



AllWays Traveller

Fort Myers, Florida, USA

www.allwaystraveller.com

A downtown on the up and up

Fort Myers, which is located between Naples and Sarasota on Florida's Gulf Coast, 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 moving onto their lands.

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 particularly badly period.

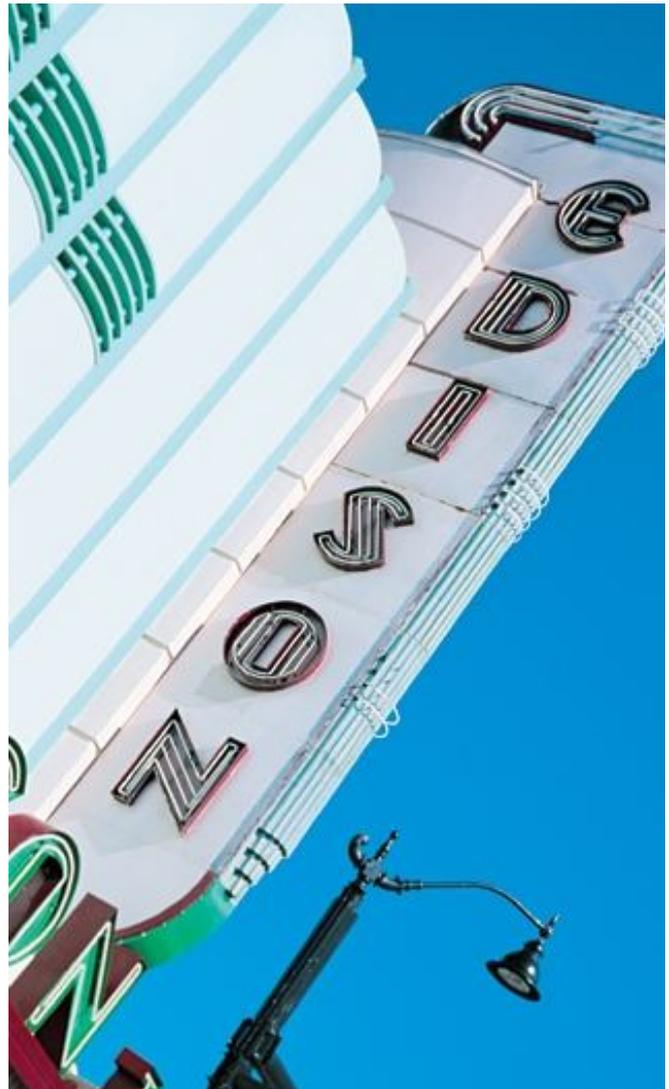
As a result, the visitors now attracted to the 50 miles of white sand beaches and 100 plus barrier and coastal islands in this area tend to give Fort Myers itself a wide berth. A big mistake in many ways.

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.

It all makes Fort Myers a very rewarding city break in its own right as well as a base to tour the areas beaches.

Ashley Gibbins

Managing Editor
AllWays traveller



www.FortMyers-Sanibel.com



A place that grows and grows on you

by Ashley Gibbins



We arrived late evening in downtown Fort Myers after a three hour drive from Miami following a nine hour transatlantic flight.

I was a tired, a little frazzled and therefore not my usual chirpy self and, at times like these, the welcome on arrival and quality of the accommodation is going to have a particular impact on my frame of mind.

The Hotel Indigo more than fitted the bill, in both respects, and perked me up for a couple of beers and something to eat before bed.

The nearby *Morgan House*, was just what we needed.

Cathy, behind the bar, was a wonderful host (thanks for the complementary chocolate martini - delicious), the food was fine and we were soon in conversation with a couple on next the bar stools.

But then the lids started to droop and it was back to the hotel and to sleep thinking this is going to be a good stay.

Fine and sunny



The next day was suitably fine and sunny.

And an early morning saunter soon showed what a really pleasant place downtown Fort Myers is.

Historic buildings, that were derelict a decade ago, have been restored and the cleaned original red brickwork and bright pastel paintwork positively shone in the sunlight.

The soaring palms that line the walkways completed the scene and one could almost have been strolling a film set.

Except that downtown Fort Myers is real, with real people determined to restore a life and vitality into the area.

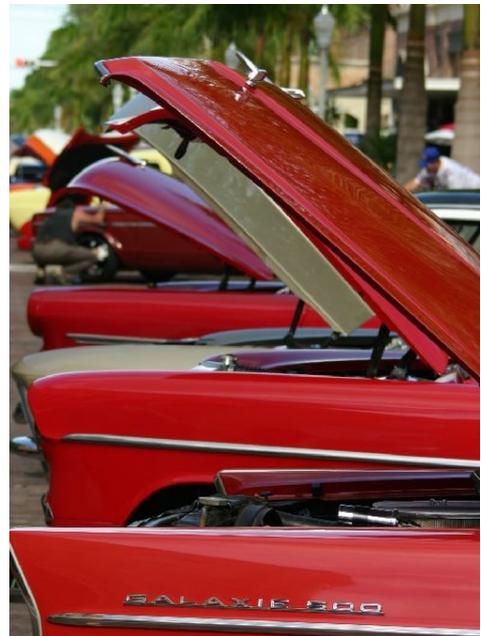
And its really working as locals and visitors alike discover the pleasure of the cafes, bars and restaurants or enjoying the many events and activities that pack the Fort Myers cultural calendar.

Art, music and classical cars



Art Walk on the first Friday evening of each month brings thousands into downtown to tour the many art galleries.

Music Walk (third Saturday) creates a similar event for those who enjoy live music and *Car cruise-in's* sees classic car collectors parking along First Street (fourth Saturday).



ArtFest Fort Myers

ArtFest Fort Myers, held each February, is Southwest Florida's premier art festival.



The two-day art extravaganza sees 200 of America's finest artists displaying their work throughout the downtown area. The event is supported with live music and entertainment.

www.artfestfortmyers.com

Life and vitality

Downtown is particularly vibrant at weekends or during the monthly art and music walks, when the entertainment spills onto the streets.



The Sidney & Berne Davis Art Center has a wonderful programme in a stunning building, the Florida Rep is rightly acclaimed and the newly opened *Art of the Olympians* showcases the talents of the world's Olympians and provides inspiration for all.

With these and the other artistic and cultural ventures on offer, downtown Fort Myers now provides an excellent city break, in its own right, and a great base for touring this beautiful part of Florida.

The Sidney & Berne Davis Art Center



The Sidney & Berne Davis Art Center, on First Street, which is the flagship of the arts revival in Fort Myers, takes up an entire block at First and Jackson streets.

The building's unique architecture features neoclassic style columns and walls made of Florida key limestone embedded with sea shells and coral formations.

It was built, in 1933, as a post office and then the federal courthouse before being abandoned and falling into complete disrepair.

In recent years it has been slowly but surely restored as a state-of-the-art visual and performing arts centre.

The complex now has three levels of gallery space with grand atriums and two rooftop levels with sculpture gardens

www.sbdac.com

A home from home



The Edison/Henry Ford Winter Estates preserves the home, botanical gardens and laboratory of Thomas Edison and that of his close friend Henry Ford.

Situated in lavishly landscaped grounds, on the bank of Caloosahatchee River, the homes form one of the historic treasures in the area.

The homes give a real insight into the lives of two American giants and Edison's botanical gardens contain more than a thousand varieties of plants imported from all over the world.

www.efwefla.org

Burroughs Home and Garden



This Georgian Revival Mansion was built in 1901 by cattle baron Nelson Burroughs, and was centre of the city's social scene during the days of the Edisons, Fords, and Firestones.

The property, now under the management of Uncommon Friends Foundation, is chock full of antique furnishings and historical artefacts.

www.burroughshome.com

Broadway Palm Dinner Theatre

The always popular Broadway Palm Dinner Theatre combines buffet dinner with full-length, professional Broadway-style, live performance.

www.broadwaypalm.com

Art of the Olympians



Art of the Olympians (AOTO), located in the Historic River District of downtown Fort Myers, promotes arts, sport and the passion for personal excellence.

Visitors can view artistic creations by Olympic athletes in mediums such as painting, sculpture, photography, film making and poetry.

The concept for the museum was the vision of the late Al Oerter, a four-time consecutive gold medalist and Fort Myers Beach resident.

www.artoftheolympians.org

A place to stay

Hotel Indigo

Hotel Indigo is boutique brand that looks to fit its design and décor with its surroundings.



The Hotel Indigo in Fort Myers is a stylish boutique hotel located in the River District of downtown.

The rooms have wireless access and large, very comfortable beds.



The Indigo's Italian restaurant, VINO de Notte, serves breakfast, lunch and dinner and its rooftop lounge *Phi in the Sky* overlooks downtown.

www.hotelindigo.com

Southwest Florida Museum of History



The fascinating Southwest Florida Museum of History is housed in city's former railroad depot.

Once inside visitors will find an extensive collection detailing early civilisation, the Fort, the first settlers and cattlemen and the boating and fishing industries in Fort Myers.

A 1929 private Pullman rail car forms part of the museum tour.

www.swflmuseumofhistory.com

Florida Rep



The highly acclaimed Florida Rep is a fully professional theatre company in the heart of the Fort Myers River District.

The company produces a wide variety of comedies, dramas and musicals during its October to May season.

The theatre brings more than 70,000 visitors into downtown each year.

www.floridarep.org

The Tom Allen Museum

The Tom Allen Museum, at the Calusa Nature Center and Planetarium, is named after the late conservation author, and artist.

It contains Allen's collection of fossils, butterflies, insects, artefacts and paintings.

www.calusanature.org

AllWays more Fort Myers

The Beaches of Fort Myers



The Beaches of Fort Myers & Sanibel includes :

- Fort Myers and its beach
- the barrier islands of Sanibel & Captiva
- Bonita Springs & Estero
- Cape Coral
- Pine Island, and
- Boca Grande.

How to get there

By air

Direct flights into Tampa or Miami, a 2.5 hour drive from Fort Myers. Most major American airlines also have connections into Southwest Florida International Airport .

By road

Fort Myers is on Interstate 75 and US 41 with :

- Miami 148 miles
- Orlando 167 miles, and
- Tampa 134 miles

The best time to visit

Fort Myers 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.

Where to stay



The area has over 20,000 rooms ranging from full-service resort properties, boutique hotels and cottages to budget motels.

www.fortmyers-sanibel.com/accommodations

What and where to eat

There are a number of excellent bars/restaurants scattered throughout the downtown area of Fort Myers.

With local fresh fish, shrimp and clams readily available, seafood is sure to be a focus of most menus.

Three places to get you started :

Morgan House

Morgan House is the popular haunt with great food, real friendly service, live music in the rooftop bar and patio and the happiest of happy hours.

www.morganhouserestaurant.com

The Veranda



The Veranda is a fine dining in a restaurant converted from two turn of the century homes. It comes top of most locals recommendation list.

www.verandarestaurant.com

The Butterfly Estates

The Butterfly Estates is a fine place to lunch, with the chance to walk among thousands of butterflies

www.thebutterflyestates.com

More information

www.FortMyers-Sanibel.com

The International Travel Writers Alliance



AllWays

www.allwaystraveller.com

AllWays traveller provides independent travellers with an equally independent view of the world.



The International Travel Writers Alliance

www.itwalliance.com

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

Ashley Gibbins



Ashley Gibbins, a third generation journalist, is Chief Executive of the International Travel Writers Alliance.