

SARASOTA

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Diane Bair
Freelance for Boston Globe
September 23-26, 2015

Welcome to Sarasota County on Florida's Gulf Coast.

Visit Sarasota County Contact: Lynn Hobeck Bates, Communications Manager, (o) 941-955-0991 ext. 103; (m) 941-539-1393
lhobeck@visitsarasota.org

Accommodations:

Check-in: Wednesday, September 23, 2015

Check-out: Saturday, September 26, 2015

Inn at Venice Beach

725 West Venice Avenue

Venice, FL 34285

941-484-8471

Confirmation #4953

VIP card provided upon arrival at hotel.

Wednesday September 23, 2015

Arrive RSW Airport in Ft. Myers.

Deb Ericson from Visit Sarasota County to pick up and transport to Venice.

Venice Train Depot, Venice Performing Arts Center, Historical Society, Venice Architecture Guide

Tour Venice with Deb Ericson and dinner.

Thursday, September 24, 2015

Morning: Search for sharks teeth at Venice Beach. Shark's teeth sifter provided. Please return to hotel office upon check-out.

Noon—Lunch at Sharkey’s on the Pier with Visit Sarasota County Lynn Hobeck Bates, Visit Sarasota County PR Manager

Sharkey’s on the Pier
1600 Harbor Drive S.
Venice, FL 342385
941-488-1456
sharkeysonthepier.com

2 p.m. Bicycle Tour of City of Venice with City of Venice Mayor John Holic
Meet at Historic Train Depot

4 p.m. Conclude Tour at Historic Train Depot

Dinner—on own. Suggestions Café Venice, cafeveniceontheisland.com; Marker 4, marker4.com

Friday, September 25, 2015

Explore using VIV card. Historic Spanish Point is in nearby Osprey and The Ringling is approximately 20 minutes north.

The Ringling

5401 Bayshore Road
Sarasota, FL 34234
www.ringling.org

The Ringling Estate includes the Ca d’Zan mansion, beautiful grounds and gardens, Circus Museum, Historic Asolo Theater and the museum of Art. Daily 10 a.m.-5 p.m.

Lunch: Downtown Sarasota. Suggestions: Bijou Café

Bijou Café
1287 First St. Sarasota, FL 34236; bijoucafe.net

Nancy’s BBQ
nancysbbq.com

Marina Jack’s
marinajacks.com

Marie Selby Botanical Gardens

900 S. Palm Avenue
Sarasota, FL 34326
www.selby.org

Explore the world’s most spectacular display of epiphytes and educational programs. Open daily 10 a.m.-5 p.m.

Afternoon:

Historic Spanish Point

historicspanishpoint.org
337 N. Tamiami Trail
Osprey, FL

Sarasota's premier outdoor archaeological site and history museum featuring a pioneer homestead, nature trails and the gardens of Mrs. Potter Palmer.

3-4 p.m. Tour Venice Theater

Meet with Laurie Colton, Director of Marketing and Public Relations at the Box Office

Venice Theatre
140 W. Tampa Ave
Venice, FL 34285
941-484-4033, ext. 221
www.venicestage.com

The second-largest of 10,000 community theatres in the United States, it is located at 140 W. Tampa Ave. in Venice, FL. Its MainStage offers seating for 432 patrons and features musicals, plays, concerts and special events. Its Yvonne Pinkerton Theatre seats 90 patrons and is home to the theatre's "Generations," Stage II and Cabaret Series. In addition to providing entertainment to the community, Venice Theatre offers a wide range of education and outreach programs for children and adults.

6:30 p.m. Dinner at Fins at Sharkeys—this is provided complimentary to you.

1600 Harbor Drive S.
Venice, FL 34285
941-488-1456

Saturday, September 26, 2015

8 a.m.-Noon Venice Farmers Market

Tampa Ave. between Nokomis & Nausau Avenues
Historic Downtown Venice, Fla.

2:30 p.m. Gulf Coast Destinations Driver to pick up at Inn at Venice and transport to RSW for flight

Gulf Coast Destinations Inc.
941-927-3737 / 727-639-1958
www.gcdmc.com

Visit Sarasota County is not responsible for any incidentals, food, beverage, transportation, and baggage or transfer fees not covered in this itinerary.

Thank you for visiting and we hope you have a great stay and will come again soon. Please contact one of the Communications Team members at the numbers above or our general office number at 941-955-0991 should you need any further information on the destination.

Sarasota County Official Visitor Information Center
14 N. Lemon Avenue, Sarasota, FL 34236
1-800-800-3906 or 1-941-706-1253

www.visitsarasota.com

the Sunday

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THREE-SY DOES IT FOR IBIZA BUDGET

WHEN planning a getaway to Ibiza, a budget is essential. Together, *Three-Sy*'s Ultimate Ibiza Budget Guide has three easy budgets to enjoy the best of the island. No matter how you want to spend, the Thrifty Ibiza is the ultimate saver. Lunch is a baguette washed down with a litre of water. Dinner is a €2 slice of pizza, a bottle of cheap Spanish beer, a group of mates on the beach and the Thrifty Ibiza is living it up to the glow of a moonbathing sunset.

The understated Ibiza can enjoy a nice meal out with friends too – and maybe a bit of Spanish authentic pasta.

Finally, the Ibiza High Roller rocks nothing back as they are ready to live it large. They can certainly afford to sample some of Ibiza's finest five-star meals with their friends.

Visit together travel or call 020 3375 0047



app CANON COME AND SEE (free) This app contains nine city guides for your smartphone – covering Paris, London, Madrid, Berlin, Milan and Amsterdam. Each is created by a different guide with a link to the city. London's is by portrait artist and photographer Scott Dale. And if you fancy a go, the guides have tips from photography experts at Canon on capturing the best pictures. Download for free at canon.co.uk/commandos.

TWO HOLS IN ONE IS TWIN-CREDIBLE

FOR those looking to combine a beach holiday with the delight of discovering a new culture or the relaxing qualities of a beach escape, Banyan Tree Hotels & Resorts has the answer with a twin-curve holiday. An Arabian escape to the UAE's Banyan Tree Al Wadi, Dubai, followed by a relaxing retreat to Banyan Tree Nabatiya in the Maldives is the perfect combination. At Banyan Tree Al Wadi guests can explore the resort's desert, learn the art of Arabian cuisine while coolly lesson and test their skills as a falconer. From the UAE, it's just a short flight to the Maldives, where the designs of Banyan Tree Nabatiya meet – a paradise island of white sand and fringed palms.

For the more active there is scuba diving. Banyan Tree Al Wadi accommodations starts at sports £285 per night. Banyan Tree Nabatiya starts at sports £200 per night, and Banyan Tree Seychelles from sports £170 per night. See banyan.com



SMILES... Annabelle and her girls ONE of my husband's favourite childhood memories is of a family holiday to Sarasota, Florida.

They all had such an amazing time there that he still talks about it now. So we jumped at the chance to take our own kids, Molly, four, and Matilda, seven months, there ourselves.

We flew to Tampa, Florida, from Glasgow via Gatwick with British Airways and even this nine-hour leg of the trip with two little ones was much less stressful than we'd anticipated. When we landed Molly was so excited that any signs of tiredness were brushed.

Soon we were driving south west on the highway heading for Venice in Sarasota County on the stunning Gulf Coast.

Our base was a spacious, two-bedroom condominium at the Inn At The Beach – just a stone's throw from the beautiful white sands and blue waters of Venice Beach.

Top of my wish list was an airboat ride

The children took a couple of days to settle into US time so we made a virtue of the early starts and headed down there most mornings to watch the sun come up.

Sam and I watched pelicans fishing a few yards off the shore while Molly picked up beautiful shells and Matilda beamed happily in her baby carrier.

Then we headed to French artisan bakery Croissant Co for breakfast – their delicate pastries, served with fresh berries, are out of this world. And the girls loved their cute leashes of alligator bread.

Top of my wish list was a ride on an airboat, just like those in the *Goosebumps* TV series we had watched as kids. So off we travelled to Myrtle River State Park for



an hour-long cruise on the lake. Our guide Robert expertly manoeuvred the *Castor* Gal – one of the world's two largest airboats – through shallow waters to within a few feet of alligators and blue herons.

We even saw mussels fishing. And afterwards we did the canopy walk for awesome views over the park's wetlands, forest and prairie before heading home for a cooling swim in the pool.

With temperatures above 80°F each day, Florida lived up to its moniker as the Sunshine State. No wonder it's such a popular place to retire to for the girls, the next time there were lots of grandparents merrily fishing. And especially as we explored the boutiques and art and craft stores along Venice Avenue.

Our shopping trips took even longer than usual but we were happy to go with the Flo. And lots of little parks in the area meant Molly had the chance to stretch her legs too.

One afternoon we stopped off for lunch at Cafe Venice, where the super-friendly staff walked croquet, paper and a cool drink out to her before we had even sat down.

I tried a tasty pulled pork roll with the house special, crispy bread sandwich, while Sam had a delicious chicken salad and Molly wolfed down pepperoni pizzas.

Being able to eat outside was a real treat after a chilly time back home and we were determined to make the most of the

GO: Sarasota

Annabelle As the *Flo* offers a nine-night family holiday in Venice, Florida, from £3,925 for two adults and two children (12-17 years) including return flights from Edinburgh or Glasgow via London Gatwick to Tampa airport, taxes, travel insurance and airport transfers. See www.theflo.com or call 020 3375 0047. See www.sarasota.org and www.inn.com

beat with a trip to a YMCA water park near Sarasota city. It wasn't quite on the scale of the ones Sam remembered from his childhood but Molly loved the slides – although she was just as keen to get back to the ocean and her body board.

A fabulous place to watch sun go down

We spent a happy morning on the shark's tooth capital of the world – touring the sand at the waterline for the little black fossilised treasures.

It is best to go in the morning when it is cool. We used a metal sift to dredge up sand and shells before checking our haul. At Venice Beach, left-back Sharkey's on the Pier proved a fabulous place to watch the sun

go down with a sike cold beer. Venice Beach – recently voted the best in the US – was another highlight. The sand is almost 100 per cent quartz, so it is brilliant white and feels almost like sugar to walk on. It is especially popular with families, particularly on Sundays when a group of drummers gather ahead of sunset to play to a crowd of several hundred – who all end up a bit mesmerised by the primal beat.

The following day we drove out to Wakulla Grove, an old Florida citrus distribution store where you can watch the fruit being sorted and enjoy the most delicious soft-serve orange and lime flavoured ice cream.

The three of us chose orange and chocolate and all agreed it was the best we had ever tasted. Luckily Matilda was asleep and

was unaware she was mbling out on this sweet treat. Venice was an ideal base from which to explore Sarasota and we would definitely go back. There are also plenty of cultural activities to interest the girls when they're older – from the world's largest miniature circus and a fabulous art collection at the Ringling Museum.

There is also the brilliant Mote Aquarium, home to a host of turtles to reef fish and manatees. The shark's tooth pools are a firm favourite with children. All too soon our time in Florida drew to a close. But hopefully the memories Molly has of what was a really special trip will be ones she still talks about for many years to come – just like her dad. ANNABELLE LOVE

MEMORIES FROM FAMILY BREAK IN SARASOTA WILL LAST A LIFETIME



What costs what?

Upper Myrtle Lake Cruise, £8 per adult, family max £30, beer covers all. www.mylakecruises.com

Visit the City Tourists – great for kids in cool off. www.citytourists.com

Don't Forget to try Shoozy pie at Annell restaurant in Venice

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PLUS: COASTAL STYLE
FROM CALIFORNIA TO THE CAPE

JULY/AUGUST 2015



Southport,
North Carolina

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SOUTHPORT North Carolina

Putting proof to the dictum that “small is beautiful,” this tiny (2.2-square-mile) harbor town at the outlet of the Cape Fear River with only 3,060 residents wins big on Southern beauty and charm. Everyone’s your neighbor here, and most of the town’s residents walk, bike, or drive golf carts down Southport’s oak tree-lined streets to enjoy a morning coffee at Port City Java, browse antiques shops and galleries, and head to the waterfront for a table—and delicious fish tacos—on the pier of Fishy Fishy Café.

One stroll through town (and perhaps a stop at Bull Frog Corner, with its barrels of penny candy) makes it easy to see why Southport has long been sought after as a film location. Bright white cottages with red roofs, stately sea captains’ homes, two

lighthouses, and water in seemingly every direction (what with the confluence of the river and the Intracoastal Waterway) create vistas at every bend in the road. It’s a vintage postcard sent from a halcyon past.

In addition to the town’s harborfront pleasures—the jaw-dropping views of massive container ships navigating toward the ocean from inland Wilmington, plus a narrow strait of sand along the water—Southport is also a quick ferry boat ride out to Bald Head Island, boasting one of North Carolina’s most stunning beaches. Finally, there’s nothing small about the Independence Day party here: Southport swells with revelers who come to celebrate at the North Carolina 4th of July Festival—a truly all-American weekend.

WHERE TO STAY: The buttercup yellow circa 1890 **Robert Ruark Inn** offers a historic retreat, not to mention a welcoming line of rockers on its ample front porch. Rates start at \$148. 910/363-4169 or robertruarkin.com. **Lois Jane’s Riverview Inn** has cozy, pretty rooms near the water. Rates start at \$120. 910/457-6701 or loisanes.com

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VENICE Florida

What does it say about this town of 22,000 people on Florida’s Gulf Coast that it has a designated beach for dogs? Two things: Venice is a town with a big heart, and it has plenty of gorgeous, pearly-white beaches to spare (14 miles, in fact). Locals love Caspersen Beach, a 2-mile long sandy playground with a short drop-off that draws ocean swimmers. Beachcombers flock to Venice Beach to seek shark teeth, for which the town is known.

On shore, the pleasures of Venice are equally beautiful. The lushly landscaped avenues of the historic district, designed in the 1920s as an homage to the town’s Italian namesake, are lined with Italian Renaissance style buildings sporting elegant arches and red tile roofs that are home to more than 100 boutiques, restaurants, and small businesses.

The onetime winter encampment for The Ringling Bros. and Barnum & Bailey Circus, Venice still enjoys its playtime. The Venetian Waterway Park runs for 10 miles on both sides of the Intracoastal Waterway, allowing everyone access to running and walking trails, not to mention constant water views. Dogs, meanwhile, just lead their masters to Broward Paw Park Beach, where they can run free.

WHERE TO STAY: Across a slender street from the ocean, **the Inn at the Beach** has a charmingly old-fashioned courtyard pool, and its beach-view suites are perfect sunset-watching perches. Rates start at \$116. 941/484-6471 or innatthebeach.com



SOUTHPORT: CHRISTOPHER SPANER; VENICE: JAMES SCHWABE/WALRY (2); BALD HEAD BEACH: JAMES APIC TO