



What's New in 2019 – Punta Gorda/Englewood Beach

PUNTA GORDA/ENGLEWOOD BEACH, Fla. – With many projects breaking ground or currently under construction, 2019 is set to be a big building year for Punta Gorda/Englewood Beach. Although there are a great number of exciting developments in the pipeline, perhaps the most notable is the Sunseeker Resort which is planned to debut in 2020. In 2019, here are a few things are new to the destination:

World's First Solar-Powered Town Officially Open in Charlotte County, Fla.

Babcock Ranch, the world's first solar-powered town located in southeast Charlotte County, just northeast of Fort Myers on Babcock Ranch Road/State Road 31, commemorated the town's official grand opening on March 10, 2018. The town is powered with a 440-acre solar field at FPL's Babcock Ranch Solar Energy Center, where more than 300,000 solar-panels harvest Florida sunshine and convert it to energy.

Babcock Ranch was created by Kitson & Partners with respect for the natural environment and the philosophy that smart growth and sustainability work hand in hand. Half of the town's 18,000-acre footprint is set aside as greenways, parks and expansive lakes, providing recreation and scenic backdrops for Babcock Ranch's homes and the Founder's Square downtown district.

Babcock Ranch promotes healthy living through a walkable community plan, 50 miles of planned biking and hiking trails, interconnected lakes for paddling enthusiasts, a robust calendar of exercise classes, and the Healthy Life Center operated by Lee Health. The community continues to grow with more services and expanded events available in 2019 including a driverless-shuttle, bicycle and kayak rentals, and freshwater fishing charters. www.babcockranch.com

New Season of Guidelines TV

Two accomplished and respected Southwest Florida fishing guides recently launched a television fishing show called Guidelines TV. Hosts Capt. Jeremy Lee of Sarasota and Capt. Jay Withers of Port Charlotte offer viewers a look inside the passion that drives these two full-time fishing guides as they travel to some of North America's most beautiful fisheries. The digital-based outdoor program streams on Waypoint Outdoors TV and is available to viewers at any time through various platforms such as Amazon Fire TV, AndroidTV, Apple TV, Google Play, Roku, and Xbox. The series can also be viewed on YouTube, and Angler HQ. Learn more www.guidelinestv.com

Coastal Conservation Association Florida

Fishing is a favorite activity in the Charlotte Harbor Gulf Island Coast and for many who live here, their livelihoods rely on a healthy fishery. The 2018 red tide bloom reduced the local snook population and to rebuild it, Coastal Conservation Association Florida and its partners, Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission and Mote Marine Laboratory, have launched a two-year initiative to raise and release 10,000 hatchery-reared juvenile snook in the Florida Southwest Coast. One way anglers can support the initiative is through the Adopt-A-Snook program where donors will be able to track their adopted fish to help raise and release 10,000 hatchery-reared juvenile snook. Donors will receive updates transmitted from a passive integrated transponder (PIT) tag on each fish. Learn more www.ccaflorida.org.

Cruise into New Possibilities

Charlotte Harbor is Florida's second-largest estuary and home to a fleet of options for enjoying the water. One of the newest charters is Downeast Charters docked at Aquamarina Palm Harbour, next to Leverock's in Cape Haze. This six-passenger, Maine-built lobster boat is available for sunrise, day, and sunset charters, and Capt. Jeff Chandonait will ensure there's an authentic Maine lobster roll served with day and sunset cruises. And, wash it down with Moxie soda. A trip out with Downeast Charters is a relaxing and memorable experience, especially for those who long for Maine with a Florida twist. (7080 Placida Rd, Cape Haze, FL 33946; Tel: (207) 299-8502; www.downeastcharters.com)

Gasparilla Boat Tours first launched in February 2018 from Gasparilla Marina and as of November 2018, is under new ownership but is still offering family-friendly educational and fun cruises. These include eco and history tours, critter cruises, and sunset trips. (15001 Gasparilla Road, Placida, Fla. 33946; Tel: (833) 786-8687; www.gasparillaboattours.com).

Muscle Car City Museum Opening Diner

Punta Gorda's Muscle Car City Museum will be opening a 60's retro diner and meeting space with the capacity to seat up to 100 people in early 2019. With a laidback feel and surrounded by nearly 200 GM muscle cars, an afternoon or meal at the Muscle Car City Museum is a fantastic way to spend the day. If plans are flexible, try to visit Muscle Car City Museum around the third Saturday of the month to attend the museum's monthly car show. (10175 Tamiami Trail, Punta Gorda, FL 33950; Tel: (941) 575-5959)

Heritage Landing Golf & Country Club

Punta Gorda's Tern Bay Golf Course closed its doors and in 2019 will be rebranding and reopening as Heritage Landing Golf & Country Club. Situated on the west side of Burnt Store Road just five miles south of US 41, guests will enjoy close proximity to Charlotte Harbor and Charlotte Harbor Preserve State Park on the newly redeveloped 18-hole course designed by Gordon Lewis.

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ABOUT PUNTA GORDA / ENGLEWOOD BEACH

Located halfway between Tampa and Naples on the Southwest Florida Gulf Coast, Punta Gorda /Englewood Beach is a charming collection of nine coastal communities surrounding the state's second largest harbor. Florida's premier year-round eco-tourism destination, the area offers a pristine unspoiled beauty. In 2014, Port Charlotte was named the top "U.S. Best Value Destination" by Trivago (the world's largest online hotel search site), and the Charlotte Sports Park, spring training home of the Tampa Bay Rays, was voted "Best Spring Training Facility" by readers of USA TODAY. A haven for outdoor enthusiasts, Punta Gorda / Englewood Beach has been named one of SAIL magazine's "10 Greatest Places to Sail in the United States," ranked by Golf Digest as "Third Best Place to Live and Play Golf in America," and rated by MONEY magazine as one of the "Best Places to Live in the South." Englewood was named second of the Top Ten emerging travel destinations in the U.S. by TripAdvisor.com. The area is served by five airports: The Punta Gorda Airport (PGD) with private and charter air service, Sarasota Bradenton International Airport (SRQ), Southwest Florida International Airport, Ft. Myers, (RSW), St. Petersburg-Clearwater International Airport (PIE) and Tampa International Airport (TPA). For more information on visiting Punta Gorda / Englewood Beach visit <http://PureFlorida.com> or call 1-800-652-6090.

CONTACTS:

PureFlorida.com/media

Jennifer Huber
Tourism Public Relations
Manager
Punta Gorda/Englewood Beach Visitor &
Convention Bureau
(941) 743-1900 or
jennifer.huber@charlottecountyfl.gov

Melissa Cederquist
Public Relations Manager
Aqua Marketing & Communications
(239) 398-3019 or
Melissa@welcometoaqua.com