



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

July 2024

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

July 4 celebrations, MangoMania, digital visitor guide, Island Hopper news

LEE COUNTY, Florida (U.S.A.) – With July 4 celebrations, MangoMania, favorite restaurants reopening and more, this summer is packed with lots of fun. And for vacation planning to our islands, beaches and neighborhoods, check out the newly updated digital Visitor Guide for everything you need to assist in making vacation memories. tinyurl.com/FMVISITORGUIDE2024

July happenings

This July 4 offers a full schedule of parades, entertainment and fireworks throughout the area with events that include:

Downtown Fort Myers Star Spangled Salute

Venice Symphony Jazz Band performs at 6 p.m. at the Caloosa Sound Amphitheatre followed by fireworks.

myriverdistrict.com/events

Fort Myers Beach 4th of July parade and fireworks

10 a.m. parade and fireworks set to begin at 9 p.m.

fortmyersbeach.org/events/fort-myers-beach-fourth-of-july-celebration

Cape Coral 4th of July Red, White & BOOM!

Entertainment begins at 5 p.m., Parmalee performs at 8 p.m. and fireworks at 10 p.m. at the foot of the Cape Coral Bridge.

capeboom.com

4th of July Star Spangled Bonita

Entertainment from 7-9 p.m., Glow golf cart parade at 8:30 p.m. followed by fireworks.

cityofbonitasprings.org/calendar

Sanibel Island 4th of July parade

From 9:30-11 a.m., the 31st annual parade rolls down Periwinkle Way. The Sanibel Recreation Center continues the celebration following the parade with hot dogs, games, pools and more at 3880 Sanibel Captiva Road, Sanibel Island. sanibel-captiva.org

Crazy about mangoes: MangoMania, Pine Island's tropical food fair

Visit Pine Island for MangoMania and join the celebration of the island's tropical fruit with food from 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. on July 13, at Our Lady of the Miraculous Medal Church in Bokeelia.

Pie-eating contests (mango, of course), games, mango tastings, a plant sale and the world's largest mango contest are just a few of the events scheduled. Don't miss the music and kids' activities. pineislandchamber.org/chamber-events/mangomania

J.N. "Ding" Darling National Wildlife Refuge offers free programs

Take a caravan tour down Wildlife Drive, a beach walk, a restorative nature walk and learn about bugs at "Insect Insanity" when you join the free summer programs at the refuge through July 31. Check details at dingdarlingsociety.org/seasonal-programs

Sea turtle nesting season runs through Oct. 31

Sea turtle nesting season is underway and runs through Oct. 31. 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. For more information about sea turtle nesting season and how you can help, contact the Sanibel-Captiva Conservation Foundation (SCCF) sccf.org/what-we-do/protect-wildlife/sea-turtle-program or Turtle Time, Inc. at turtletime.org

Tips to protect our wildlife

Shield your lighting so that it is not visible from the beach. Sea turtles go toward the light instead of heading for the water.

When enjoying our 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 but be sure to fill any holes when you leave.

Observe a nesting sea 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 smartphones and stay far away where she cannot see you as she crawls back to the water.

Plan ahead

Ticketed shows, headliners and more for 10th Island Hopper Songwriter Fest

Island Hopper Songwriter Fest, named one of the Top 5 music fests by USA Today 10Best Readers' Choice Awards, celebrates its 10-year anniversary with 10 days of outstanding performances, Sept. 20-29.

This year's headliner is BMI singer-songwriter Scotty McCreery, whose hit song, "Cab in a Solo," currently tops the country radio singles chart, according to Mediabase.

Island Hopper gives fans the opportunity to see singer-songwriters perform in smaller venues with a tropical setting as the backdrop. Catch a live Island Hopper performance at these four locations around the Fort Myers area:

- Captiva Island, Sept. 20-22
- Cape Coral, Sept. 23-24
- Downtown Fort Myers, Sept. 25-26
- Fort Myers Beach, Sept. 27-29

While most Island Hopper performances are free, a few experiences, will be ticketed:

Sept. 25: ACMA showcase at Sidney & Berne Davis Art Center in downtown Fort Myers includes performances by Bill Metts, Robert Bidney, Karen Cohen, Bruce Gallant and Roy Schneider. ACMA is the Association of Classical Musicians and Artists.

Sept. 26: five-time Grammy nominee and BMI singer-songwriter Jeffrey Steele will join the Gulf Coast Symphony in a live performance at the Florida Repertory Theatre in downtown Fort Myers.

Sept. 27: Music Row @ Margaritaville has VIP tickets available. The show takes place at Margaritaville Beach Resort on Fort Myers Beach and includes performances by Kristian Bush, Kassi Ashton and Shane Proffit.

Sept. 29: Scotty McCreery will wrap up Island Hopper with a pool party performance at Pink Shell Beach Resort & Marina on Fort Myers Beach.

For the full lineup and ticket information, along with additional special events, visit IslandHopperFest.com or download the Island Hopper app.

Island Hopper Songwriter Fest is presented by BMI, iHeart Radio's Cat Country 107.1, Florida Restaurant & Lodging Association and Fort Myers – Islands, Beaches and Neighborhoods. Follow the festival hashtag #islandhopperfest as well as [Instagram](#) and [Facebook](#).

Accommodations news

Captiva Island Inn has reopened on Andy Rosse Lane in the heart of Captiva Village. Located close to Gulf beaches, restaurants and shopping, the inn is taking reservations for its cottages, suites and two vacation homes. captivastrandinn.com

New 12-hole golf course opens at South Seas

South Seas on Captiva Island has opened its 12-hole golf short course, The Clutch (named after a turtle's nest). The walking course is designed by Beau Welling and pairs natural beauty, strategic challenges and a family-friendly atmosphere. Designed for players of all ages and skill levels, the course caters to a wide spectrum of abilities and enhances the enjoyment of the game for everyone. The course is available to members and resort guests with a confirmed reservation during their dates of stay. southseas.com/the-clutch

Learn more about what is open at South Seas and to book reservations. southseas.com

Hyatt Regency Coconut Point Resort & Spa in Bonita Springs ranked as the 17th top pool hotel in the U.S. News & World Report "Best Hotel" awards. The awards are based on an evaluation of rankings from awards, hotel class, and guest ratings.

travel.usnews.com/hotels/pools-florida-r59

Woodspring Suites Fort Myers-Cape Coral opens

The new, 122-room, extended stay hotel is located at Colonial Blvd. near I-75 in Fort Myers.

woodspring.com/extended-stay-hotels/locations/florida/fort-myers/woodspring-suites

Fins Up! Beach Club opens at Margaritaville Beach Resort at Fort Myers Beach

Resort guests and day pass holders enjoy the amenities of this action-packed aquatic playground situated on the Gulf of Mexico and Matanzas Bay.

margaritavilleresorts.com/margaritaville-beach-resort-fort-myers-beach

Dining/entertainment news

Blossom & Brie, an 86-acre working farm located in North Fort Myers, is serving farm-fresh dining experiences for lunch, dinner and brunch. Farm-to-table menu items include Smoked Red Wattle Pulled Pork Sandwich with Uncle Bubby's "Sweet Heat" BBQ sauce, Smash Burgers that feature grass-fed and finished ground beef, and the Florida Farm Bowl with greens grown at Blossom & Brie's vertical, sustainable freight farm located on the property.

Visitors can stroll the property and visit Blossom, a miniature donkey and the namesake of the farm, plus her two offspring, Margaret and Humphrey. Guests may also meet the Florida Cracker sheep, chickens, Longhorn cattle and Red Wattle pigs that live on the farm. Details: BlossomandBrie.com

It's a new chapter for an old favorite and diners couldn't be happier. Visitors to Captiva Island over the years will remember the fine dining restaurant, **Bellini's**. It's back and in a

new space in Cypress Square in Fort Myers. Check out the menus and details.

bellinisfortmyers.com

The **Capital Grille** has opened in Bell Tower in Fort Myers. The 10,156-square-foot fine dining restaurant is known for dry-aged steaks, fresh seafood and a world-class wine list.

thecapitalgrille.com/locations/fl/fort-myers/fort-myers/8073?

Popular **Lighthouse Café of Sanibel** has reopened in a new location and is serving its “World’s Best Breakfast,” and lunch daily. On the island since 1968, it now has outdoor seating, some of the same servers and the treasured vintage lighthouse photos from the previous location. The same sweet and savory dishes are on the menu along with daily specials. lighthousecafe.com

Bay Street Yard opens in downtown Fort Myers

Bay Street Yard, a destination for live entertainment, craft beers, artisan beverages and food trucks, has opened at 2136 Bay St. in downtown Fort Myers. The new venue features two full-service bars, food trucks serving up tailored menu options, seating for over 300 people and a second level with VIP seating, and accommodations for private functions of up to 451 people. With an emphasis on entertainment, a covered stage will feature live performances. BayStreetYard.com

The **Yucatan Bar and Grill** has reopened its popular spot in **Matlacha**. Popular with locals and tourists, the waterfront restaurant serves up a menu of island cuisine, live music and fun. yucatanwaterfront.com

One of the oldest restaurants on **Pine Island**, the **Waterfront Restaurant and Marina** has reopened in St. James City. Accessible by water or land, the restaurant overlooks a scenic canal and is known for its seafood and sunsets. waterfrontrestaurantmarina.com

Serving waffles and more, **Let’s Waffle** has opened in **Cape Coral**. Serving “love at first bite,” with sweet, savory, heart-shaped waffles. letswaffleflorida.com

Recently opened **Wickies Lighthouse** restaurant at 362 Periwinkle Way on **Sanibel Island**, is a venture between the owners of two iconic island restaurants, the soon-to-be-rebuilt Island Cow and Mad Hatter. Serving breakfast, lunch and dinner, along with a full bar and signature drinks. The owners also own and operate the adjacent Magic Bus Ice Cream & Caffeine. wickieslighthouserestaurant.com and themagicbussanibel.com

Three new restaurants coming to Coconut Point, Estero, this fall

After relocating his original Fort Myers Beach restaurants, **Fresh Catch Bistro** and **Junkanoo Below Deck**, to a new location on Estero Boulevard on Fort Myers Beach, Franco Russo recently launched **Stone’s Throw** restaurant, as well as co-launched **Hooked Island Grill** in Cape Coral. The new Estero location of **Fresh Catch** will include an expanded menu to include burgers and pastas along with seafood favorites.

freshcatchbistro.com

PJK Neighborhood Chinese Restaurant specializes in scratch-made coastal Chinese with fresh specialty dishes that showcase a mix of traditional and modern Asian flavors. Its menu includes exclusive entrees, small plates, wok classics, dim sum and craft cocktails. pjkchinese.com

Third restaurant scheduled for fall at Coconut Point is **Real Seafood Co.**, specializing in a full range of seafood including such as grouper, sea bass, salmon, perch, blue crab, clams, oysters, shrimp, scallops and Maine lobster, as well as a raw bar, steaks and chicken. In addition to dinner entrees, the upscale restaurant's menu includes shared plates, soups, salads and desserts. realseafoodcorestaurant.com

Attractions news

Visit a park for National Park & Recreation Month

July is National Park & Recreation Month and there is no better way to celebrate than by spending time at our local parks, on the beach, hiking or visiting a preserve. Lee County Parks & Recreation is dedicated to keeping our parks safe and beautiful for our visitors and residents to enjoy. To learn more about our parks and programs being offered this summer and throughout the year, visit leegov.com/parks/programs.

Planning to travel this summer? Take advantage of the National Park's "America the Beautiful" annual pass for savings. This pass includes J.N. "Ding" Darling National Wildlife Refuge. Details: store.usgs.gov/recreational-passes

Neighborhood Mural Program

Highlighting what makes each area of the destination special, visitors are enjoying the experience of a neighborhood mural program. The "placemaking initiative" by the Lee County Visitor & Convention Bureau is done in partnership with the Fort Myers Mural Society. The project gives visitors a chance to interact with the murals' designs by taking and sharing photos.

The locations of this latest mural project include:

- the side of Eagle's Nest Restaurant on Pine Island
- a double-mural on both sides of the entrance doors into the North Fort Myers Recreation Center
- Lakes Park in Fort Myers for a series of murals in the children's garden
- the side of the Community Redevelopment Agency building at 1231 Lafayette Street in Cape Coral
- the side of the Sanibel-Captiva Islands Chamber of Commerce building on Sanibel Island

The next neighborhood mural will be in Lehigh Acres at a pavilion at Veteran's Park. fortmyersmuralociety.com

Learn more about the mural program in the Fort Myers area:

visitfortmyers.com/visit/editorial/making-splash-evolution-fort-myers-mural-movement

Calusa Blueway Challenge

Take the Calusa Blueway Challenge and celebrate 20 years of the Great Calusa Blueway Paddling Trail by checking in at locations along the trail for a chance to win prizes. Earn points as you paddle and check in at attractions, restaurants, parks and nature spots along the trail. Paddle on your own, experience a guided tour, shop at a local business or grab a bite to eat as you explore the 200-mile marked trail that meanders through the back-bay estuaries, rivers, and shorelines of Fort Myers Islands, Beaches and Neighborhoods.

Complete a certain number of check-ins on the pass to be entered to win a Body Glove iSUP Performer 11' or a two-night stay at Tarpon Lodge. Details and sign up:

visitfortmyers.com/CalusaBluewayChallenge

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 2.0: Win prizes and explore

Start exploring with the latest pass to earn discounts and rewards in Cape Coral. Known for its unique shopping opportunities, restaurants, and more than 400 miles of canal waterways, the area is full of vibrant culture. Each participating location has a four-digit code somewhere on the property. Answer 20 riddles to be entered to win the grand prize: a two-night stay at The Westin Cape Coral at Marina Village with daily breakfast. Enter all 30 codes and you'll earn a 2024 Sunsplash Season Pass! Get your pass, check out details and tips at visitfortmyers.com/cape-coral-quest and start participating on any mobile device.

Southwest Florida International Airport (RSW) news

New air service at RSW

Breeze Airways

- Manchester, New Hampshire (MHT) weekly, starting Oct. 2
- Stewart/Newburgh, New York (SWF) weekly, starting Oct. 2
- Lansing, Michigan (LAN) weekly, starting Oct. 3
- Wilkes-Barre/Scranton, Pennsylvania (AVP) weekly, starting Oct. 3
- Bangor, Maine (BGR) weekly, starting Oct. 5

For more information, visit flyrsw.com

In the news

“The gateway to the state's southwest region — is a city full of water-play opportunities, interactive museums, and a history that includes two of America's most famous inventors.” is how **Mommypoppins.com** described the area on her recent visit to write about family travel and the 25 top things for kids to do throughout the destination.

mommypoppins.com/anywhere-kids/family-travel/best-things-to-do-ft-myers-kids-itinerary

In an article about affordable beach vacations, **Travel + Leisure** mentions Bonita Springs, Lovers Key State Park, Audubon’s Corkscrew Swamp Sanctuary and Hyatt Vacation Club Coconut Cove. travelandleisure.com/cheap-beach-vacations-in-florida

USA TODAY 10Best Readers' Choice Awards named Indigo Trail at the J.N. “Ding” Darling National Wildlife Refuge one of the Best Hiking Trails in America.

“Indigo Trail is an easy 4.4-mile loop located at the J.N. "Ding" Darling National Wildlife Refuge in Sanibel, Florida. It's best known for visiting migratory birds and is a favorite spot for hikers, bikers, and trail runners. Visitors can enjoy it year-round and even bring along their pooch, as long as they're leashed.” 10best.usatoday.com/awards/travel/best-hiking-trail-2024

Sanibel and Captiva islands were included in **Purewow.com** as part of its list of “the Best Beach Towns in Florida for the ultimate summer getaway.” purewow.com/travel/best-beach-towns-in-florida

Annual festivals and events

Downtown Fort Myers fireworks and concert

Venice Symphony Jazz Band performs at the Caloosa Sound Amphitheatre

July 4

myriverdistrict.com/events

Fort Myers Beach 4th of July parade, concerts and fireworks

July 4

fortmyersbeach.org/events and fortmyersbeachfl.gov/1293/Special-Events

Cape Coral 4th of July Red, White & BOOM!

July 4

capeboom.com

4th of July Star Spangled Bonita

July 4

cityofbonitasprings.org/calendar

MangoMania

July 13

Our Lady of Miraculous Medal Church, Bokeelia,
pineislandchamber.org/chamber-events/mangomania

Island Hopper Songwriter Fest

Sept. 20-29

island-hopperfest.com

FITMIX FEST, downtown Fort Myers

Sept. 27-29

fitmixfest.com

Cape Coral Oktoberfest

Oct. 18-20 and 25-27

capecoraloktoberfest.com

Concerts in the Park, Cape Coral

Nov. 7

Four Freedoms Park

capeconcerts.com

34th annual American Sand Sculpting Championship

Fort Myers Beach

Nov. 21-24

fortmyersbeach.org/sandsculpting-2024

Sanibel Island Writers Conference

November TBA

fgcu.edu/siwc

Holiday Luminary Stroll

Dec. 6-7

Sanibel and Captiva islands

13-month celebration of Sanibel's 50th anniversary.

sanibel-captiva.org/50th-anniversary

40th annual Cape Coral Art Festival and Market Place

January 2025

capecoralartfestival.com

34th Tour De Cape in Cape Coral

Jan. 17-19, 2025

Rotary Park

tourdecape.net

ArtFest Fort Myers, downtown Fort Myers

Feb. 1-2, 2025

artfestfortmyers.com

87th Edison Festival of Light Grand Parade, Fort Myers

Feb. 15, 2025

edisonfestival.org

23rd annual Burrowing Owl Festival, Cape Coral

Wildlife and Environmental Expo

February 2025

Rotary Park

ccfriendsofwildlife.org/burrowing-owl-festival-2

26th annual Southwest Florida Reading Festival, Fort Myers

March 1, 2025

Fort Myers Regional Library, downtown Fort Myers

readfest.org

88th annual Sanibel Shell Festival, Sanibel Island

March 7, 2025

Community House

sanibelcommunityhouse.net/event/88th-annual-sanibel-shell-festival-2

Sanibel Shell Show, Fort Myers

March 2025

Marriott Sanibel Harbour Resort

sanibelshellclub.com/6306-2

Fort Myers Beach annual Lion's Club Shrimp Festival

March 8-9, 2025

fortmyersbeachshrimpfestival.com

Southwest Florida Ag Expo

Feb. 27-March 9, 2025

Lee County Civic Center Complex

swflagexpo.com

Spring training

Boston Red Sox

February-March 2025

mlb.com/redsox

JetBlue Park, Fort Myers

Minnesota Twins

February-March 2025

mlb.com/twins

Lee Health Sports Complex/Hammond Stadium, Fort Myers

ECHO Global Food and Farm Festival, North Fort Myers

March 2025

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

Concerts in the Park, Cape Coral

March 6 and 22, April 3, 2025

Four Freedoms Park

capeconcerts.com

Florida Lighthouse Day

April 2025

Port Boca Grande Lighthouse & Museum and Gasparilla Island Lighthouse

bocagrandehappenings.org/events/its-florida-lighthouse-day

10th annual Bonita Springs Film Festival

April 17, 2025

Prado Stadium

bonitaspringsfilmfestival.org

36th annual “Ding” Darling Day Conservation Carnival, Fort Myers

April 2025

Lakes Park

dingdarlingday.com

13th annual “Ding” Darling & Doc Ford’s Tarpon Tournament, Sanibel Island

May 9, 2025

dingdarlingsociety.org/tarpon-tournament

World’s Richest Tarpon Tournament, Boca Grande

May 14-15, 2025

[Facebook: bgacc](https://www.facebook.com/bgacc)

15th annual Fort Myers Film Festival

May 14-18, 2025

fortmyersfilmfestival.com

Fringe Fort Myers

May 2025

artinlee.org/experience/fringe

National Seashell Day

June 20, 2025

visitfortmyers.com/national-seashell-day

Juneteenth Community Celebration

June 19, 2025

Roberto Clemente Park, Fort Myers

leecountyblackhistorysociety.org/events

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EDITOR'S NOTE: *Fort Myers - Islands, Beaches and Neighborhoods includes: 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.*