



NEWS RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Looking for romance? Find Valentine's Day love with an escape to The Beaches of Fort Myers & Sanibel

LEE COUNTY, FL – When it comes to romance, the beauty of The Beaches of Fort Myers & Sanibel offers all the ingredients for a romantic Valentine's Day getaway on southwest Florida's Gulf Coast. With spectacular sunsets, perfect weather, white-sand beaches that stretch as far as the eye can see, sparkling waters and unspoiled natural beauty, the area is as romantic as it gets! You can even renew your vows on Lovers Key!

Go island hopping. Kick back. Relax. Fall asleep in a hammock to the rhythm of island breezes. Indulge in a sunset cocktail. Count the dolphins. Escape to a deserted island. Rent a kayak. Book a romantic dinner cruise. Browse charming boutiques and galleries. Walk on shell covered beaches. Sleep late. Do nothing.

Many area properties, spas and restaurants offer romance packages. To celebrate with a visit to the area, visit www.fortmyers-sanibel.com/discover/around-town/romantic-escapes/ for details.

A sampling of special Valentine's Day events includes:

Friends of Lovers Key Annual Vow Renewal, Lovers Key State Park Feb. 14, 2017

www.friendsofloserskey.org

Love is always in the air at Lovers Key State Park, but even more so on Valentine's Day. Couples renew their vows near the gazebo on the beach, while the ocean and gulls provide background music.

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The ceremonies at 10 a.m. and 3 p.m. include a champagne toast, brunch or lunch, coffee and cake, socializing, photo, as well as door prizes and parting gifts. Reservations are required. The non-refundable donation of \$75 per couple adds to the Environmental Education Center Fund. This event has been a sell-out in the past, so reserve a spot early by contacting event chair Judy Greenwood at 708-359-0466 or fjgreenwood@gmail.com. For details, visit www.friendsofroverskey.org/events-valentinesday.html

Lovers Key State Park has been named among the "Top 10 Romantic Retreats" by *Coastal Living* magazine and earned a spot on The Travel Channel's "Florida's Top 10 beaches." Located between Fort Myers Beach and Bonita Beach, Lovers Key was only accessible by boat for many years and legend has it that lovers traveled to the island so they could enjoy its secluded beach.

Valentines with a Love connection

Norman Love Confections

www.normanloveconfections.com

This Valentine's Day, award-winning Norman Love Confections offers many ways to celebrate during the most romantic holiday of the year with handcrafted artisanal chocolates from the Fort Myers corporate headquarters that encompasses both production and retail operations. There are two area chocolate salons (Fort Myers and Estero) with retail shops where customers may purchase chocolates or linger over house-made pastries, gourmet coffees, lattes and smoothies. Visit site for locations and a list of Valentine gift options.

Adventure In Paradise: Valentine's Day Sunset Dolphin & Wildlife Cruise

Feb. 14, 2017

www.adventureinparadiseinc.com/cruises/holiday-cruises/valentines-day-cruise/

239-472-8443

Valentine's Day Sunset Dolphin Cruise includes complimentary soft drinks, bottled water and cupcakes. Listen to tropical music, cruise the tranquil waters along the coastline of Sanibel. Experience hundreds of birds flocking their evening roost, watch dolphins play in the wake, sightsee and learn about the mangrove islands and estuaries where the Calusa Indians once lived. Narrated by a knowledgeable captain and first mate. \$29 per adult. Reservations required.

Sweetheart Express

Feb. 10-14

www.semgulf.com

239-275-8487

A strolling violinist completes a romantic evening of dinner show and ride aboard the Murder Mystery Dinner Train in Fort Myers. Celebrate Feb. 10-14. Visit website for reservations and information.

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And check out a few more ways to escape for a romantic vacation:

Watch the best sunset view

The area is surrounded by spectacular sunset views. **The Mucky Duck** at the north end of **Captiva Island** is a favorite with visitors and locals who claim it has the best sunset views in the area. Aside from British dishes like fish 'n' chips, the menu boasts Florida favorites of grouper sandwiches and Key lime pie. www.muckyduck.com

Other popular beach locations for catching a sunset include: the Fort Myers Beach fishing pier, Bowman's Beach on Sanibel Island, the old shipping pier on Boca Grande, Cabbage Key, Bonita Beach, Captiva Island and Lover's Key.

A Valentine's Day paddle on the Calusa Blueway

Set out in an easy-to-use tandem kayak with a picnic to a coastal island to celebrate! The 190-mile Calusa Blueway provides the perfect idea for paddlers looking for a getaway. The trail is not crowded and the area's sugar-sand beaches on barrier islands, such as Sanibel and Captiva, harbor back bays loaded with isolated sandy spots and picturesque mangrove mazes. Two dozen outfitters are available in the area, so it is easy to find a boat that suits your needs and/or hire a guide. Visit www.calusablueway.com

Leave all your cares behind

Start a shell collection. Relax away the hours. Watch exotic wildlife. Learn why Anne Morrow Lindbergh was inspired to write her best-selling book, *Gift from the Sea*, while visiting **Captiva Island**. www.fortmyers-sanibel.com

Sleep on an uninhabited island

Book a really rustic cabin or pitch a tent at **Cayo Costa State Park**. Sleep under the stars and walk on unspoiled shell-lined beaches along this deserted island. www.floridastateparks.org/park/Cayo-Costa

Dine beachfront on Sanibel Island

Watch the sun set surrounded by the historic elegance of the award-winning **Thistle Lodge Restaurant** on **Sanibel Island**. www.casaybelresort.com/thistle-lodge

Escape all ties to the mainland!

Let **Captiva Cruises** whisk you away to an outer island for lunch on **Cabbage Key** or **Useppa Island**. Sunset serenade cruises are also available to capture the beautiful Gulf of Mexico sunsets! www.captivacruises.com

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For a really romantic evening...

Take a starlight dinner cruise on the 100-foot luxury yacht, the **Sanibel Princess** at **Sanibel Harbour Marriott Resort & Spa**. www.marriott.com/hotel-restaurants/rswsb-sanibel-harbour-marriott-resort-and-spa/sanibel-harbour-princess-yacht/5136457/home-page.mi

It's just silly!

But great fun! Don't miss a dinner at the **Bubble Room** on **Captiva Island**. Electric trains run amok, there are miles of Christmas lights and a tree, 2,000 movie star photos, Superman in a phone booth. Waiters and waitresses are dressed as bubble scouts. It has to be seen to be believed. Super-sized portions and huge desserts are legendary. www.bubbleroomrestaurant.com

Indulge

Give yourselves a treat and book a spa package at **Sanibel Harbour Marriott Resort & Spa**. For some real romance, try the **Caloosa Experience**, a couple's favorite. www.marriott.com/spas/rswsb-sanibel-harbour-marriott-resort-and-spa/the-spa-at-sanibel-harbour/5136484/services.mi

Mingle with the Vanderbilts

Visit picture perfect **Boca Grande**. Pedal down Banyan Street and visit the old **Gasparilla Inn**, a favorite from the Vanderbilt's to the Bush family! Have a waterside lunch at **Harpers**. Be sure to visit the historic lighthouse. www.fortmyers-sanibel.com/discover/communities/boca-grande-and-outer-islands

Peek inside two of the area's famous estate homes

Visit the beautiful homes (**Edison & Ford Winter Estates**) of famous next-door neighbors, Thomas Edison and Henry Ford. Located on the banks of the Caloosahatchee River in Fort Myers, tour botanical gardens, Edison's laboratory and a museum with the world's largest collection of his inventions and memorabilia. The Estates are also a popular site for memorable weddings. www.edisonfordwinterestates.org

Push some pedals!

Rent bikes and explore 23 miles of paved bike paths on **Sanibel Island**. There are even bikes for two! Meander through shopping areas, past beautiful gulf homes, tour through diverse parts of the island. Quaint shops and restaurants provide fun rest stops. Wheelchair bikes are available. www.sanibeltrails.com/sanibel-bike-paths.aspx

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What is a romantic getaway without some shopping?

Stroll along Captiva's picture-perfect **Andy Rosse Lane** and its eclectic shops and galleries. Nearby is **Jungle Drums**, "The Ultimate Wildlife Gallery," which showcases works in bronze, glass, clay, mixed media, resin, wood and others. Be sure to check out the hand-painted Adirondack chairs - they'd make a great reminder of Captiva's laid-back lifestyle. Visit the colorful galleries of **Matlacha** and **Pine Island**.

www.fortmyers-sanibel.com/see-do/shopping

Share a Cheeseburger in Paradise

Head for this beautiful tropical island and leave a dollar at **Cabbage Key's** historic restaurant and inn, where the walls are covered with thousands of signed dollar bills (a tradition that began when a thirsty fisherman left a bill taped to the wall to make sure he would have a cold drink during his next visit). Built atop a Calusa Indian shell mound, the island has cottages for rent but don't look for telephones or TVs!

www.cabbagekey.com

For more information on planning a romantic vacation to Florida's unspoiled island sanctuary, visit www.FortMyers-Sanibel.com.

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***Editor's note:** The Beaches of Fort Myers & Sanibel in Southwest Florida includes: Sanibel Island, Captiva Island, Fort Myers Beach, Fort Myers, Bonita Springs, Estero, Cape Coral, Pine Island, Boca Grande & Outer Islands, North Fort Myers, Lehigh Acres. For media assistance, visit www.fortmyers-sanibel.com/media-central/. Images available upon request.*