



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

March 2022

CONTACTS: Francesca Donlan, Jackie Parker, Miriam Dotson 239-338-3500

What's new from Fort Myers - Islands, Beaches and Neighborhoods

St. Patrick's Day celebrations, festivals, free garden tours

LEE COUNTY, Fla. (U.S.A.) – Fort Myers' Islands, Beaches and Neighborhoods in Southwest Florida continues to provide new experiences for returning guests and first-time visitors. Whether you're looking for great year-round weather or shell-drenched beaches along the sparkling Gulf of Mexico, VisitFortMyers.com is your source for the most up-to-date vacation information.

Enjoy free garden tours in Fort Myers this month and a chance for a manatee sighting!

Sunday garden tours at Manatee Park, Fort Myers

A volunteer naturalist leads the tours and participants can learn about the park's history and the native flora and fauna that reside in some of Florida's habitats. Optimum viewing for the Florida manatee is now through March. The 9 a.m. garden tours are Sundays through March and meet behind the welcome center. Free with paid parking. leegov.com/parks/parks/manateepark

Tuesday & Thursday tours at Berne Davis Gardens, Fort Myers

The Berne Davis Gardens are open 10 a.m.-1 p.m. Tuesdays and Thursdays through May. The gardens feature bromeliads, hibiscus, rare and tropical fruit, bonsai display and more. Guided tours available. fmlcgardencouncil.com

March events

85th Annual Sanibel Shell Festival, Sanibel Island

March 3-5

9 a.m.-4 p.m.

It's all about shells with shell art, crafts, pies and cakes, judged artistic and scientific exhibits. There is a \$5 donation, free parking and lots of great raffle items. Sponsored by the Sanibel Community Association and Sanibel-Captiva Shell Club. sanibelcommunityhouse.net

Tours, experiences and workshops for the whole family

ECHO Global Food and Farm Festival, North Fort Myers

March 9-12

There will be a tropical tasting lunch in the community garden, edible backyard design workshops and off-the-beaten-path tours with an ECHO culinary guide. On March 12, spend the day at the 57-acre Global Farm touring a tropical rainforest demonstration, the 300+ variety seed bank, an educational tour of the fruit tree arboretum or learn about alternative energies. Kids of all ages can taste, touch and experience their way around the world as they learn about world hunger and ways they can make an impact. echonet.org/events/global-food-and-farm-festival

Celebrate our famous, delicious pink shrimp

64th Annual Fort Myers Beach Lions Club Shrimp Festival, Fort Myers Beach

March 12-13

In 1949, the discovery of pink shrimp off Fort Myers Beach changed the area and shrimping forever. Coined “pink gold” in the 1950s because of their value to our local economy, this local commodity is native to the warm waters of the Gulf, sustainably sourced and bursting with flavor. And today, we celebrate all things shrimp with a two-day event, presented by the Fort Myers Beach Lions Club that includes an Art and Food Expo, festival parade, Queen’s Pageant shrimp boil and a shrimp-eating contest. fortmyersbeachshrimpfestival.com

It’s easy being green on March 17

Everyone is Irish on this day so don’t miss the **Fort Myers Beach St. Patrick’s Day Parade** beginning at 10 a.m. The fun goes from Santini Marina Plaza North on Estero Boulevard to the Church of the Ascension. fortmyersbeach.org/events/st-patricks-day-parade

Then plan to head for downtown Fort Myers for a **Block Party** from 4 to 8 p.m. and celebrate the day with great music, food from popular restaurants and beer. myriverdistrict.com/event/st-patricks-day

Plan ahead for Island Hopper 2022

Mark your calendar for Island Hopper Songwriter Fest 2022, returning for its eighth year. A 10-day music festival featuring performances by some of the country’s greatest singer-songwriters, Island Hopper takes place in three areas, with the first weekend kicking off on Captiva Island, Sept. 16-18, then moving to downtown Fort Myers, Sept. 19- 22, and ending with a weekend on Fort Myers Beach, Sept. 23-25. Most shows are free, with the exception of a few ticketed experiences, like our headliner shows. Stay up-to-date on festival news with the Island Hopper app or islandhopperfest.com.

Dining news

Popular Cape Coral restaurant, Rumrunners, has reopened following an extensive renovation and a revamped menu. Live music on Sundays, beach area for kids and a dog menu are a few of the new features that visitors will enjoy. rumrunnersrestaurant.com

Accommodations news

Plans are underway for the top-to-bottom conversion of the former Hotel Indigo as it is transformed into the **Banyan Hotel Fort Myers**, Tapestry Collection by Hilton. Reservations are currently being taken by phone at 239-337-3446.

The boutique hotel features a beautiful rooftop with bar, pool and fitness room offering stunning views of downtown and the river. Located in the downtown in the River District, less than two blocks from the Calusa Harbor Convention Center, shopping, dining, historical attractions and businesses are nearby. Check for the latest details and online reservations beginning July 1 at hilton.com/en/hotels/fmyfmup-the-banyan-hotel-fort-myers

Airport news

New air service at Southwest Florida International Airport (RSW)

Air Transat: Montreal (YUL), weekly, seasonal service

Euroings Discover: Frankfurt, Germany (FRA), weekly, year-round service starts March 28

New flights at RSW

Sun Country: Duluth, Minn. (DLH), weekly; Green Bay, Wis. (GRB), weekly; Milwaukee (MKE), weekly; Rochester, Minn. (RST), weekly

United Airlines: Los Angeles (LAX), daily; San Francisco (SFO), daily

News from Punta Gorda Airport (PGD)

Allegiant service from Akron, Ohio (CAK), begins March 2

Attractions news

Full moon hike at the Calusa Nature Center and Planetarium, Fort Myers

Come walk under the full moon from 7 to 8 p.m. March 20. Watch the sky for bats, listen for owls, find a constellation. This walk starts just after sunset, so wear closed-toed shoes. Night hikes are an educational, nighttime experience with minimal flashlight use, \$10 per person. Online only, preregistration required. calusanature.org/calendar

Off the beaten path: Harns Marsh Preserve, Lehigh Acres

A calm peaceful escape, a hike around Harns Marsh allows visitors to explore the beauty of one of our rural neighborhoods. Nestled between Sunshine Boulevard and Buckingham Air Park, it's one of Lehigh Acres' best kept secrets – a 578-acre preserve. It's not a park and there are no facilities but what you will find is an escape to the natural Florida and a great birding site that welcomes a variety of species at different times of the year. Open from dawn to dusk.

myecwcd.net/harns-marsh

Day of the Dinosaur at Shell Factory Nature Park, North Fort Myers

Who needs Disney when you can take the entire family for a walk through life-sized dinosaurs?

Day of the Dinosaur is open 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. daily at Shell Factory Nature Park.

shellfactory.com

New trailhead opens at John Yarbrough Linear Park, Fort Myers

The new trailhead at the southern end of John Yarbrough Park near Ben C. Pratt/Six Mile Cypress Parkway is now open with new amenities that include paved parking ADA-compliant parking, restrooms, picnic pavilions and bike repair stations. The north-to-south linear park trail is 6 miles and paved, offering space for walking, biking, jogging, rollerblading, on-leash dog walking, fishing, birding and wildlife viewing. leegov.com/parks/parks/linearpark

Butterfly House tours are available at 10:30 a.m. each Friday and Saturday at Rotary Park in Cape Coral. The Tom Allen Memorial Butterfly House is home to many native Florida butterfly species, including the zebra longwing. Free. Donations are accepted.
ccfriendsofwildlife.org/tom-allen-memorial-butterfly-garden

Mindfulness Trail, J.N. “Ding” Darling National Wildlife Refuge, Sanibel Island

This new, self-guided mindfulness trail at the Bailey Tract offers visitors a meditative, nature experience. The trail features five stations with QR codes that connect hikers to podcasts with guided meditations on nature and wellbeing. The 0.35-mile trail runs around the perimeter of Ani Marsh, a wildlife-spotting area at the Bailey Tract. It is the first nature mindfulness experience to debut among the nearly 570 U.S. national wildlife refuges. The podcasts start with an introduction to the health benefits of nature by Dr. Joe Blanda, a retired orthopedic surgeon who promoted mindfulness and nature exposure to his recovering patients. He continues to help people with well-being and connectivity outdoors.

Four other calming podcasts guide trail-users on the topics of grounding and mindful listening, viewing and feeling. Each podcast runs about four minutes.

Have fun and save with Fort Myers Sun Saver Passport

The Beaches of Fort Myers & Sanibel has launched a free mobile savings passport giving users access to exclusive deals on attractions, restaurants and experiences throughout the destination.

To participate:

- Sign up at explore.visitfortmyers.com
- The passport will be delivered to your mobile phone via text.
- Redeem it on your mobile phone at participating businesses.
- Visit the website for a complete list of attractions, restaurants and experiences.

2022 festivals and events

Spring training 2022 **check MLB lockout status*

Boston Red Sox spring training

18 home games

Through March 29

JetBlue Park, Fort Myers

mlb.com/redsox/tickets/spring-training

Minnesota Twins spring training

17 home games

Through March 28

Lee County Sports Complex, Fort Myers

www.mlb.com/twins/tickets/spring-training

85th Annual Sanibel Shell Festival, Sanibel Island

March 3-5

sanibelcommunityhouse.net/p/84/shell-festival

23rd Annual Southwest Florida Reading Festival, Fort Myers

March 5

readfest.org

ECHO Global Food and Farm Festival, North Fort Myers

March 10-12

echonet.org/events/global-food-and-farm-festival

64th Annual Fort Myers Beach Shrimp Festival, Fort Myers Beach

March 12

fortmyersbeach.org/events/fort-myers-beach-shrimp-festival

33rd Annual “Ding” Darling Day, Lakes Park, Fort Myers

Conservation Carnival

April 24

dingdarlingsociety.org/articles/ding-darling-days

2th Annual Fort Myers Film Festival

May 18-22

fortmyersfilmfestival.com

10th Annual “Ding” Darling & Doc Ford’s Tarpon Tournament, Sanibel Island

May 13

dingdarlingsociety.org/articles/tarpon-tournament-1

24th Annual MangoMania Tropical Fruit Festival, Pine Island

July TBD

<http://mangomaniafl.net>

Island Hopper Songwriter Fest

Sept. 16-25

IslandHopperFest.com

Fort Myers Beach International Film Festival

September TBD

fmbfilmfest.com

Roar Offshore, Fort Myers Beach

October TBD

roaroffshore.com

37th Annual Oktoberfest, Cape Coral

October TBD

capecoraloktoberfest.com

Lee County Alliance of the Arts 5th Annual Arts on Tap, Fort Myers
November TBD
Artinlee.org/ontap

38th Annual Cape Coral Festival of the Arts, Cape Coral
January 2023 TBD
capecoralfestival.com

ArtFest Fort Myers, downtown River District
February 2023 TBD
artfestfortmyers.com

Edison Festival of Light Grand Parade, Fort Myers
Feb. 18, 2023
edisonfestival.org

Boca Grande Film Festival
February 2023 TBD
friendsofbocagrande.org/events/boca-grande-film-festival

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Editor's note: Fort Myers and surrounding areas includes Fort Myers Beach, Sanibel & Captiva islands, Boca Grande & Outer Islands, Pine Island, Matlacha, Cape Coral, North Fort Myers, Bonita Springs, Estero, Alva, Buckingham and Lehigh Acres. For media assistance, VisitFortMyers.com/media-central