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The Bradenton Area: Florida's West Coast Offers the Shore and More

Off the Beaten Path, But Easily Accessible Destination Remains Top Choice for Travel in 2018

BRADENTON, FL – For those looking for the perfect, one-of-a-kind beach vacation, packed with fun for all ages – but with just as many opportunities to relax and leave the hectic routine behind – the [Bradenton Area](#) is ready to welcome you. From its ideal temperatures to its off-the-beaten-path (but [easily accessible](#)) location, its world-class beaches, dining, sports, eco activities, historical stops and one-of-a-kind “soft” adventures, Bradenton, Anna Maria Island, Longboat Key offers the shore and so much more and is the perfect place to escape to year round. Here's what's in store:

By the Beach:

Beaching it: The Bradenton Area is one of the few destinations in the state to have successfully preserved the characteristics of authentic Florida while also seeing major growth in development. “Old Florida” still thrives on its [16 miles of sugar white beaches](#), with options for those looking to snorkel, shell or enjoy some seclusion. And, Coquina Beach on Anna Maria Island was recently named one of the world's top island beaches for perfect sand by *Conde Nast Traveler* readers.

Fishing: Visitors can enjoy fishing from the beach, a kayak or even a deep-sea charter boat. Many take the grand slam challenge of catching redfish, snook and tarpon all in the same day, and after, bring their catch to one of several hook and cook restaurants in the area. Places like [Pier 22](#), [Cortez Fishing Village](#) and [Anna Maria Oyster Bar](#) will prepare freshly caught fish however you like it!

Soft Adventures:

Horse Surfing: Riding horseback along the shores of a vacation locale is a fantasy for many travelers, though there are few vacation areas in the United States where it is actually possible. However, in the Bradenton Area visitors can dive right in! The local tradition, which originated in the destination, lets visitors (accompanied by a guide) ride bareback on a Thoroughbred or quarter horse down the stunning and calm shores of Palma Sola Bay where they then ride a horse into deeper waters. Once the horse begins to swim, riders can stand up to try “[horse surfing](#)” for a vacation experience they will never forget.

Flyboarding & Other Water Sports: In the Bradenton Area, visitors can take advantage of the destination's beach and water by renting a kayak, jet-ski or powerboat, chartering a fishing boat, [flyboarding](#) (boarding up to 20 feet in the air using a jet-ski for power), parasailing, windsurfing, or just exploring the clear-blue water where they are likely to spot wildlife, including manatees, dolphins, sea turtles and fish.

Treetop Obstacle Courses: [TreeUmph!](#) Adventure Course, a high-flying ropes course through the treetops for ages 7 and up, is Southwest Florida's only elevated adventure course. Here families can safely swing through the trees, while tackling zip-lines and obstacles such as wobbly bridges, swinging logs, climb-through barrels, bungee swings and more.

Sports:

Pittsburgh Pirate Spring Training: Fans visiting February through March have ample opportunity to *catch* the spring training action at one of the oldest Spring Training stadiums in use, [LECOM Park](#)



(formerly McKechnie Field), which recently received a \$10.5-million retrofit to add new and upgraded fan amenities while still maintaining its throwback atmosphere.

Andersen RacePark: Set on 18 acres, the facility includes a one-mile professional go-kart track with 13 turns, 22 garages on pit land, a full-service karting store and an 8,000 square-foot shop where professional open-wheel racecars are prepared. [Andersen](#) also offers classes for both adults and children, starting at age 5.

Nature Travel:

Eco Adventures: [Robinson](#) and [Emerson Point Preserve](#) are popular destinations for wildlife photography and bird watching. At each, visitors will find hundreds of acres of coastal saltern, marsh and mangrove habitat attracting rare wildlife in their natural environment, plus lots of trails to explore.

History, Arts / Culture and Sustainability

The South Florida Museum: Visitors to [The South Florida Museum](#) can take in the largest natural and cultural history museum on Florida's Gulf Coast, visit The Parker Manatee Aquarium –a second stage rehabilitation center for injured Manatees – or enjoy a one-of-a-kind show at the Bishop Planetarium.

Village of the Arts: Located in downtown Bradenton, [The Village](#) is Florida's largest art community with over 30 businesses calling it home. The undeniably eclectic neighborhood provides residents and out-of-town fans access to galleries, studios, cafes, healing arts, jewelry, fashion and more – all found within restored 1920's and 30's cottages.

Pine Avenue: Those who get nostalgic for the time when chain restaurants, stores and hotels were not on every street corner should look no further than [Pine Avenue](#) on Anna Maria Island. Recently restored to feature award-winning, energy efficient, storm-strong buildings, native landscapes and crushed-shell sidewalks, Pine Avenue is all about local and sustainable. With a Platinum LEED-certified Green Village, community gardens, shops / boutiques (many selling recycled, refashioned or vintage goods and items produced by local artists) and gourmet restaurants, visitors will understand how Pine Avenue earned the title of "Greenest Little Main Street in America."

Dining:

Floribbean Cuisine: With influences from the rest of the South and the Caribbean, the Bradenton Area is known for its Floribbean cuisine which utilizes many delicious (and unique) heritage products from the land and Gulf. Top restaurant options include Euphemia Haye on Longboat Key, offering world-class cuisine, an extensive wine list and a room dedicated to outrageous desserts, and Beach Bistro on Anna Maria Island, which has been featured on Emeril Lagasse's "Inside Emeril's Florida."

"Though the destination is known for its world-class beaches, the Bradenton Area is fortunate to also offer many unbeatable experiences off of the sand as well, helping to set it apart from other beach destinations in the state," said Bradenton Area Convention and Visitors Bureau Executive Director Elliott Falcione.

"Each year is filled with countless opportunities to enjoy the Bradenton Area and get a glimpse of Florida, the way it used to be."

About the Bradenton Area Convention & Visitors Bureau

The Bradenton, Anna Maria Island and Longboat Key area is located on Florida's West Coast between St. Petersburg and Sarasota. It is bordered on the north by Tampa Bay, and to the west by the Gulf of Mexico. Easy to get to, but off the beaten path, filled with "Old Florida" ambience brimming with opportunities to experience Florida at its most real and authentic, the Bradenton/Anna Maria Island/Longboat Key area is a part of the state worth discovering and exploring again and again.