



AllWays Traveller

Gasparilla Island, Florida

[www.allwaystraveller.com](http://www.allwaystraveller.com)

## Little changes on this Florida island - and why should it?

**Gasparilla Island, one of a string of barrier islands along the southwest Gulf Coast of Florida, is located between Fort Myers and Tampa.**

The island takes its name from the legendary Spanish pirate Jose Gaspar, who is said to have plundered the surrounding waters in the 18th century.

Travellers may well be more familiar with the name Boca Grande, which is the small residential heart of the island.

Gasparilla is an upmarket destination that has been attracting the affluent and influential for almost a century, either for short break stays or as second home owners.

Its lure is the chance to relax on an island with stunning beaches, great fishing and shelling and where the bike or golf buggy is the preferred mode of transport.

### **The Gasparilla Inn & Club**

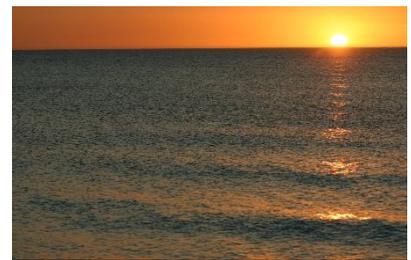
The historic Gasparilla Inn and Club, in Boca Grande, is the place to stay offering Old Florida charm with modern comfort and service in equal measure.

### **Ashley Gibbins**

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**AllWays traveller**



[www.fortmyers-sanibel.com](http://www.fortmyers-sanibel.com)



# A one-time experience and memories to cherish

By Ashley Gibbins

**Writers often need something, sometimes anything, to kick start the flow of words.**

For me, sitting in the sun, with a clear blue sky and a slightly deeper blue sea, into which pelicans are diving for an early fish supper, is a good start.



The temperature, at 78 degrees, is as 'near as damn it' perfect and all that's lacking is a cold 'happy hour' beer. And that is not too far off.

But not before taking in yet another spectacular sunset - and a few hundred words.

**This is not the liveliest of places**

The first thing to say about Gasparilla is that this is not the liveliest place you'll find in Florida.

As the centre of activity, Boca Grande, is a very pleasant small town with a sleepy, mid-50s small town American feel to it.

Rush hour here is two golf buggies arriving at a stop sign together.

## And that's during daylight hours

Things tend to get a little quieter at night. But then that's the joy of this small island, the 'away-from-it-all-ness'.



## When to go

Timing is all important, if visiting Gasparilla Island,

We were there the first week of December, the islands 'shoulder' season (which runs from after Thanksgiving to mid-December) and it was great.

The weather is wonderful and the prices very reasonable. A couple more weeks and folks will be flocking in for the holidays.

Then, after a brief lull, the high social, season kicks in and lasts right through to mid-May. Everything tends to shut down on the island after 4 July through to mid-October. It's just too darn hot



## Cycle to the lighthouse

Take a leisurely cycle to the Boca Grande lighthouse, which is on the southern end of the island, which is a six mile round trip.



The beach around here is the best on the island with fine views across to the Le Costa Island nature reserve.

## Go shelling

Gasparilla Island is one of the best places to shell in Florida.



Beachcombers, that means almost everyone, will enjoy looking for and finding shells to take home.

The best time to look is during the low tide.

## A place to stay : The Gasparilla Inn and Club



The Inn has been a Florida institution since it first began welcoming the wealthy back in 1913.

For a full history on the Inn's website, which makes for fascinating reading visit : [www.the-gasparilla-inn.com/about\\_history.php](http://www.the-gasparilla-inn.com/about_history.php)



Walking up and through the grand columned entrance to the Inn, one is likely to reflect on the many thousands of wealthy and influential guests who have gone before.

These include Henry Ford, Thomas Edison, Katharine Hepburn and President George H.W. Bush.



### As good as it always was

Although there have been continual improvements and refurbishment over the years, the ambience and the emphasis on service remains as high as it must always have been.

In the Inn itself the large lounge area, smaller sitting rooms and the grand Pelican Club room are sumptuous and should be used as much as possible.

I am a great believer in making the most of the public areas of the best hotels to relax, read, have a drink or, as one does now, check emails from the tablet or smart phone.

## Go fishing



This area of Florida is known for its fine fishing and provides one of the world's best tarpon fishing 'holes'

The tarpon gather and spawn out of passes along most of the entire rim of the Gulf of Mexico, although why they are attracted to Boca Grande Pass is unclear, though subject to many theories.

### Have a happy hour or two at Miller's Dockside



From 4pm to 6pm join the locals for happy hour at the bar of the Eagle at Millers Dockside.

[www.eaglegrille.com](http://www.eaglegrille.com)

## Fine dining at the Inn



The dining experience at the Inn falls under the auspices of Certified Master Chef Peter Timmins, who is one of only 60 chefs in the US to hold this title.

Dining itself is in the *Main Dining Room*, which so understates the restaurant and the food it serves.

### The Pink Elephant

The Pink Elephant, a short stroll away, offers more casual and al fresco dining.



### The accommodation

The Gasparilla Inn's guest accommodation includes 63 suites, deluxe king, queen and twin rooms within the Inn itself.

There are also surrounding cottages and villas

## On the course with a club or mallet



The Inn also offers an 18 hole, Pete Dye designed, championship golf course, three international calibre croquet lawns and its own marina.

## The beach club



And then there's the beach club, which has a fitness room, spa, pools, bar and daytime restaurant.

But most of all it has a sand terrace overlooking the beach and those crystal blue Gulf waters and diving Pelicans.

And that's where I came in. It's time for that cold beer.

[www.the-gasparilla-inn.com](http://www.the-gasparilla-inn.com)

## Watch the birds – they're everywhere



## More information



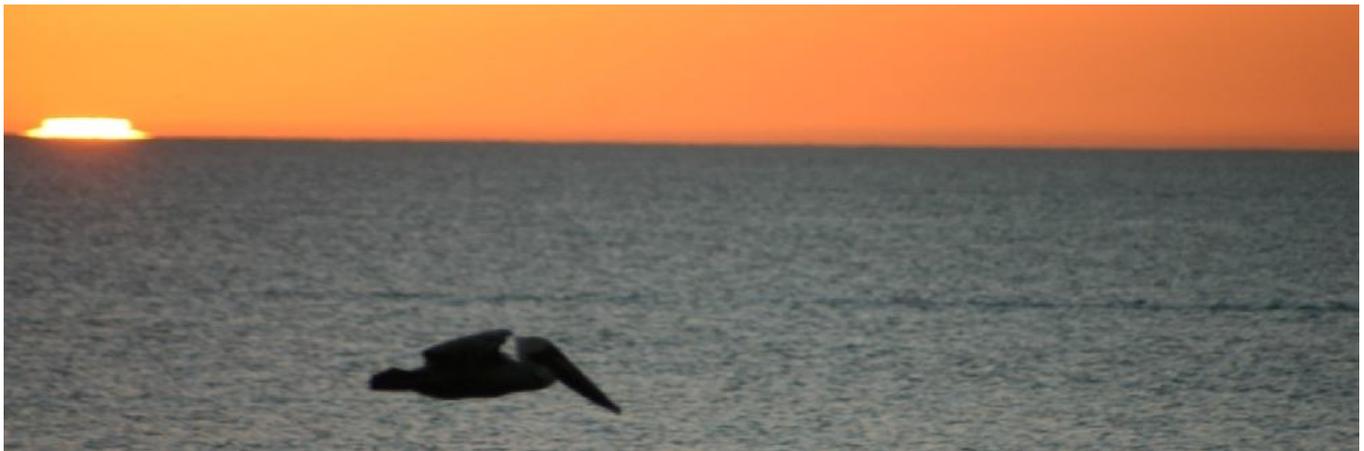
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[www.floridastateparks.org/gasparilla-island](http://www.floridastateparks.org/gasparilla-island)

[www.visitflorida.com/Boca\\_Grande](http://www.visitflorida.com/Boca_Grande)

[www.bocagrandechamber.com](http://www.bocagrandechamber.com)

## A snapshot of Gasparilla Island



### AllWays traveller and the International Travel Writers Alliance

### Ashley Gibbins



AllWays

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AllWays traveller provides independent travellers with a view of the world from the journalists in the International Travel Writers Alliance.

The International Travel Writers Alliance

[www.itwalliance.com](http://www.itwalliance.com)

The International Travel Writers Alliance is the world's largest association of professional travel journalists.



Ashley is Chief Executive of the International Travel Writers Alliance and Managing Editor of AllWays traveller