



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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

Turtle nesting season begins, Fort Myers Film Festival, voluntourism opportunities

LEE COUNTY, Florida (U.S.A.) – Spring gives us reason to celebrate the renewal and growth that the season brings. As the Fort Myers area continues to recover from the impact of Hurricane Ian, 9,881 hotel rooms are open throughout Lee County.

For details about the accommodations and attractions that are currently open, visit visitfortmyers.com/open. As information is rapidly changing and there may be limited availability, hours and amenities, please check with the individual businesses on their status.

As beaches continue to open, find information at visitfortmyers.com/beach-conditions

Turtle nesting season begins

May brings the beginning of turtle nesting season, which runs through Oct. 31. It's important to have a few reminders of what we can do to help young turtles survive. They don't have an easy journey and we all need to help protect this threatened species.

A few facts:

- Sea turtles are among the world's oldest creatures. The seven species that can be found today have been on the earth for about 110 million years.
- Most common to our area is the loggerhead sea turtle, which lives to be 40-60 years old. They are big – they weigh 250-400 pounds.

And like our visitors, who return year after year to enjoy our beautiful beaches, the loggerheads return to the same beach time after time to deposit their eggs. Our destination is known for its wildlife. That's why turtle nesting season is so special to visitors who travel from all over the world to experience it. This ritual is one of nature's miracles.

Tips for turtle nesting season:

- Shield lighting so that it is not visible from anywhere on the beach. Turtles go toward the light instead of heading for the water.
- When enjoying the beaches, take a bag and remove any litter that you may find on your walk. Balloons, plastic bags, foam and other non-degradable pollutants can cause the deaths of sea turtles if mistaken for food.
- Enjoy your fun at the beach and be sure to fill any holes when the day ends.
- Observe a nesting turtle from a distance. Don't shine lights on or around her or she may abandon her effort to nest. Forgo taking photos or using cell phones and stay far away where she cannot see you as she crawls back to the water.

Turtle resources

For more information about turtle nesting season and how to help, contact the Sanibel-Captiva Conservation Foundation (SCCF) at sccf.org/our-work/sea-turtles or Turtle Time, Inc. at turtletime.org.

Mural mosaic unveiled in downtown Fort Myers

The next time you're visiting the area, be sure to stop by Cornog Plaza at the Fort Myers Regional Library. The America Connects National Mural includes more than 1,500 artists from all over the country who participated in Mural Mosaic's Global Roots Project, a collaboration with Fort Myers Mural Society and Visit Fort Myers.

The mosaic is comprised of 4-by-4-inch tiles that bring together individual expressions of each artists' connection to the region. With its vibrant colors and intricate details, the mosaic captures how art can be used as a powerful visual tool celebrating our opportunity to connect through the joy of painting. muralmosaic.com/southeast

Fort Myers Film Festival

The 13th annual Fort Myers Film Festival will be held May 17-21 at the Sidney & Berne Davis Art Center and other venues throughout the area. Screenings will take place for 77 official selections that feature films from all over the world, with a focus on local and environmental films. For details, tickets and trailers for screenings, visit fortmyersfilmfestival.com

Voluntourism opportunities for visitors

While there has been incredible progress in such a short period of time, there are still ways to help the destination. Beach cleanups, tree plantings, sorting through relief supplies, providing data on wildlife are some of the many ways to assist in the ongoing recovery efforts.

Another way is to check with your favorite attraction. They may need your help. Contact them directly and ask about volunteer opportunities or check their website for listings.

United Way of Lee, Hendry and Glades Counties is dedicated to improving the quality of life for participating communities. Voluntourism opportunities include helping unload and sort

supplies, helping Sanibel's and Captiva's senior residents clean their homes as well as providing emergency construction and repairs. volunteer.unitedwaylee.org/need/index

Keep Lee County Beautiful is a local community organization with the mission of improving, beautifying and protecting the local environment. Check volunteer listings at klcb.org/get-involved

The Sanibel-Captiva Conservation Foundation has launched a [Coastal Watch Cleanup Crew](#) to remove non-natural debris from conservation areas and encourage conservation efforts in both Sanibel and Captiva.

The **American Red Cross** is calling for volunteers throughout the county to aid in disaster action and other support. To sign up for shifts throughout Lee County, visitors should go to redcross.org/volunteer/become-a-volunteer

[Submit wildlife sightings](#) to the **Sanibel-Captiva Conservation Foundation**, where visitor photos and locations will go directly to scientists who are actively tracking the post-Hurricane Ian impacts to the local wildlife.

The Bailey-Matthews National Shell Museum is calling on visitors to spot and report rare and invasive species to expand their database and knowledge of local land and tree snails in the region. shellmuseum.org/snail-search

Help the Fort Myers Beach community by volunteering in the chamber's ["Roxie" Visitor Information Center](#) located at Times Square.

Cape Coral's [Rotary Park Environmental Center](#) is inviting volunteers to help clean up nature trails and assist with other local environmental projects.

To learn more about volunteer opportunities, visit visitfortmyers.com/visit/editorial/how-you-can-help-fort-myers.

Digital Guide 2023 available

As the destination moves forward in its recovery efforts, the goal for this guide is to inspire future travel while providing valuable information on things to see and do throughout Fort Myers' Islands, Beaches and Neighborhoods. Check it out here: digital.milespartnership.com/publication/?m=67161

Returning and reopening

Tarpon Bay Explorers resumed its narrated tram tours on Wildlife Drive at the J.N. "Ding" Darling National Wildlife Refuge. Reservations at tarponbayexplorers.com

Sanibel beach walks return

Sanibel weekly guided beach walks at the Island Inn are back. Tours led by Sanibel Captiva Conservation Foundation and Sanibel Sea School are from 9-10:30 a.m. each Wednesday.

Sanibel Island offers world-class beachcombing, birding and wildlife-watching opportunities. Join knowledgeable marine science educators for a casual guided beach walk to explore what's washed ashore. Look for fascinating animals and learn about shell biology. A guide will happily answer any questions along the way. Reservations for the general public are \$20 and must be made in advance at sanibelseaschool.org/atyourresort

The Barrier Island Parks Society, Inc. has completed repairs to the **Gasparilla Island Lighthouse** and it has reopened. With magnificent views of Boca Grande, Charlotte Harbor and the Gulf of Mexico, climbs and other programs are available at bips.org/programs

Popular artist moving to downtown Fort Myers

Matlacha artist Leoma Lovegrove plans to move into a new gallery and studio in downtown Fort Myers. Work has started at the Dean Building, 1415 Dean St., next to Ford's Garage. leomalovegrove.com

Former Smokin' Oyster Bar chef opens restaurant on Pine Island

Fort Myers Beach chef Reid Freeman and his wife Natasha have opened Street Eat & Ale restaurant in Bokeelia on Pine Island. facebook.com/SEA.Bokeelia

Airport News

Southwest Florida International Airport (RSW) was named No. 1 of the 10 best airports in the U.S. by Travel Lens, an online travel publication. Fifty of the busiest U.S. airports were ranked by wait time, passenger satisfaction and Google review ratings. flylcpa.com

New air service at RSW:

- **Breeze Airways:** Hartford (BDL) and Providence (PVD) begin this summer. The RSW-BDL flights will operate twice weekly on Wednesday and Saturday starting May 17; and the RSW-PVD service will start July 13 and operate three times a week on Tuesday, Thursday and Sunday.
Sun Country Airlines: Eau Claire (EAU), weekly.
- **American Airlines:** Austin (AUS), daily.
- **Avelo Airlines:** Raleigh-Durham (RDU) weekly; Wilmington (ILG), weekly.

Attractions and entertainment

J.N. "Ding" Darling National Wildlife Refuge Nature Free Wellness Week May 3-9

As part of National Mental Health Month, the J.N. "Ding" Darling National Wildlife Refuge on Sanibel Island will celebrate Nature Wellness Week 2023. The second annual event takes place May 3 through 9 at refuge venues and throughout the community, including Lakes Park and Florida Gulf Coast University (FGCU) in Fort Myers.

Highlights of the week will range from nature-healing lectures by nationally noted speakers and a Food Forest Wellness Fest at FGCU, to mindfulness walks on Wildlife Drive and Boot Camp. Guest lecturers include Dr. Geraldine Oades-Sese, child resilience psychologist, and Dr. Joe Blanda, healing-through-nature advocate. Visit dingwellness.com for details.

Rockin' good time at Red, White & Tunes Festival

The fun begins at 1 p.m. May 28 at the Caloosa Sound Amphitheater in downtown Fort Myers. Enjoy a kickoff to the Memorial Day weekend with food, fun, music and more. Music includes the Winters Brothers Band, Carter Smith, Roxx Revolt & the Velvets and Jaded Aerosmith Tribute. caloosound.com/event/red-white-tunes-festival

Sun Saver Passport: Dine, Play, Shop, Sip

This popular, digital savings pass provides instant access to a variety of deals and experiences from area attractions, restaurants and more across four categories – Dine, Play, Shop and Sip. Sign-up is simple and free. Passports are instantly delivered to phones via text and email. And there is an option for users to save the pass on their home screen for one-tap access. Sign up now to start saving. visitfortmyers.com/sun-saver-passport

Cape Coral Quest: win prizes and explore

Download the Cape Coral Quest app for a fun way to explore the area and a chance to win prizes through Nov. 30. Follow the directions at visitfortmyers.com/cape-coral-quest to collect a Cape Coral Quest Pass to participate on any mobile device.

Offshore Sailing School Family Cruising Course

Offshore Sailing School is offering a new Family Cruising Course Package at 'Tween Waters Island Resort on Captiva Island. Check out the details along with other sailing packages at offshoresailing.com/news-specials/specials

Annual festivals and events

13th Annual Fort Myers Film Festival

May 17-21

fortmyersfilmfestival.com

11th Annual “Ding” Darling and Doc Ford’s Tarpon Tournament

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

Mango Mania

July 15

Our Lady of Miraculous Medal-Catholic Church, Bokeelia

pineislandchamber.org/chamber-events/mangomania

Island Hopper Songwriter Fest

Sept. 22-Oct. 1

island-hopperfest.visitfortmyers.com

Cape Coral Oktoberfest

Oct. 20-22 and 27-29

capecoraloktoberfest.com

Sanibel Island Writers Conference

November TBD

fgcu.edu/siwc

39th Annual Cape Coral Festival of the Arts, Cape Coral

Jan. 13-14 2024

capecoralartfestival.com/

ArtFest Fort Myers, Downtown River District

Feb. 2-4, 2024

artfestfortmyers.com

21st annual Burrowing Owl Festival, Cape Coral

February TBD

Rotary Park

ccfriendsofwildlife.org/burrowing-owl-festival-2

Edison Festival of Light Grand Parade, Fort Myers

February TBD

edisonfestival.org

Spring training 2024, February and March

Boston Red Sox

JetBlue Park, Fort Myers

mlb.com/redsox/tickets/spring-training

Minnesota Twins

Lee County Sports Complex/Hammond Stadium, Fort Myers

mlb.com/twins/tickets/spring-training

25th Annual Southwest Florida Reading Festival, Fort Myers

March 2

readfest.org

ECHO Global Food and Farm Festival, North Fort Myers

March TBD

echonet.org/events/global-food-and-towardwardl

35th Annual “Ding” Darling Day

April TBD

dingdarlingsociety.org/articles/ding-darling-days

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EDITOR'S NOTE: *Fort Myers - Islands, Beaches and Neighborhoods include: Sanibel Island, Captiva Island, Fort Myers Beach, Fort Myers, Bonita Springs, Estero, Cape Coral, Pine Island, Matlacha, Boca Grande & Outer Islands, North Fort Myers, Alva, Buckingham and Lehigh Acres. For more information, go to visitfortmyers.com.*