

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE



THE TIDE HAS TURNED FOR THE BEACHES OF FORT MYERS & SANIBEL

Traces of Red Tide Leave the Southwest Florida Coastline

LEE COUNTY, FL. - February 25, 2019 - Following the most intense red tide outbreak in nearly half a century along Southwest Florida's coastlines, [The Beaches of Fort Myers & Sanibel](http://www.fortmyers-sanibel.com) has been in the clear for the past two months. Red tide, which appears unpredictably on a nearly annual basis, is caused by a naturally occurring algae bloom that discolors the waters and causes wildlife to perish. In 2018, the unusually strong bloom lingered far longer than normal. Fort Myers and its barrier islands are eager to welcome guests back now that the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission has determined the region's coastlines are currently free of red tide.

"Last year's bloom prevented visitors from enjoying our beautiful beaches and took a major toll on our tourism industry," said Tamara Pigott, executive director, Lee County Visitor & Convention Bureau. "I hope we never see what we experienced again. Our local hotels, restaurants and attractions are excited to welcome new and returning visitors during one of the best times of year to visit."

Beckoning guests with a wealth of outdoor activities, natural adventures and fun educational tours, The Beaches of Fort Myers & Sanibel provides a detox from amusement parks and crowded beaches. With over 10,000 acres of dedicated nature preserves, many travelers enjoy boating and cruising to islands, like the remote Cayo Costa, which boasts unspoiled stretches of white sand and a completely undeveloped coastline.

Given the destination's unique geography, the islands of Sanibel and Captiva are known as the "Shelling Capital of the World," with over 250 shell varieties spread across their shores. The J.N. "Ding" Darling National Wildlife Refuge features winding kayak trails and scenic paths that stretch across more than half of Sanibel. Further offshore, Cabbage Key boasts its own hidden history, as famous folks have left their mark on the dollar bills that line the walls and Jimmy Buffett is said to have written "Cheeseburger in Paradise" after one delicious lunch on the island. Accommodations found across the destination embody the region's "Old Florida" appeal, with idyllic stays ranging from private cottages, condos and opulent Gulf-front homes, to full-service resorts. Safe beaches and family-friendly resorts are plentiful on Estero Island, the 7-mile stretch of coastline that defines Fort Myers Beach. Hotels that suit any style of vacation are easy to find on nearby Sanibel and Captiva islands, where small inns provide an intimate experience and grand waterfront properties cater to outdoor enthusiasts.

In addition to great year-round weather, shell-drenched beaches and the sparkling Gulf of Mexico, The Beaches of Fort Myers & Sanibel in Southwest Florida provides new experiences for visitors seasonally.

Catch a Boston Red Sox or Minnesota Twins spring training game, February through March. Winter brings "Fort Myers' Friendliest Birds," pink roseate spoonbills, to the region, while manatees appear beside kayakers and paddleboarders in the warm waters. Tarpon fishing season starts in April, and to celebrate the history of the first documented tarpon caught on a rod and reel in 1885, the destination will host the eighth annual "catch, care, and release" tarpon tournament on May 3. The sixth annual Island Hopper Songwriter Fest, Sept. 20-29, features nine days of live, intimate performances, parties and events across downtown Fort Myers, Fort Myers Beach and Captiva Island, bringing together thousands of country music lovers along with some of Nashville's best-known and upcoming songwriters.

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The Gulf's picturesque waters and surroundings play host to the 22nd Hobie 16 World Championship, Nov. 1-16. This is the first time since 1984 the event will be held in the U.S. More than 500 competitors are expected to race off the shores of Sanibel and Captiva while sailing spectators cheer them on from the coastline.

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About The Beaches of Fort Myers & Sanibel

The Lee County Visitor & Convention Bureau represents The Beaches of Fort Myers & Sanibel which also includes Captiva Island, downtown Fort Myers, Bonita Springs, Estero, Cape Coral, Pine Island, Boca Grande and Outer islands, North Fort Myers and Lehigh Acres. Visit www.fortmyers-sanibel.com