



NEWS RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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April 2019

239-338-3500

Celebrate nationally recognized annual festivals at The Beaches of Fort Myers & Sanibel

LEE COUNTY, FL – In addition to great weather, shell-drenched shores and the sparkling Gulf of Mexico, The Beaches of Fort Myers & Sanibel in Southwest Florida is the setting for award-winning, nationally recognized festivals and special events each year. Visit FortMyers-Sanibel.com for more information.

Plan ahead: Hobie 16 World Championship in 2019

Hobie 16 World Championships returns to the USA, after 35 years of events being held in other beautiful locations worldwide. And it is coming to The Beaches of Fort Myers & Sanibel Nov. 1-16, 2019.

Sailors from around the world will compete in three world championship disciplines: Women's, Youth and Open, and three additional disciplines; Masters Cup, Grand Masters Cup and Great Grand Masters Cup.

South Seas Island Resort will host more than 1,000 athletes and 336 teams on 60 new Hobie Cat racing catamaran sailboats for 16 sailing days. Sailors from 30 countries are expected to attend. In past world events, as many as 7,000 people have attended the championships.

The Hobie 16 World Championships is the only sailboat class in the world to supply 60 brand-new identical Hobie Cats, 16-foot catamaran sailboats, for all competitors to race. Hobie Cat Company will provide the boats that will be used exclusively on the racecourse located just off Sunset Beach at the north end of Captiva Island. hobieworlds.com.

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Happening now

9th annual Fort Myers Film Festival

April 10-14, 2019

Sidney & Berne Davis Art Center

fortmyersfilmfestival.com

The Fort Myers Film Festival is an intelligent independent filmmaker's preferred event to create, unite and showcase the finest artistic cinematic works. Known for its support of local filmmakers, the event is a must-attend for cineastes who love indie film and film festivals. Check out all the details on the website.

14th annual Fort Myers Beach Film Festival, Fort Myers Beach

April 24-28, 2019

fmbfilmfest.com

The Fort Myers Beach Film Festival invites independent film fans, filmmakers and distributors to spend four days to exchange ideas, make new contacts and enjoy some great films for all ages. Area accommodations offer special rates and packages to support this international celebration of independent filmmaking.

Smoke on the Water Barbecue Competition & Music Festival, downtown Fort Myers

April 26-27, 2019

239-333-1933

sbdac.com/smoke-on-the-water-fort-myers

The Sidney & Berne Davis Art Center will host barbecue cook teams from across the South to compete in the Smoke on the Water Barbecue Competition & Music Festival 2018. This free community event brings an authentic experience of craft barbecue, beer and bands.

Upcoming events

“Ding” Darling & Doc Ford’s Tarpon Tourney, Sanibel Island

May 3, 2019

239-472-1000

dingdarlingtarpontourney.org

To celebrate the history of the first documented tarpon caught on a rod-and-reel in “Ding” Darling’s Tarpon Bay in 1885, Doc Ford’s and the “Ding” Darling Wildlife Society-Friends of the Refuge have partnered to host this 8th annual “catch, care, and release” tournament. Proceeds support the wildlife and conservation efforts at the J.N. “Ding” Darling National Wildlife Refuge. Check out all of the details on the website.

23rd annual MangoMania Tropical Fruit Festival, Pine Island

July 13-14, 2019

239-283-0888

mangomaniafl.net/

The mango is the star attraction for two days each summer on Pine Island. Go wild for fruit as

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you sample locally-grown delicacies at this annual affair, an unusual celebration of all the tropical fruit grown on the island, which includes lychee, carambola, longan, papaya, and “chocolate pudding fruit.” Fruit, exotic fruit trees, and fruit-related products are available for purchase. This fun, family event celebrates Pine Island's mangoes and other tropical fruits. In addition to mango food and beverages, the event features live music, art and craft vendors, food and recipe contests, and activities area for kids and a chance to meet the Mango Queen.

Save the dates and plan ahead!

The sixth annual **Island Hopper Songwriter Fest** returns **Sept. 20-29, 2019**. The popular event brings music back to the beach with new artists and new events. The festival takes place over 10 days and offers a range of star-studded performances. It kicks off on Captiva Island Sept. 20-22; moves to downtown Fort Myers Sept. 23-26; and ends at Fort Myers Beach Sept. 27-29.

Visit islandhopperfest.com for details as they are announced including artists, venues and great deals on accommodations for locals and out-of-town guests (coming soon).

The festival is presented by The Beaches of Fort Myers & Sanibel, iHeartRadio, Cat Country 107.1 and BMI. It was named one of the top events for summer by the Southeast Tourism Society. Past performers include Midland, Parmalee, Thompson Square and Grammy Award winner Maren Morris. The sixth annual event will continue to give fans the opportunity to meet the talented artists who write songs for country superstars including Tim McGraw, Miranda Lambert, Jason Aldean and Tricia Yearwood.

For more information visit www.islandhopperfest.com. Follow the festival hashtag #islandhopper on Twitter and other social channels.

33rd annual Oktoberfest, Cape Coral

Oct. 18-20, 25-27, 2019

German-American Club

239-283-1400

capecoraloktoberfest.com

Hosted by the German-American Club, this huge celebration brings organizes Munich to Cape Coral. The Cape Coral Oktoberfest is the largest party of the year in the community and is THE event for fun, good food, freshly poured domestic and German beer, live music on several stages, laughter, dancing. Call or check website for schedule and ticket information.

31st annual J.N. “Ding” Darling Days, Sanibel Island

Oct. 19-20, 2019

239-472-1100

dingdarlingdays.com

Conservation Art Day on Saturday, Oct. 19, kicks off the "Ding" Darling Days weekend with Federal Duck Stamp Winners, other artists, cartooning, and nature art – a day devoted to Jay Norwood Darling’s legacy as the first duck stamp artist and Pulitzer Prize-winning political cartoonist.

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Family Fun Day on Oct. 20, culminates the weekend of eco-activities with all-free Refuge tram tours, live wildlife presentations, hot dogs, crafts, and other family activities. Birding, boating, tram, and kayaking activities fill the weekend.

37th annual Taste of the Town, Fort Myers

Nov. 3, 2019

jlfmtaste.com

Alliance for the Arts

Join the Junior League of Fort Myers for a great day of food, music and kids entertainment for the 37th annual Taste of the Town. All proceeds from this event go to support the projects of the Junior League.

Cape Coral CoCoNut Festival, Cape Coral

November 2019

239-573-3121

cocofest.com

Sun Splash Family Water Park

Cape Coral CoCoNut Festival celebrates Cape Coral's reputation for coconuts, multi-cultural food, boating, fishing and wildlife. The festival will feature a national musical act, gymnastic entertainment, carnival rides, water-ski shows, tropical food, contests, coconut crafts and fireworks.

14th annual Sanibel Island Writers Conference

Nov. 7-10, 2019

239-590-7421

fgcu.edu/siwc

BIG Arts and the Sanibel Island Public Library

This intimate writers' conference draws acclaimed authors and songwriters, award-winning poets and screenplay writers. The talented group holds small workshops for all levels of aspiring writers who want to follow in their creative footsteps. Participants also enjoy nightly readings and concerts, which are open to the public. The conference welcomes any writer who wants to create new work or refine a project in progress.

For details and reservations, visit website or contact Tom DeMarchi at tdemarch@fgcu.edu.

33rd annual Sand Sculpting Championship, Fort Myers Beach

Nov. 22-Dec. 1, 2019

In front of Wyndham Garden Hotel

239-454-7500

fmsandsculpting.com

Come and join the fun on Fort Myers Beach for the 33rd annual American Sand Sculpting Championship and Beach Festival. Sponsored by the Fort Myers Beach Chamber of Commerce, this fun-filled event will include world-class master sand sculptors, a state championship contest,

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an amateur contest, sand sculpting demonstrations and lessons, and much more. With more than 1,000 tons of sand, master sand sculptors are returning to Fort Myers Beach forming the largest sand sculpting event in the state, plying their craft and showcasing their artistry in what *USA Today* and *CNN Travel* have named a “must-see” and one of the 10 best sand sculpting competitions in the world.

43rd annual Holiday Nights at the Edison & Ford Winter Estates, Fort Myers November/December 2019

239-334-7419

edisonfordwinterestates.org

Edison Ford Holiday Nights reflect the many contributions of Thomas Edison, Henry Ford and their families to the local community. It was chosen by the editors of *USA Today* as one of the *10 Best Historic Homes for the Holidays*. A not-to-be-missed holiday tradition, the historic buildings and more than 20 acres of gardens are decorated with lights and traditional decorations. The event offers a special holiday tour, Children's Tree Trail, Santa visits on select nights, refreshments and shopping in the Ford Cottage Shoppe, Museum Store and Garden Shoppe. For admission and details: www.edisonfordwinterestates.org/events/annual-events/holiday-nights/

35th annual Christmas Luminary Trail and Open House, Sanibel and Captiva islands Dec. 8 on Sanibel Island and Dec. 9 Captiva Island 2019

sanibel-captiva.org

This event draws visitors from all over the world as they join local residents to celebrate the season with three miles of luminary candles and events.

River District Holidays, downtown Fort Myers

Dec 1, 2019-Jan. 2, 2020

fortmyersriverdistrictalliance.com/holidays

The calendar is packed with holiday events to get you in the spirit of the season. Festival of Trees, Holiday Stroll and Tree Lighting, Burroughs's Home & Gardens Holiday House, Music Walk, holiday concert and a New Year's Eve celebration to welcome 2020. Check the website for a complete calendar.

Annual Port Boca Grande Lighthouse and Museum Lighting, Boca Grande December 2019

barrierislandparkssociety.org/events

Celebrate the annual lighting of the Gasparilla Lighthouse at 6 p.m. with music and refreshments. Gates open at 5:30 p.m.

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Cape Coral Festival of the Arts, Cape Coral

Jan. 11-12, 2020

capecoralfestival.com

239-699-7942

This annual event in its 33rd year draws hundreds of artists and more than 100,000 visitors.

Twisted Strings, Fort Myers

Top Rocker Field at Six Bends Harley Davidson

January 2020

twistedstrings.org

The annual, outdoor festival brings together classically trained musicians who fuse their years of musical training on stringed (and other) instruments with the sounds of jazz, blues, soul, rock, hip hop and world music. Visit site for lineup and ticket information.

ArtFest Fort Myers, downtown historic district

Feb. 1-2, 2020

239-768-3602

artfestfortmyers.com

On the waterfront in downtown Fort Myers, visitors enjoy made-in-USA original art by more than 200 artists. Enjoy food, music and fun for the whole family. Opening night activities: Jan. 31, 2020.

Friends of Lovers Key Annual Vow Renewal, Lovers Key State Park

Feb. 14, 2020

friendsofroverskey.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. 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 required. The non-refundable donation of \$100 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.

82nd annual Edison Festival of Light Grand Parade, Fort Myers

Feb. 15, 2020

239-334-2999

edisonfestival.org

During February, Fort Myers celebrates the birthday of its most illustrious historical resident, Thomas A. Edison, in befitting fashion. Edison, who built a home on the banks of the Caloosahatchee River and spent 46 winters there, invented the light bulb and held more than 1,200 patents. So it's appropriate that the month of activities culminates with a lighted night parade. Invention competitions, parties, craft shows and a 5K run are all part of the festival.

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Spring training 2020

The Beaches of Fort Myers & Sanibel is the spring training home of the Boston Red Sox and the Minnesota Twins. Get up close and see your favorite baseball players. What could be better than beautiful spring days and great baseball? For a complete listing of packages, special rates and information on a spring training vacation, visit www.FortMyersSanibel.com.

Boston Red Sox spring training
February/March 2020
JetBlue Park, Fort Myers
redsox.com

Minnesota Twins spring training
February/March 2020
CenturyLink Sports Complex, Fort Myers
twinsbaseball.com

83rd annual Sanibel Shell Fair & Show, Sanibel Island March 7-9, 2020

Sanibel Community House
239-472-2155
sanibelcommunityhouse.net

Sanibel Island, named the best shelling beach in the U.S. and one of the best in the world, hosts shelling enthusiasts who gather each year for the shell fair that draws visitors from around the globe. One of the most unique events in the country, it began on a porch with just a few islanders and has evolved into today's fair that includes demonstrations, shell displays, crafts, prizes, food and entertainment.

21st annual Southwest Florida Reading Festival Fort Myers Regional Library Campus March 2020

Celebrate the power of reading at the 21st annual **Southwest Florida Reading Festival** at the Fort Myers Regional Library campus at 2450 First St., Fort Myers. The free, family-oriented festival is a chance to meet well-known authors and to focus on the importance of reading. There will also be books and authors for kids and teens. Check the schedule and list of authors at readfest.org

62nd annual Fort Myers Beach Shrimp Festival and Parade, Fort Myers Beach March 7-8, 2020

fortmyersbeachshrimpfestival.com

The **62nd Annual Fort Myers Beach Shrimp Festival and Parade** takes place at Lynn Hall Memorial Park on Fort Myers Beach. Both days are filled with fun, food and crafts as

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well as the world-famous Lions Club shrimp dinners. Shrimp are from our local fleets and are as fresh as you can get. Enjoy a 5K run, the Shrimp Festival Parade, crowning of the Shrimp Queen and a shrimp eating competition.

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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 and Lehigh Acres. For media assistance, visit www.fortmyers-sanibel.com/media-central/