



LONGBOAT KEY | ST. ARMANDS | LIDO KEY  
SIESTA KEY | CASEY KEY | VENICE  
MANASOTA KEY | ENGLEWOOD | NORTH PORT

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### Eco-Tourism and Outdoor Adventure in Sarasota County

From the warm waters of the Gulf of Mexico to the lush landscape and wildlife that call this sub-tropical destination home, Sarasota County offers nature lovers and eco-friendly travelers ample opportunities to explore the outdoors by land and by sea.

#### Parks and Outdoor Offerings

- There is no entrance, user or parking fees at any county or city park, preserve, or beach. There are small entrance fees at **Myakka River State Park** and **Oscar Scherer State Park**.
- Information for all parks may be found at [www.scgov.net/parks](http://www.scgov.net/parks) unless otherwise noted.
- **The Legacy Bike Trail**, opened in 2008, is a 10.8-mile paved trail in Sarasota County that runs from Sarasota to Venice. Bike rentals are available at various locations throughout the county.
- The City of Venice is designated a **Bicycle Friendly Community** by the League of American Bicyclists.
- **Oscar Scherer State Park** covers 1,381 acres of rare scrubby and pine flatwoods habitat and has fifteen miles of walking and biking trails. Frequent wildlife sightings in the park range from alligators and armadillos to eagles and egrets, just to name a few.
- **Myakka River State Park** is preserved within 58 square miles and features an 85-foot Canopy Walkway, a suspended bridge high in the trees with an adjoining 74-foot tower that provides panoramic views of the unique landscape.

#### Water Adventures and Activities

- The **exotic mangrove tunnels of Lido Key** are best viewed by kayak and are home to a wide variety of South Florida's fish and bird species.
- There are more than 231 species of fish in Sarasota Bay, making it a **fisherman's paradise**.  
[www.visitsarasota.org/activities-attractions/fishing/boating/marinas](http://www.visitsarasota.org/activities-attractions/fishing/boating/marinas)
- A must-visit is **Siesta Key**, named TripAdvisor's 2017 Travelers' Choice Award for the Best Beach in North America and No. 1 on Dr. Beach's Top 10 Best Beaches In America in 2017 for its soft, pure-white sand.

#### Birding & Wildlife Viewing

- Sarasota County has two local Audubon Society chapters, the [Sarasota Audubon](#) and [Venice Area Audubon](#).

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- Nesting months are December through May and the best time to spot birds are in the winter months in the early morning.
- Guided tours for birding are available, but vary by location and time of the year.
- The Florida scrub jay is easily spotted along any one of the trails at **Oscar Scherer State Park**, along with bobcats, bald eagles, gopher tortoises, white-tailed deer, eastern cotton-tail rabbits, and raccoons.
- Wildlife abounds with alligators, armadillos, eagles, eastern indigo snakes, bobcats, panthers, bears, sea turtles, gopher tortoises, deer, wild boar, blue jay, blue heron, and egrets.
- The **Celery Fields**, which opened its first welcome center in 2015, offers exceptional opportunities to observe more than 300 species of birds nesting and foraging in their natural habitat. Sarasota County has a **hand-held printed guide** to help adventurers navigate their way through the natural landscape.

### Camping

- Cost varies for camping sites in Sarasota County. Prices can be as low as \$5 per night at for primitive camping and \$70 for cabins at [Myakka River State Park](#).
- Group camping is available at **Myakka River State Park** and **Oscar Scherer State Park**.
- Camping equipment availability varies by campground.

### Events and Festivals

- The [Crystal Classic Sand Sculpting Contest](#) is held each year in November, with participants gathering at pristine Siesta Key for a 24-hour battle that results in museum-quality works of sand art.
- The [Shark Tooth Festival](#) happens each April in Venice, the “Shark Tooth Capital of the World,” inviting fossil collectors to hunt for sharks’ teeth and other prehistoric fossils that line the sandy shore.
- [Ecofest](#) every winter in Sarasota and North Port in the fall and the [Seagrass Festival](#) in the spring are two festivals celebrating Sarasota County’s natural abundance.

For more information, contact **Visit Sarasota County**® at **800-522-9799** or [www.VisitSarasota.com](http://www.VisitSarasota.com). Information may also be found on smartphones and tablets by downloading the Visit Sarasota County® app.

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