



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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

Gary LeVox of Rascal Flatts headlines Island Hopper Songwriter Fest

LEE COUNTY, FLORIDA (U.S.A.) – Fort Myers' Islands, Beaches and Neighborhoods in Southwest Florida continues to provide new experiences for returning guests and first-time visitors. Great weather, shell-filled beaches, family fun and a chance to explore natural Florida along the Gulf of Mexico are a few of the experiences to be found in this destination. Check out VisitFortMyers.com for the most up-to-date vacation planning information.

Gary LeVox of Rascal Flatts headlines Island Hopper 2022

[Gary LeVox](#), frontman for Rascal Flatts, is the headline songwriter/performer at the 8th Island Hopper Songwriter Fest, Sept. 16-25. LeVox is scheduled to perform at 5 p.m. Sunday, Sept. 25, poolside at the Pink Shell Beach Resort & Marina on Fort Myers Beach.

Tickets for the LeVox concert are available on the Island Hopper app or at islandhopperfest.visitfortmyers.com/artist/gary-levox. Be sure to download the app to be entered for a chance to win a two-night stay at Pink Shell during the final weekend of Island Hopper, tickets to the LeVox concert and a \$200 gift card.

The 10-day music festival featuring performances by some of the country's most talented singer-songwriters and 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

Airport news

New air service at Southwest Florida International Airport (RSW)

Breeze Airways: nonstop to Las Vegas (LAS) and Charleston, South Carolina (CHS), twice weekly.

Eurowings Discover: Frankfurt, Germany (FRA), weekly, year-round service

Alaska Airlines: Seattle (SEA) weekly, year-round service.

Attractions news

Wonder Gardens repainted, preserved popular roadside signs

Wonder Gardens in downtown Bonita Springs is a part of Old Florida that is nostalgic for generations of visitors. As a charitable zoological park and botanical garden, the attraction is home to rescued and non-releasable birds and reptiles nestled among sprawling banyan trees and plantings.

The attraction has repainted and reinstalled three large roadside signs that have been pointing visitors to the attraction for more than 60 years. The three large murals faded through the years and are now bright and protected. Also, a sign with giant painted alligator eyes that looked over the gardens has been repainted. John Merrifield, a Fort Myers artist and muralist of 30 years, was hired to work on the project.

As the oldest roadside attraction in Southwest Florida, the gardens opened in 1936 originally as the Everglades Reptile Garden. wondergardens.com

Lovers Key State Park offers free events

August brings lots of events to Lovers Key that visitors will enjoy free with park entry. Fun topics include Walk on the Wild Side, Savvy Sea Turtles, Seashell Walk, Fishing Clinic, Munchin' Manatees, All about Alligators and much more. Check them out along with dates and details at friendsofloversonkey.org/events/list. Reservations are required and may be made at loverskey.eventbrite.com

Upcycled Wonders at J.N. "Ding" Darling National Refuge

A selection of creations from the past two Project Refuge: A Couture Fashion Show Using Trash events is on display in the "Ding" Darling Visitor & Education Center Auditorium from 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. daily through Aug. 30.

Project Refuge debuted in 2019 to celebrate the refuge's 75th anniversary and raise awareness for recycling. The current, free "Upcycled Wonders: Project Refuge Designs Exhibition" showcases 18 of the fashions modeled at the events. Signage describes the creations and provides facts about waste and recycling and their impact on the environment.

dingdarlingsociety.org/articles/project-refuge

Another free (parking fee) event from "Ding" Darling, a morning **Mindfulness Beach Stroll** at 8 a.m. on Aug. 20. Participants meet up at Gulfside City Park Beach. Reservations required at eventbrite.com/e/morning-mindfulness-beach-stroll-gulfside-city-park-beach-tickets

Creatures of the Mound House

The Mound House is hosting special forums this month. Mound House Curator of Education Bobby Feldman presents "The Creatures of The Mound House: From Birds to Bugs" for adults on Aug. 9, with a wine-&-refreshments reception beginning at 5:30 p.m. and the program from 6 to 7 p.m. Learn about common animals found on the Mound House grounds while gaining a greater appreciation of suburban wildlife. Advance registration is required by calling 239-765-0865; \$7 for Mound House members & \$12 for non-members.

The iconic Mound House on Fort Myers Beach traces its roots to the ancient Calusa of more than 2,000 years ago. As the oldest standing structure on Estero Island, the Town of Fort Myers Beach operates the Mound House as a museum complex and cultural and environmental learning experience that offers numerous monthly tourism and environmental programs, including many for kids. Check the schedule at moundhouse.org

Have fun and save with Fort Myers Sun Saver Passport

Fort Myers' Islands, Beaches and Neighborhoods 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.

Check in and have a good day: Fort Myers Discovery Challenge

Explore Fort Myers and surrounding areas to discover the arts and cultural attractions that make the islands, beaches and neighborhoods naturally unique. Embark on a guided tour of the Mound House that overlooks Estero Bay or walk the Calusa Heritage Trail on Pine Island. From the nationally recognized shell museum on Sanibel Island to the art galleries of Matlacha, there are so many ways to have a good day. Using your mobile device, check in to each location and you could find exclusive savings and deals. Even better, you can earn a variety of prizes.

visitfortmyers.com/challenge

In the news

Travelandleisure.com has named Sanibel and Captiva Islands among the “world’s best islands in the U.S.” Describing Captiva with its “low-key vibe and beaches with abundant shells,” it also mentions South Seas Island Resort.

With “equally beautiful beaches,” it mentions “off-beat fun” including the Bailey-Matthews National Shell Museum. travelandleisure.com/worlds-best/best-islands-in-the-us-2022

Whereverfamily.com writes about prime birdwatching opportunities in the Fort Myers area year-round for locals and family travelers alike. The article includes Sanibel Captiva Audubon Society, J.N. “Ding” Darling National Wildlife Refuge and Six Mile Cypress Slough Preserve. It also mentions the Sanibel Public Library where kids (and adults) may check out birding kits that include binoculars. Whereverfamily.com/best-birdwatching-spots-near-fort-myers-florida

Annual festivals and events

Island Hopper Songwriter Fest

Sept. 16-25

IslandHopperFest.com

Roar Offshore, Fort Myers Beach

Oct. 6-8

roaroffshore.com

Art in the Wild Day, J.N. “Ding” Darling Wildlife Refuge, Sanibel Island

Oct. 13

dingartinthewild.com

37th Annual Oktoberfest, Cape Coral

Oct. 21-23 and 28-30

capecoraloktoberfest.com

Alliance for the Arts 5th Annual Arts on Tap, Fort Myers

November TBD

Artinlee.org/ontap

38th annual Luminary Holiday Stroll

Sanibel Island Dec. 2 and Captiva Island Dec. 3.

sanibel-captiva.org

Fort Myers Beach 34th annual Christmas Boat Parade

Dec. 3 beginning at 6 p.m. at Salty Sam’s Marina and will pass the restaurants on the back bay.

fortmyersbeach.org/events/2022-christmas-boat-parade

Broadway Palm Dinner Theatre, Fort Myers

Irving Berlin’s “White Christmas” in the Main Theatre Nov. 18 through Dec. 30;

Ha! Ha! Ho! The Holiday Show in Off Broadway Palm Dec. 10 through 25;

“Santa Claus the Musical” in the Children’s Theatre Nov. 29-Dec. 24.

broadwaypalm.com

Adventures in Paradise Holiday Cruises, Port Sanibel Marina, Fort Myers

Dec. 24 Santa Dolphin and Wildlife Cruise and a Christmas Eve sunset cruise.

adventureinparadiseinc.com/cruises/santa-christmas-cruise

2023 Events

38th Annual Cape Coral Festival of the Arts, Cape Coral

Jan. 14-15

capecoralfestival.com

ArtFest Fort Myers, downtown River District

Feb. 3-5

artfestfortmyers.com

Edison Festival of Light Grand Parade, Fort Myers

Feb. 18

edisonfestival.org

Spring training 2023

Boston Red Sox

February-March

JetBlue Park, Fort Myers

mlb.com/redsox/tickets/spring-training

Minnesota Twins

February-March

Lee County Sports Complex/Hammond Stadium, Fort Myers

mlb.com/twins/tickets/spring-training

Boca Grande Film Festival

February TBD

friendsofbocagrande.org/events/boca-grande-film-festival

86th Annual Sanibel Shell Show and Festival, Sanibel Island

March 2-4

sanibelcommunityhouse.net/p/84/shell-festival

24th Annual Southwest Florida Reading Festival, Fort Myers

March 4

readfest.org

ECHO Global Food and Farm Festival, North Fort Myers

March 7-11

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

65th Annual Fort Myers Beach Shrimp Festival, Fort Myers Beach

March 11-12

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

34th Annual “Ding” Darling Day, Lakes Park, Fort Myers

Conservation Carnival

April 22

dingdarlingsociety.org/articles/ding-darling-days

17th Annual Fort Myers Beach International Film Festival

April TBD

fmbfilmfest.com

13th Annual Fort Myers Film Festival

May 17-21

fortmyersfilmfestival.com

11th Annual “Ding” Darling & Doc Ford’s Tarpon Tournament, Sanibel Island

May 19

dingdarlingsociety.org/articles/tarpon-tournament-1

Captiva Pride Weekend

June 2-4

tween-waters.com/captiva-pride-weekend

National Seashell Day

June 21

visitfortmyers.com/national-seashell-day

MangoMania Tropical Fruit Festival, Pine Island

July TBD

mangomaniafl.net

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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