



AllWays Traveller

Fort Myers Beach, Florida

www.allwaystraveller.com

Sun and fun on this thin and glorious strip of Florida

Fort Myers Beach is located along a thin strip of barrier island on the Gulf of Mexico, in South West Florida.

It's a real tourist trap, attracting families, active couples and the young single set in search of sun, sea, sand and the 'Coney Island' style excitement of the Times Square dining and entertainment district.

And even while the focus is invariably on the lively, fun side of a sunshine beach holiday, those looking for a spell away from this can take the short drive to Lovers Key state park.

Here you will walk or take the tractor pulled tram through a mangrove forest to one of Florida's most pristine stretches of sand.

Alternatively a short trip over the causeway and one is on the barrier islands of Sanibel and Captiva.

Ashley Gibbins

Managing editor
AllWays traveller



www.fortmyers-sanibel.com

Downtown Fort Myers

Finally, for a cultural experience head to downtown Fort Myers, which has enjoyed a remarkable artistic renaissance in recent years.



An independent view of Fort Myers Beach

Welcome to the town of Fort Myers Beach

By Ashley Gibbins



The sign on the outskirts of this place welcomes visitors to the Town of Fort Myers Beach



And having taken time to look around I can confirm that there is indeed a community of very friendly Floridians living here.

The residential areas can be found down the quiet cul-de-sacs to the landward side of Estero Boulevard.

But for the day trippers, tourists and snowbirds who flock here in their droves, it is the 'beach' part of Fort Myers Beach that provides the lure.

And no wonder. Fort Myers Beach is a long stretch of gently sloping, soft white sand that takes one effortlessly - and naturally - into gloriously warm, safe, waters of the Gulf.

As such it is a magnet for all manner of 'sun worshipers'.



All life on this beach

Life on Fort Myers Beach starts at sun rise when the shoreline sea birds start their daylong hunt for morsels.

These are quickly followed by the first walkers and joggers who use its flat expanse for idyllic, daily fitness routines.

It is around this time that those offering beach beds, jet skis and a parasailing experience are getting kit and equipment ready.

While there

Lovers Key State Park



Close at hand is the isolated Lovers Key State Park and the chance to experience a castaway experience for a couple of hours.

A boardwalk takes visitors over tidal lagoons to a white sandy beach and there is also the opportunity to hike through woods, look for manatees or kayak through inner waterways.

A little further afield

For those looking for days away from Fort Myers Beach, there can be a visit downtown Fort Myers (13 miles) and the Sanibel and Captiva islands (12).

Sanibel and Captiva



The barrier islands of Sanibel and Captiva are connected to the mainland by a three-mile-long causeway that stretches from Fort Myers Beach out across San Carlos Bay.

There is a real laid back ambiance on the islands that makes for a great day out.

The family platoons

Next to arrive are the 'platoons' of families, eager to stake a claim to a plot of beach and set up their 'camps' of brightly coloured, low slung beach chairs, striped towels, sun shades and cool boxes.



They are obviously here for the long haul and well prepared for the warm, sun filled hours lie ahead.

Defending the camps, the toddlers get straight to work building badly designed sea defences, against the tide when it arrives, and sand castles to defend, well, only they know what.

But it keeps this happy band occupied in endless, if futile, construction projects while their parents opt for that ageless beach pursuit - snoozing in the sun before making a 'reccy' of one of the beachside bars.

The young single set

The young, free and single set tend to turn up somewhat later in the day, having recuperated from raucous exploits of the night before.



For this group, Fort Myers Beach offers the chance to chill out in a way that enables seeing and being seen, in best light, to best effect.

Then there are the snowbirds, here for the winter from the cold northern states.

The snowbirds have time on their side and the knowledge that the sun will shine tomorrow, and tomorrow.

As a result, this group tend to be selective in their use of the beach, dropping in for a couple of hours during the late afternoon before heading off to one of the many happy hours.

And finally, as the sun starts to dip and the daytime beach dwellers slowly dissipate, it is time for the new - and older - romantics to stroll, hand-in-hand along the sand, into the silhouette of another stunning sunset.

Times Square

As darkness closes, in its turn the bright lights of Times Square act as a beacon for those wanting a lively time that lasts into the early hours.

This Coney Island style entertainment complex offers bars and restaurants, beach wear outlets and gift shops.

It is a place just made for a Jimmy Buffet style of relaxed hanging out with friends and the sound of live and recorded music drifts out from all corners of Times Square.

And when, finally, it is time to head back to the hotel, what better route than via the beach with the water now shimmering with a silvery moonlit glow.



More than half of the area of Sanibel and Captiva is preserved as wildlife refuges with the Sanibel-Captiva Conservation Foundation responsible for curbing uncontrolled commercial growth and development.

In particular, the 6,000 acre JN 'Ding' Darling National Wildlife Refuge, , features bird and animal watching spots, walking, bike and canoe trails and a 4-mile scenic drive and guided tours.

See : [AllWays traveller to Sanibel and Captiva.](#)

www.dingdarling.fws.gov
www.fortmyerssanibel.com
www.sanibel-captiva.org

Downtown Fort Myers



Fort Myers got its name from the 1850s wooden fort named in of honour one Col Abraham C Myers.

The fort was built to garrison the troops sent to subdue the native Seminole Indians who were not best pleased with the settlers.

A place to stay

The DiamondHead Beach Resort & Spa



The first thing to look for in a place to stay here is, of course, a hotel on the beach.

The *DiamondHead Beach Resort & Spa* fits the bill perfectly by combining a friendly, relaxed approach and good service.



This high rise hotel enjoys spectacular views and the all-suite, self-contained, accommodation is geared to comfort and creating that home-from-home feel.



So while guests can come and go as they please, and cook and do the laundry if they want to, the *DiamondHead* also has an excellent restaurant and an intimate cocktail bar with live music.



In addition, Sunstream Resorts, which owns the *DiamondHead Beach Resort* also offers the *GullWing Beach* and *Pointe Estero Beach* resorts - two excellent beachfront, 'condo' developments in Fort Myers Beach.

www.diamondheadfl.com
www.sunstream.com

And finally AllWays recommends

Heavenly Biscuit

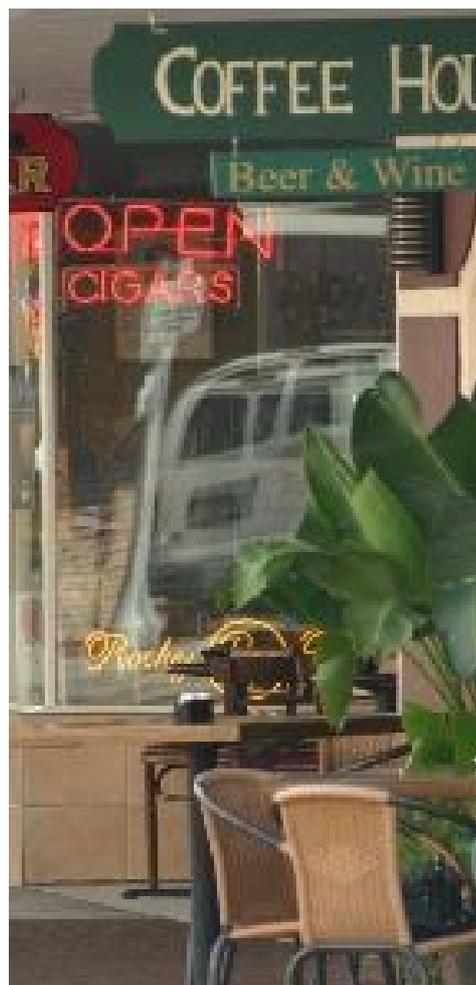
My personal favourite, the Heavenly Biscuit on Estero Boulevard s a must for breakfast and/or lunch.

This small ramshackle cabin has a tremendous atmosphere, great food, 'bottomless' coffee and a warm and wonderfully down to earth welcome by the ladies who run the place.

A steady flow of visitors and locals arrive and leave happy between 7.00am and 3.00pm with diners and those collecting 'take-outs'.

I took a 24 mile round trip just to have a second breakfast here.

Fort Myers



The city of Fort Myers grew up around the fort and flourished as a cattle station, port and rail terminal long after the fort itself was decommissioned and its wood scavenged by those same settlers.

In more recent times the city's economic prosperity floundered, before dipping into severe decline.

The historic downtown suffered a particularly badly period. As a result, the visitors now attracted to Fort Myers Beach tend to give Fort Myers itself a wide berth.

A big mistake in many ways.

The downtown regeneration and cultural renaissance of Fort Myers, in recent years has been startling.

And equally as remarkable is the infusion of artistic and cultural activities and initiatives from the citizens.

See : [*AllWays traveller to Fort Myers.*](#)

AllWays more Fort Myers Beach

When to go



Fort Myers Beach is a year round destination although October to April is perhaps the best time to make a visit.

That said, accommodation can be up to 60% less during off peak periods.

How to get there

By air

Direct flights into Tampa or Miami.

Most major American airlines also have connections into Southwest Florida International Airport .



I flew with Virgin Atlantic from London Heathrow.

In addition to Miami and Orlando, Virgin Atlantic flies to 28 other major destinations worldwide in the USA, Australia, the Caribbean, Europe, Asia and Africa.

www.virgin-atlantic.com

By road

Fort Myers is on Interstate 75 and US 41 with Miami 148 miles, Orlando 167 miles, and Tampa 134 miles

Car rental

All car rental companies operate in Florida.



Dollar, which has competitive rates, always provides a cracking service.

www.dollar.com

Where to stay

There is no shortage of accommodation on Fort Myers Beach with a wide range of hotels, apartments, cottages, motels and camp grounds to choose from.

www.visitfortmyersbeach.co/where-to-stay

I stayed at the *DiamondHead Beach Resort*.

www.diamondheadfl.com

Where to eat



SOB

For happy hour on Times Square, the *Smokin Oyster Brewery*, Seafood Restaurant is the 'down to earth' place to head for to mix with the locals and, come fall and winter, the snowbirds.

Doc Ford's and Parrot Quay

Also in the Times Square area Doc Ford's and the Parrot Quay, compete for top spot in the highly recommended category.

www.docfordsfortmyersbeach.com
www.myparrotkey.com

The Beached Whale

The Beached Whale sums up Fort Myers Beach dining and entertainment.

Great ribs, steaks and fish dishes, a very popular roof top sports bar and live music to dance to below.

www.thebeachedwhale.com

The Bayfront Bistro

For an 'upscale' dining option, try the Bayfront Bistro, which serves up fine cuisine and a bay view.

www.batfrontbistro.com

Coconut Jacks

And Coconut Jacks, which is just down the road in Bonita Springs, has a hugely popular happy 'hour', from 3.00pm to 6.00pm and the chance to enjoy great grouper, wonderful Mango Bango Shrimp and other dishes on the patio with its lake view setting.

www.coconutjacks.com

What's on



Fort Myers Beach stages a range of annual festivals and events throughout the year.

Notable among these is the Fort Myers Beach Shrimp Festival in March and the American Sandsculpting Championship Festival, which attracts competitors from all over the world.

More information



www.FortMyers-Sanibel.com
www.ultimateislandguide.com

A snapshot of Fort Myers Beach



The International Travel Writers Alliance



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www.allwaystraveller.com

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



The International Travel Writers Alliance

www.itwalliance.com

The International Travel Writers Alliance is the worlds largest association of professional travel writers, editors, broadcasters and photographers.

Ashley Gibbins



Ashley is Chief Executive of the International Travel Writers Alliance.