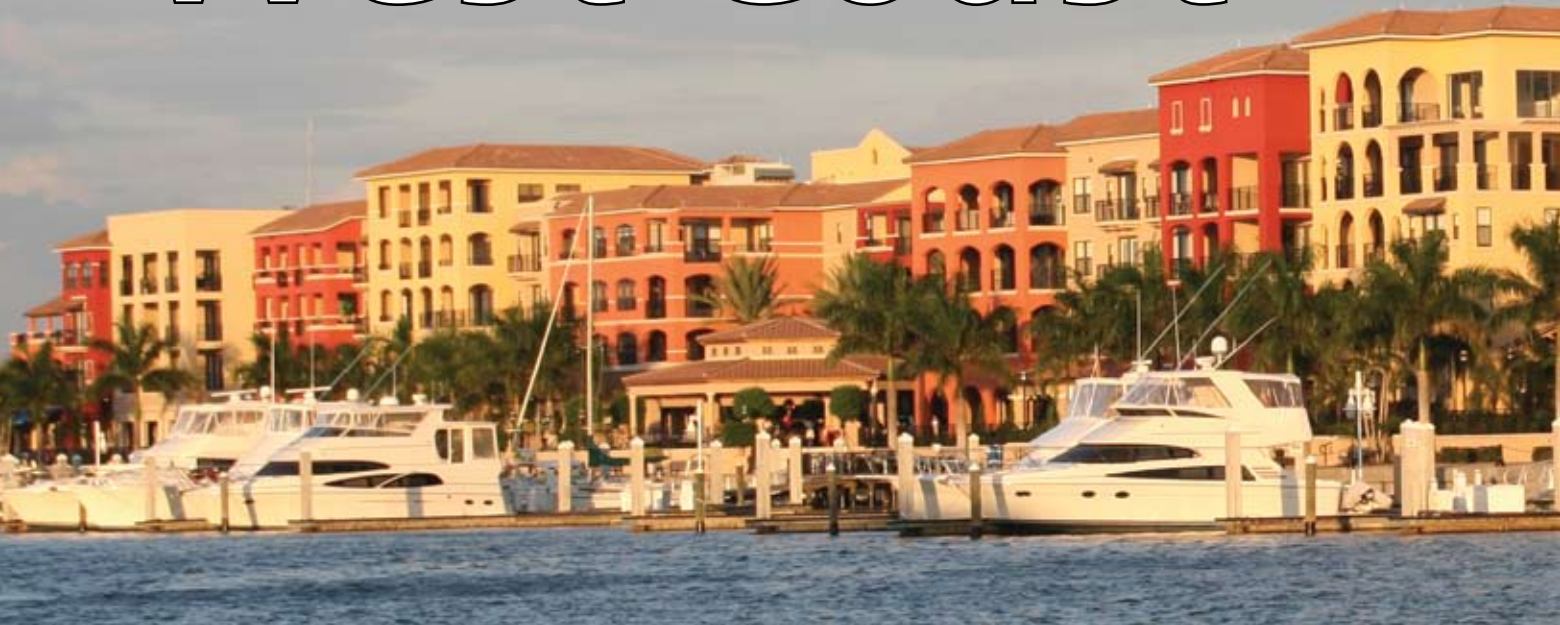


Florida's West Coast



Marinalife explores the best places to visit (and eat and shop) from Marco Island to Fort Myers

The Southwestern part of Florida is a delightful get-away spot for boaters traveling the west coast of Florida. Whether traveling from the Keys or from the Panhandle, the waters are sparkling and the towns are home to fantastic restaurants, world-class shopping, golf and plenty of fun for travelers of all ages.

Coming from the south, you will find a largely unspoiled and undeveloped area that is part of Everglades National Park. This area is known for its fishing and wildlife – Ten Thousand Islands and Chokoloskee boast some of the best fishing in the region, yet very few adventurous souls ever visit. After rounding Cape Romano, swanky Marco Island and Naples await the visiting boater, offering an abundance of marine facilities and amenities.

Cruising from Everglades City in the south to Fort Myers Beach, and Sanibel/Captiva farther north, allows boaters the opportunity to enjoy an extensive choice in activities from fishing amidst the wildlife of Everglades National Park to high-end shopping and restaurants in Naples. Experience the highlights of Marco Island, Naples, Fort Myers Beach and Sanibel/Captiva by boat, combined with side trips to Cabbage Key and Useppa Island.



MARCO ISLAND

Esplanade Marina

Marco Island is suspended off the southernmost tip of Florida's Gulf Coast and is the largest inhabited isle of the Ten Thousand Islands. While only three-and-a-half miles long, Marco Island may be small, but its distinct neighborhoods add an irresistible appeal. Beautiful beaches, fantastic shopping, exquisite dining, and a relaxing atmosphere make Marco Island an ideal tropical destination. In addition to the glistening sands and shimmering turquoise waters, the inland area is a maze of waterways, mangroves and sawgrass that provides sanctuary for more than 200 exotic and domestic species of birds.

Visit the Everglades Area to enjoy great food accompanied by amazing

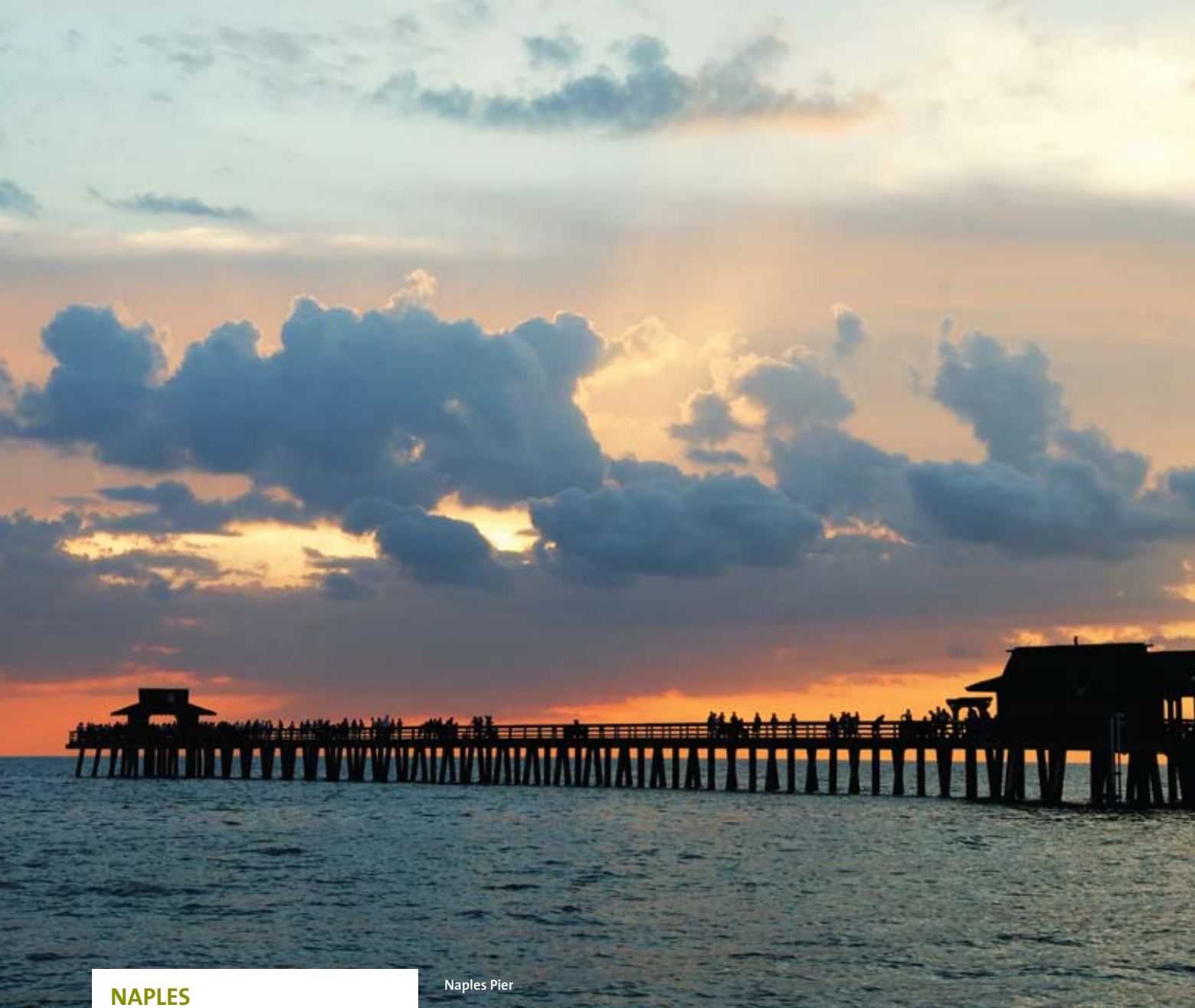
ocean views and great fishing (see the article about fishing in Chokoloskee Island). Mid-Island is home to many casual family friendly restaurants. The Esplanade Shoppes, Residences and Marina, located on Smokehouse Bay, is a coastal Italian-style village consisting of upscale retailers, small specialty stores, fine dining and luxury waterfront residences. Located on North Collier Boulevard, the island's main thoroughfare, The Esplanade graces more than 1,100 feet of waterfront on Smokehouse Bay with nearly 50,000 square feet of retail and office space, 72 multi-family waterfront residences and a 77-boat-slip marina.

Where to Dock

- Marco Island Marina (tel: 239-642-2531)
- The Marina at Factory Bay (tel: 239-389-2929)
- Esplanade Marina (tel: 239-394-6333)

Local Favorites

- Ne-Ne's Kitchen for breakfast/lunch/dinner (297 N Collier Blvd, Marco Island, tel: 239-394-3854)
- Island Cafe for dinner (918 N. Collier Boulevard, Marco Island, tel: 239-394-7578)
- Konrads Seafood & Grille Room for good seafood and an amazing salad bar. (599 S. Collier Blvd, Marco Island, tel: 239-642-3332)



NAPLES

Naples Pier

A short trip up from Marco brings you to Naples, the “crown jewel” of Southwest Florida. Naples has experienced explosive growth during the last decade and it is easy to see why. It is nestled on the sun-drenched beaches of the Gulf of Mexico, and is known for world class shopping, dining and abundant, challenging golf courses. It is only steps away from island seclusion or the untamed tropical wilderness of The Everglades.

Shopping is a favorite pastime in Naples. Visit the upscale shops of Old Naples located on 5th Avenue and 3rd Street South. Newer additions are the Waterside Shops, The Village on Venetian Bay, Coastland Mall, and Bayfront. The Naples fishing pier is also a favorite place for strolling and taking in the beautiful sunsets on the Gulf of Mexico.

Where to Dock

- Naples City Dock (tel: 239-213-3070)
- Naples Yacht Club - private club with reciprocal yacht club privileges. (tel: 239-262-7301)

Local Favorites

- Cote D'Azur -cuisine provencale (11224 Tamiami Trail N, Naples, tel: 239-597-8867)
- Campiello's —Italian country cooking (1177 3rd St S, Naples, tel: 239-435-1166)
- Café Lurcat—famous for apple salad and hot baby doughnuts for dessert (494 Fifth Ave S, Naples, tel: 239-213-3357)



FORT MYERS BEACH

Children of Marinalife members boating in Captiva.

From Naples, you can journey to Fort Myers and Fort Myers Beach. Fort Myers is known as the “City of Palms” and was made famous by Thomas Edison and Henry Ford. Impressed by the tropical climate and natural beauty, Edison spent his winters in Fort Myers. Fort Myers is located on the Caloosahatchee River, and is the oldest city in Lee County. Historic downtown brings back the flavor of old Florida.

Fort Myers Beach, once a quaint settlement only accessible by boat, features white sands and stunning sunsets, Fort Myers Beach is known for being a well-equipped yet laid-back spot; offering all that tourists need without the overwhelming crowds and hassles of Florida’s larger cities.

Where to Dock

- Salty Sam’s Marina (tel: 239-463-7333)
- Pink Shell Beach Resort & Spa for dock and dine (tel: 239-463-6181)

Local Favorites

- Parrot Key Caribbean Grill at Salty Sam’s Marina-voted Best Waterfront Restaurant (2500 Main Street, Fort Myers Beach, tel: 239-463-3257)
- Fish House Restaurant (7225 Estero Blvd, Fort Myers Beach, tel: 239-765-6766)

SANIBEL AND CAPTIVA ISLAND

Sanibel and Captiva Island

From Fort Myers/ Fort Myers Beach head to Sanibel and Captiva Islands. Sanibel, “The Shelling Capital of the Western World,” has more shell varieties than any other single beach in Florida. Thick, lush foliage covers the island, half of which is a natural preserve. Sanibel is tethered to the mainland by a toll bridge. Connected to its sister island of Captiva, Captiva is approximately 4 miles long. Both of the islands are quaint with colorful restaurants and shopping. Rent a bike to explore islands or relax on the beautiful beaches and enjoy shelling that rivals the best in the world.

Where to Dock

- Tween Waters Inn, Day Spa, and Marina, Captiva Island. In the midst of 13 gorgeous Gulf beaches-to-bay acres, and a charming blend of warm hospitality and barefoot style that dates to 1931, a total of 41 slips are available for dockage. Tween Waters offers adventure for everyone from kayaking through mangrove keys, deep-sea fishing, golf, swimming pools, and a great dining experience. (tel: 239-472-5161)
- South Seas Island Resort The resort recently finished a multi-million dollar renovation. (tel:239-472-5111)

The west coast of Florida is a wonderful get-away especially in the winter. Enjoy the beautiful weather and all the area has to offer. For additional information or to view this cruise online, visit marinalife.com/cruises/flwestcoast. ❖

Sanibel Island Lighthouse

OTHER AREAS TO VISIT

Cabbage Key

After a visit to the lap of luxury, visit Cabbage Key, the site for Parrot Heads near and far. Said to be the inspiration for Jimmy Buffet’s “Cheeseburger in Paradise!” The island is one hundred acres of tropical vegetation surrounding a historic restaurant, inn and cottages. The main house, now the Cabbage Key Inn and Restaurant, was built in the 1930’s by the family of playwright and novelist Mary Roberts Rinehart. A panoramic view of Pine Island Sound is provided from the front porch atop a thirty-eight foot Indian shell mound. There are no cars here; not even a paved road but you will enjoy winding nature trails, picturesque views and relaxation in the finest Southwest Florida style.

Where to Dock: Cabbage Key Inc. (tel: 239-283-2278)

Useppa Island

In this area you can visit Useppa, which according to Conde Nast is “one of the top 25 true island retreats in the world—serenity, great facilities and fishing, and no cars—Useppa has it all.” A private Island Club which maintains its private club status but invites travelers to discover some of the finest in accommodations, activities, dining and dockage on Florida’s Gulf Coast.

The Useppa Island Club is the focus of island life. It boasts a tradition of sincere, personalized hospitality which traces to origins before the turn of the century. The story of the island comes alive in the island’s historical society museum. Useppa joins family fun and an informal sporting lifestyle with a sense of history and tradition.

Where to Dock: Useppa Island Club (tel: 239-283-1061)