



NEWS RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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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 www.FortMyers-Sanibel.com for more information.

Save the dates and plan ahead!

The fifth annual **Island Hopper Songwriter Fest** returns **Sept. 21-30, 2018**. 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. 21-23; moves to downtown Fort Myers Sept. 24-27; and ends at Fort Myers Beach Sept. 28-30.

Visit www.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 Parmalee, Thompson Square and Grammy Award winner Maren Morris. The fifth 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.

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Upcoming events

32nd Annual Oktoberfest, Cape Coral

October 19-21 and 26-28, 2018

German-American Club

239-283-1400

www.capecoraloktoberfest.com

Hosted by the German-American Club, this huge celebration brings organizers 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.

30th Annual J.N. "Ding" Darling Days, Sanibel Island

October 12-14, 2018

239-472-1100

www.dingdarlingdays.com

Let's Get Outside Day kicks off the annual celebration on Oct. 12, with free admission to Wildlife Drive for cyclists and hikers and various free and discounted tours and eco-activities.

Conservation Art Day follows on Oct. 13, with visits from Federal Duck Stamp and Junior Duck Stamp winners and nature art workshops.

Family Fun Day culminates the weekend with free activities on Oct. 14. It features all-free refuge tours, live wildlife presentations, archery clinics, hot dogs, live music, and kids' nature crafts. Cool Kids Zone will provide activities in the Visitor & Education Center, so families can come in to cool off. It will include puppet shows, story and crafts, DIY nature crafts, face-painting, and a selfie photo station.

Check website for schedule.

36th Annual Taste of the Town, Fort Myers

November 4, 2018

www.jlfm.org

Alliance for the Arts

Join the Junior League of Fort Myers for a great day of food, music and kids entertainment for the 36th 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 9-10, 2018

239-573-3121

www.cocofest.com

Sun Splash Family Water Park

Cape Coral CoCoNut Festival celebrates Cape Coral's reputation for coconuts, multi-

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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.

13th Annual Sanibel Island Writers Conference

November 8-11, 2018

239-590-7421

www.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. Keynote speaker: New Times bestseller, Ann Hood.

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

32nd Annual American Sand Sculpting Championship, Fort Myers Beach

November 16-25, 2018

239-454-7500

www.fmbsandsculpting.com

Come and join the fun on Fort Myers Beach for the 31st 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, 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 23 through December 30, 2018 (Event closed Dec. 24 and 25)

239-334-7419

www.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*, which also included The White House, Mount Vernon, Monticello and the Biltmore in North Carolina. To view the article visit:

www.10best.com/interests/trip-pics/historic-homes-for-the-holidays/.

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In addition, The American Bus Association (ABA) designated the event as one of the *Top 100 Events in North America for 2016*. Edison Ford Holiday Nights has also been featured in *Destinations* magazine noting that Edison Ford Holiday Nights offers excellent entertainment value to both tour groups and individual travelers from around the world.

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.edisonfordwinterstates.org/events/annual-events/holiday-nights/

**34th Annual Christmas Luminary Trail and Open House, Sanibel and Captiva islands
December 7 on Sanibel Island and December 8 on Captiva Island 2018.**

www.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, 2018-Jan. 2, 2019

www.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 2018. Check the website for a complete calendar.

**Annual Port Boca Grande Lighthouse and Museum Lighting, Boca Grande
December 8, 2018**

www.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.

Cape Coral Festival of the Arts, Cape Coral

Jan. 12-13, 2019

www.capecoralfestival.com

239-699-7942

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

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**Twisted Strings, Fort Myers
Top Rocker Field at Six Bends Harley Davidson
Jan. 26, 2019**

www.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. 1-3, 2019**

239-768-3602

www.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.

**Friends of Lovers Key Annual Vow Renewal, Lovers Key State Park
Feb. 14, 2019**

www.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.

**81st Annual Edison Festival of Light Grand Parade, Fort Myers
Feb. 16, 2019**

239-334-2999

www.edisonfestival.org

Parade begins at 7 p.m. at Edison Stadium and continues to the Fort Myers downtown River District. 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. Celebrating 79 years, the month of February is filled with special events.

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Spring Training 2019

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 a 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
JetBlue Park, Fort Myers
www.redsox.com

Minnesota Twins spring training
CenturyLink Sports Complex, Fort Myers
www.twinsbaseball.com

82nd Annual Sanibel Shell Fair & Show, Sanibel Island

March 1-3, 2019

Sanibel Community House
239-472-2155

www.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.

20th Annual Southwest Florida Reading Festival

Fort Myers Regional Library Campus

March 2019

Celebrate books and the written word at the **Southwest Florida Reading Festival** on March 3 from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. at the Fort Myers Regional Library campus at 1651 Lee St., Fort Myers (a new location this year). 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 www.readfest.org

61st Annual Fort Myers Beach Shrimp Festival and Parade, Fort Myers Beach

March 10-11, 2019

239-463-6986

www.fortmyersbeachshrimpfestival.com

Activities for the 61st annual Fort Myers Beach shrimp harvest event will include a parade, crowning of the Shrimp Queen, craft vendors, the boiled shrimp concession, and other seafood booths set up both days at Lynn Hall Memorial Park.

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9th Annual Fort Myers Film Festival

March 2019

Locations throughout Lee County

www.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 2019

www.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 2019

239-333-1933

www.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.

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

May 3, 2019

239-472-1000, ext. 4

www.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. Registration is \$500 per team of four, 100 percent of which goes back to the anglers in cash awards. 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

www.mangomaniafl.net/

The mango is the star attraction for two days each summer on Pine Island. Go wild for fruit as you sample locally-grown delicacies at this annual affair, an unusual celebration of all the

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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.

For the latest information on the area's many accommodation choices, events and activities, visit www.FortMyers-Sanibel.com.

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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/