Sanibel Island

Not only is Bowman's Beach one of the best beaches in Florida, but it is also often voted as one of the best beaches in the United States. Sanibel Island is located just off the coast of Fort Myers and sits in the Gulf of Mexico. The area is known for high-end resorts and seafood restaurants as well as historic architecture. It's a sheller's paradise and one of the most family-friendly areas in the state. The Sanibel Stoop is a term coined for all the people you're going to see hunched over searching for unique shells on Sanibel beaches. According to area shellers, you're going to find the most different variety of shells in the morning at low tide. Don't forget to visit the Lighthouse Beach Park while you're there and also check out one of the many wildlife refuges Sanibel Island.

[The 7 Best Beach Destinations in the U.S.](#)

Smarter Travel

July 2021

Fort Myers, Sanibel Island

Turquoise waters and brilliant white sand beaches are fringed by wild greenery, lending a tropical paradise feel to the beaches of [Fort Myers and Sanibel Island](#). This vacation spot feels miles away from the real world—on Sanibel, it's said that no building is taller than a palm tree, and any lights near the beach are blacked out for sea turtle nesting and stargazing—but this Florida location is just 20 minutes from the airport.



[8 of the Best Florida Island Escapes Perfect for your Next Staycation](#)

PureWow

July 2021

Sanibel Island & Captiva

Consider this a two-for-one deal: Just off the state's peninsula on the Gulf of Mexico, Sanibel is a perfect seaside vacation spot, with miles of crystal-clear waters for boating, fishing and snorkeling. With beaches spanning for more than 15 miles, Captiva Island is its own tropical paradise, too. Together, these islands also include more than 25 miles of beachy bike paths, 250 types of unique seashells and 0 (!!!) stoplights.

[10 Florida Beaches that are Great for Avoiding Crowds](#)

MSN

July 2021

Lovers Key State Park, Fort Myers

When it's not serving as the setting for some of Florida's most romantic beach weddings, Lovers Key is a great place for a solo kayak ride. Spared from becoming condos thanks to the hard work of concerned citizens who negotiated with one of the developers and some Lee County commissioners, this Gulf of Mexico barrier island offers 2.5 miles of white sand on a 1,600-acre park. It's a nature preserve with tidal lagoons and canals, welcoming manatees and roseate spoonbill birds. Note that from the main parking lot, you'll have to cross two canals, so it's not the shortest walk from car to beach blanket. We recommend packing light, including a few bucks for lunch at concessioner Hurricane Charley's, dishing up simple fare like cheeseburgers, nachos and ice cream.

[14 Best-Kept Secret Islands in Florida](#)

Trips to Discover

August 2021

Captiva, Cayo Costa, Gasparilla Island, Pine Island & Sanibel Island

Florida is well known for its unspoiled beach destinations, but many don't realize that it also has some pretty stunning islands to explore as well. Put your toes in the sand, let the salty breeze flow through your hair, and let the stress of the world fade away while relaxing on island time. No need to pack your passport for these destinations, save your money and visit one of these islands in Florida that will surely give you that exotic island escape you've been looking for.

[The Top 15 Islands in the Continental U.S.](#)

Travel + Leisure

September 2021

Sanibel & Captiva Islands

From coast to coast, the best islands in the Continental U.S. attract all types of travelers, but readers seem to have a soft spot for the eastern seaboard — especially



when it comes to Florida, which lays claim to five of the top islands. Still, there's a Midwestern haven that continues to draw fans from every corner of the country.

Every year for our World's Best Awards survey, T+L asks readers to weigh in on travel experiences around the globe — to share their opinions on the top cities, islands, cruise ships, spas, airlines, and more. Readers rated islands according to their activities and sights, natural attractions and beaches, food, friendliness, and overall value.

[Top Islands: Readers' Choice Awards 2021](#)

Condé Nast Traveler

October 2021

Sanibel & Captiva Islands

Condé Nast Traveler readers rank the top islands in the world, from Indonesia to the United States.

[Top 20 Resorts in Florida: Readers' Choice Awards 2021](#)

Condé Nast Traveler

October 2021

Pink Shell Beach Resort & Marina, South Seas Island Resort & The Gasparilla Inn & Club

Condé Nast Traveler readers rate their top resorts in Florida, outside of the Keys and Orlando.

[The 25 Best Winter Trips in the World](#)

Outside

October 2021

Cabbage Key, Captiva Island, Captiva Cruises, Cayo Costa State Park, Great Calusa Blueway Paddling Trail

Cayo Costa State Park is one of Florida's largest and most stunning undeveloped barrier islands. The only way to get there is by boat or kayak. Captiva Cruises runs a ferry service (from \$45) from Captiva Island to and from Cayo Costa. Or, for the experienced sea kayaker, it's about a seven-mile paddle from island to island along the Great Calusa Blueway Paddling Trail. Pitch a tent or book a cabin from the state park's campground (from \$22)—winter temperatures here are ideal for camping, plus the mosquitoes are less prevalent. Collect shells from the nine miles of unspoiled beaches, spot sea turtles nesting, or fish for redfish, snook, and trout. Bikes and kayaks are available to rent from the camp store, and the island has six miles of hiking trails. Don't miss Manatee Hole, a lagoon that's full of the lovable marine mammals year-round, and paddling 20-minutes to dinner at Cabbage Key, on a namesake island, where the bar's walls are lined with 60 years' worth of dollar bills from previous customers.



[Top 10 Winter Getaways For Couples On The East Coast](#)

Travel Off Path

November 2021

Sanibel Island

To end the list here's another warm-weather option. Sanibel Island is located off the coast of Florida and enjoys pleasant, balmy weather year-round. This makes winter one of the most popular times to visit this gorgeous retreat. It also offers a variety of memorable things to do, including shelling and enjoying some gorgeous beaches.

[The Best Places for Camping in Florida, from the Keys to the Everglades](#)

Condé Nast Traveler

November 2021

Cayo Costa State Park, Captiva

In terms of absolute solace, it doesn't get much better than Cayo Costa State Park, a small tent campground accessible only by boat. Perched about 25 miles off the west coast from Fort Myers, the island can be reached by private vessel or aboard Captiva Cruises from Jug Creek Marina. Out here, it's nothing but nautical nature, with nine miles of unobstructed beachfront and meandering trails for bicycling and walking. The 30 primitive beach-side tent sites come with picnic tables, ground grills, and water hookups, though no electricity. Since the campground is a mile from the ferry dock, the park provides tram service between 10 a.m. and 4 p.m. all year. Don't fret about the lack of electricity, either: Cayo Costa is an apt reminder of how enriching nature can be, with opportunities for fishing, swimming, snorkeling, and wildlife-watching—manatees, porpoises, and sea turtles are often around.

[The World's Most Beautiful Beaches for Ultimate Relaxation](#)

MSN Canada

November 2021

Sanibel Island, Sundial Beach Resort & West Wind Inn

Sanibel Island is a low-key spot on Florida's west coast that's known for its abundance of seashells. People come from all over to do the "Sanibel stoop," which is what island dwellers call combing the beaches for one-of-a-kind seaglass finds.

[The 10 Best Christmas Towns in America](#)

Fox News, [New York Post](#) & [Trend Fool](#)

December 2021

Captiva Island, Fort Myers Beach & Sanibel Island

The Fort Myers Beach Christmas Boat Parade is quite the unique spectacle, voted the 5th Best Holiday Parade by USA Today 10Best, and featuring many illuminated and intricately decorated vessels. Learn more about the 33rd annual parade here. In nearby Captiva Island, the Tween Waters Island Resort & Spa Tree Lighting Celebration on Nov. 26 is also quite the scene, in which there are 200,000 holiday lights added to a 30-foot Christmas tree, all flickering in musical synchronicity. Then, on Captiva's



neighboring Sanibel Island, known as "the seashell capital of the world," check out Santa's Dolphin & Wildlife Cruise, a Christmas Eve experience that combines ol' Saint Nick with watching dolphins swim throughout the Pine Island Sound and San Carlos Bay.

[I'm a travel writer who's been to all 50 states. Here are the 12 best ones to visit](#)

Insider & [MSN](#)

December 2021

Captiva Island & Sanibel Island

I spent a week in April 2019 exploring the Gulf Coast via a road trip from Miami, through the Everglades, and up to Sanibel, Captiva, and Little Palm Island, and the journey made me appreciate the sheer range of vacation spots and natural wildlife and diversity than ever before.