



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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The Beaches of Fort Myers & Sanibel

Welcomes four-legged visitors and their people

LEE COUNTY, FL – If vacation planning has you looking for beach destinations where you can enjoy some fun and sun with your four-legged friend, The Beaches of Fort Myers & Sanibel in Southwest Florida Welcomes dogs with open paws!

Sanibel Island is ranked among the top dog friendly vacations in the United States by bringfido.com. The site mentions pet friendly hotels, events, restaurants and parks and beaches for dogs to enjoy.

Vetstreet.com, a top animal health and lifestyle website, has named Algiers Beach in Gulfside City Park on Sanibel Island to the top of its list of eight dog-friendly beaches in the U.S. The site notes that there is plenty of space for owners and dogs to get ample exercise or just take a break. The tropical nature of the island and the nearby nature preserve makes this beach even more of an exotic getaway. Picnic areas and barbecue grills are available, and the area offers plenty of pet-friendly restaurants and accommodations, making an extended stay an easy option.

There are a few rules to make sure that two-and four-legged beachgoers get along! Owners must clean up after their pups and they must be on leashes no more than eight feet long.

The welcome mat is always out for pets visiting The Beaches of Fort Myers & Sanibel with names like Dog Beach, Pooch Park, K-9 Corral and Barkingham Park. From a beach designated exclusively for dogs to roam unleashed, to accommodations that pamper pets, to nature parks that allow dogs on leashes, the destination is known for its pet-friendly hospitality. The area offers dog-friendly accommodations for visitors who can't leave home without their family pooch. From Florida state parks and the renowned J.N. "Ding" Darling National Wildlife Refuge on Sanibel Island, to Lee County parks and the popular Dog Beach, the area is a perfect destination for visitors and their pets to enjoy some vacation time together.

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Accommodations: Dogs are welcome here

Many area accommodations from luxury resorts to beach cottages to condos and rental homes welcome pets. Be sure to check with each property for information regarding charges and requirements. Visit <http://www.fortmyers-sanibel.com/stay/> and click "pets on leash allowed" for a complete listing in the amenities drop down menu. However, keep in mind that some hotel chains charge a fee for pets and may have restrictions on breeds and weight so it is important to always read the fine print. You can also visit [bringfido](#) to find pet-friendly hotels in the Fort Myers area or [TripAdvisor](#) to find pet-friendly hotels on Sanibel.

Lee County Parks

When it's time for some fun and exercise, dogs (and their owners) have lots of great choices, including their own beach. For information on all of the Lee County parks offering facilities for dogs, visit www.leeparks.org or call 239-533-7275. It's a dog's life at the well-known **Dog Beach**, at the south end of Lovers Key and north of Bonita Beach, which has been a waterfront wonderland for dogs since 2001. This popular and beautiful beach setting allows dogs to romp in Gulf waters unleashed from sunrise to sunset. It is the only beach in the destination that allows dogs to be unleashed and requires owners to be over 15 and adhere to a two-dog limit. Children under 12 must be accompanied by an adult. Call 239-949-4615.

For visitors heading to Sanibel and Captiva islands, **Causeway Island Park** offers a 10-acre area for dogs on a leash. The location is divided by the causeway as it goes over the two spoil islands built to link the mainland to Sanibel Island. Call 239-765-6794. The newest Lee County dog park, **Paws 4 Duty**, is located in Veterans Park in Lehigh Acres. With two shaded, large, off-leash areas; one for large dogs and the other for small, shy dogs or puppies that need a smaller space, the park features water and shower stations as well as waste removal stations and public restrooms for pet owners nearby.

Attractions

Bark on the Ark

It's a dog day on the water. Enjoy a river cruise to Picnic Island for playtime on the beach at Picnic Island with your dog. Water, tennis balls, dog treats and waste bags are included for the canines. \$44 per person, reservations at 239-919-2965 or PureFl.com.

8-11:30 a.m. third Saturday of the month (Jan. 20, Feb. 17, March 17, April 21), Pure Florida's Edison Explorer docks at The Marina at Edison Ford, 2360 W. 1st St., Fort Myers

Dog Beach near Lovers Key State Park is the only shoreline in the area – and one of only a handful in the state – where dogs can roam without a leash. Located just outside Lovers Key State Park, this secluded beach allows pups of all sizes to frolic in the sand and shallow waters of the Gulf. Be sure to check the tide report before you head here though to avoid going during a high tide.

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J.N. “Ding” Darling National Wildlife Refuge

Welcomes dogs (on a leash no longer than six feet) on **Wildlife Drive**, the refuge's public access road. Visit www.fws.gov/dingdarling or call 239-472-1100.

Most of the area's **Florida state parks** welcome dogs on leashes. They are not allowed on beaches or on playgrounds but may be on hiking trails. These include two of the area's most beautiful parks: **Cayo Costa State Park** 941-964-0375 and **Lovers Key State Park** 239-463-4588. For a complete listing, visit www.floridastateparks.org.

Island Paws

Island Paws offers quality health and nutrition, gourmet treats, and unique gifts. It is their pleasure to be able to share their love of pets with so many people. They believe that pets are a part of the family. They deserve our love and understanding, and a scratch on the belly whenever time allows!

Fishing Buddy Charters

[Fishing Buddy Charters](#) is dog friendly! Fish the fruitful backwaters of Estero Bay, Sanibel Island and Pine island Sound. Depending on the time of year, you'll catch popular Snook, Red Fish, Grouper, Tarpon and Trout and Trout species. They are plenty of other fish in the sea life Flounder, Pompano, Mackerel and more! They also offer sightseeing tours of the habitats of a vast of local wildlife.

Dipidy Dawg gourmet Dog Bakery & Boutique, Estero

A specialty Pet Store offering an organic bakery, pet grooming, pet supplies, natural and holistic foods, dog fashions, spa products, pet toys harnesses, collars, totes and more.

Paw-radise Dog Bakery

Is a natural store offering a large variety of USA holistic line of different cat and dog food, treats, and of course their homemade cookies baked on premise. Does your best friend have allergies? You can visit the hypoallergenic section of the store.

Dog-friendly shopping

Coconut Point in Estero is an open-air shopping center with water stations and plastic bag stations. Even though most stores are pet-friendly, double check to see what stores won't allow your pets inside. Some restaurants allow dogs on patios. Check with individual shops and restaurants. (23106 Fashion Drive, Estero, FL, 33928 | 239-992-9966 or visit <http://www.simon.com/mall/coconut-point>)

Bell Tower Shops in Fort Myers host a monthly "Yappy Hour" from 6:00pm to 8:00pm that benefits the local Humane Society. The center allows pets at some outdoor restaurants. (Daniels Parkway & US 41 Fort Myers, FL 33907 | 239-489-1221 or visit <http://www.thebelltowershops.com>)

Miromar Outlets offer a large selection of stores situated under covered walkways. This mall is also outdoors and welcomes pets into most stores and restaurants. Miromar offers water bowls

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for pets throughout the mall and some stores even give treats to well-behaved pets. The mall requires all pets to be on a leash. (10801 Corkscrew Rd, Estero, FL, 33928 | 239-948-3766 www.miromaroutlets.com)

River District Events

The newest downtown Fort Myers event, **Pet Walk**, takes place on every fourth Friday of the month from October to May. Owners can bring their friendly pooches to socialize and explore the historic river district starting at 6:00pm at the Butterfly Estates. Call 1-885-RDA-EVENTS(732-3836) or visit <http://www.riverdistrictevents.com/>

Four-legged diners welcome!

Restaurants in the area that welcome dogs include: **the McGregor Café, Bistro 41, and Ford's Garage** in Fort Myers; **The Dog Bar & Grille** and **Rumrunners** in Cape Coral; and **Pinchers Crab Shack, and Survey Cafe** in Bonita Springs. Sanibel and Captiva also have many choices for dinnin with you pup; **George & Wendy's Sanibel Seafood Grille, Keylime Bistro, Pinocchio's Original Italian Ice Cream, The Island Cow, Cantina Captiva, RC Otter's Island Eats, Sanibel Deli & Coffee Factory, The Pecking Order Friend Chicken, Cip's Place, Mucky Duck Restaurant, Schnappers' Hots, Over Easy Café, Blue Giraffe Island Dining, Geppetto's Beach Foodies, and the Green Flash Restaurant.** You can also visit [BringFido](#) or [fortmyers- Sanibel](#) websites to find more restaurants that welcome your furry companions.