

28 Hidden Treasures

SW FLORIDA



Are you looking to enjoy the Florida lifestyle, and make the most of the beautiful, sunny weather?

We're proud to present you with 28 Hidden Treasures of SW Florida.

1. *Explore a farmers market in Lee County.*



Cape Coral welcomes farmers and vendors from across the state to share their latest harvest with the residents of the city at each of three markets – the Cape Coral Farmers Market, the Surfside Sunset Market and the Cape Harbour Farmers Market. Whether indulging in a delectable baked good or cutting into a freshly caught grouper

right out of the Gulf, you are guaranteed some of the freshest food and unique gifts in SW Florida. All three markets are always overflowing with fresh, local and healthy produce, fruits and foods, along with melt-in-your-mouth baked goods, made-on-site guacamole, salsas, homemade jams & jellies, pickles & olive mixes, cheeses, and take-home foods. The markets often boasts the soothing sounds of local musicians, cooking demonstrations by local chefs, and specially-made, hand-crated jewelry. Visit their website for more information www.capecoralfarmersmarket.com.

* Cape Coral Farmers Market (Downtown) 8 AM – 1PM, Saturdays, from October thru May, in Club Square (SE 47th Terrace & SE 10th Place)

* Surfside Farmers Market 2 PM – 7 PM, Tuesdays throughout the year, the Shops at Surfside, Veterans Parkway & Surfside Boulevard.

* Cape Harbour Farmers Market: 8AM – 1PM, Saturdays, May thru October, 5789 Cape Harbour Drive.

Local Roots, LLC, is the largest operator of 8 of the largest Farmers Markets in Lee County. Each market offers a unique opportunity for local vendors to sell seasonal local fruits, vegetables, cheeses, meats, breads, nursery stock and other commodities. Some of the markets also create an opportunity for local crafters to showcase their products. Attendees have the opportunity to buy locally and to gather with friends and neighbors in a relaxed outdoor setting. Stop by one of the [Local Roots Farmers Markets](#)...It's the Best Thing Growing!



- Lakes Park Farmers Market 9 AM – 1 PM, Wednesdays, October thru April, 7330 Gladiolus Drive, Fort Myers



- Fort Myers River District Farmers Market 9 AM – 1 PM, Thursdays year round (Thanksgiving week, will be previous Wednesday), Under the Bridge, Downtown Fort Myers

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or by calling 239.542.1075

2. Enjoy the finest ice cream at [Love Boat Ice Cream](#).

Enjoy the finest homemade ice cream of SW Florida, established in 1967. You will taste over 50 of the creamiest of flavors of ice cream, ranging from sugar/fat free to sorbets and more. Come early in season, because this place is so popular – lines may be long. Visit at any of their locations in Fort Myers: 16475 San Carlos Blvd. or 16229 San Carlos Blvd. In Sanibel Island: 1700 Periwinkle Way.



3. Drive a go-cart at [Gator Mike's Family Fun Park](#).

Endless fun in the sun awaits the entire family inside the Gator Mike's Family Fun Park! A visit to Gator Mike's in Cape Coral, FL, is one of the top things to do in Southwest Florida, so don't miss out. Experience the excitement of Ziplining, Rock Climbing, Go-Karts, Batting Cages, Mini-Golf, Cutting Edge Arcade and more!

4. Experience the wonders of [Lakes Regional Park](#).



Lakes Park, owned and operated by Lee County Parks & Recreation, encompasses nearly 300 acres of beautiful nature trails, lakes and

gardens. Visitors can relax, exercise and explore at Lakes Park with several miles of paved and unpaved trails, boardwalks, canoeing and kayaking, fishing, picnicking, bird watching, and gardens. Lakes Park offers two playgrounds and water parks, a miniature train, railroad museum and concession facilities with food sales, bike and watercraft rentals. Every year, more than 800,000 people enjoy Lakes Park's natural beauty for exercise and family recreation.

5. Dance at [Oktoberfest](#).



Since 1985, the German American Social Club has brought Munich to Cape Coral. The six-day celebration over two weekends in October is much anticipated among Cape Coral residents. Billed as THE event for fun, good food, freshly poured domestic and German beer, live music on several stages, laughter, dancing – with or without the chicken hat –

Oktoberfest is fun for the whole family and a unique celebration of German culture, Florida style.

6. Visit [Edison and Ford Winter Estates](#).

Edison and Ford Winter Estates is a historical museum and a botanical garden beside the Caloosahatchee River in Fort Myers. Thomas Edison visited SW Florida and purchased the property for a home as a place for both work and relaxation during the winter. Henry Ford, one of Thomas Edison's close friends, purchased the adjoining property and built his family's winter home. Be sure to check out the botanical garden, containing more than one thousand variety of plants. Many special events are hosted here throughout the year.

7. Plan your trip to [Naples Zoo](#).

Naples Zoo is a nationally accredited zoo, with more than 70 species of animals. Get a chance to see a number of different animals in wildlife exhibits, from birds to mammals to reptiles. Leopards, lions, cheetahs, pythons, alligators, and military macaws are many of the creatures to watch up close in their habitat. Naples Zoo is celebrating over 95 years of natural history!



8. Sail in the annual boat parade.

It's Christmas... Florida style! For more than 35 years boaters have joined in Cape Coral's annual holiday boat parade. Processions often feature as many as 100 boats, decorated in festive holiday fashion with lights, costumes, elves, and



whatever else their captains can think of, sail along the canals of South Cape Coral. You never know how many boats will participate from year to year as no preregistration is required. Even if you don't live on one of the canals, you can still see the parade. Four Freedoms Park provides an ideal seat to watch the illuminated vessels.

Thousands of people spread blankets and chairs on the grass and wait all afternoon for the big event. The park also hosts live holiday music, decorated trees, Christmas crafts, food, beverages, and Mr. Santa Claus to pose for photos with kids.

9. Fish in more than 400 miles of waterways.

With 295 miles of freshwater and 105 miles of Gulf-access (brackish water, the fishing opportunities in Cape Coral are endless. This city is home to eight boating marinas and five official boating ramps, allowing easy access for boaters, no matter where you live. Keep an eye out for snook, trout, and grouper – local favorites throughout the year.

10. Lose yourself on a nature trail in Four Mile Cove.

Stretched across 365-acres of land, Four Mile Cove is one of the largest preserved green-spaces in Cape Coral. While you're there, rent a kayak and paddle through unspoiled wetlands and tropical mangroves, or walk through the preserve and spot local wildlife, like the Southern bald eagle or the great American alligator. Each journey is sure to be an adventure.

11. Stroll through the annual Arts & Music Festival.

Every year artists and craftsmen line the streets of downtown Cape Coral showcasing their latest creations. Last year over 100,000 people attended the festival, emphasizing the popularity and success of the event. The Cape Coral Arts & Music Festival takes place in mid-January. Everything from paintings and sculptures to jewelry and clothes are available for purchase. Food and drinks are available from a variety of vendors.

12. Take your pet through Rotary Park.



Set on 97 acres of land, Cape Coral's Rotary Park is found just off the Rose Garden Road in Tarpon Point. Amenities include a butterfly house, nature trails, an environmental center used for gardening and nature-related classes, and a 9-acre dog park, you're sure to find many locals and pet owners who frequent the park on a regular basis. The grounds also offer a variety of exercise classes, an observation tower, a boardwalk nature

trail and a summer camp for children.

13. Enjoy a show while dining at [Broadway Palm Theatre](#).

Broadway Palm Theatre is celebrating its 25th Season, entertaining over 170,000 guests annually. The facility includes a 450-seat dinner theater, a 100-seat "black-box" theatre, a 120-seat dining room.

14. Visit the Dome Homes by boat.

Built in 1981 by a retired oilman, the Dome House on Cape Romano at the Southern tip of Caxambas Island, just south of Marco Island and NW of 10 Thousand Islands was intended as an off-the-grid, eco-friendly vacation spot for his extended family. Among the innovations at



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the site are the raised units themselves which would be heated by lighting fires among the concrete pylons beneath the rooms, and the dome-shaped roofs which were to direct rainwater into troughs that would then be collected for showering and dishwater. The structure is made of concrete which has helped it survive hurricanes and storms that have cause beach erosion. The domes are now surrounded by water and only survive thanks to the concrete pillars elevating them above the water level. With no chance of reclamation, the abandoned domes make an excellent setting for both wildlife and wild legends.

15. Gather with friends at [Shell Factory](#).

For more than 80 years, the Shell Factory has been Southwest Florida's #1 family entertainment destination! It provides visitors and locals a great place to shop, eat, or gather with friends. The Shell Factory has many attractions, both indoors and out, that will provide your family hours of fun. There are four free, dog-friendly museums. The Shell Factory's main attraction is its Natural History display with over 500 exhibits. They also claim to have the largest gift store at over 60,000 square feet. Free entry and free parking makes it an awesome day out for the family to enjoy.

16. Catch sight of a Florida manatee at [Manatee Park](#).

Manatee Park is a non-captive refuge for the Florida Manatee. Best viewing months are late December, January and February when the temperature is below 68F. Manatees are not present during the warm summer months. The park amenities include playgrounds, Live Oak amphitheater, Chickee Hut, a pavilion, shelters, a picnic area, and fishing on Orange River.



Parking fees are \$2 per hour or \$5 per day. (Price increases for shuttle vans or tour buses).

17. Take a ride down to the keys on [Key West Express](#).

Sit back and relax while enjoying the views of the Gulf on a fast ferry heading south to the beautiful and entertaining Key West. It is faster than driving, cheaper than flying, and the best way to travel to Key West. Enjoy air-conditioned interiors, sun



decks, reclining airline-style seating, a full-service galley, a full-service bar and flat screen TVs with satellite television. There are two locations that can quickly and conveniently take you to Key West – Fort Myers Beach and Marco Island. Boarding & departure times are subject

to change, be sure to check the [Sailing Calendar](#) to find the best dates for you and your party.

18. Take a walk through [Six Mile Cypress Preserve](#)

Six Mile Cypress Slough Preserve is over 3,500 acres of wetland ecosystem with a Boardwalk trail and Interpretive Center. Take a guided walk with a Volunteer Interpretive Naturalist, attend a nature program, or have a picnic with your family. Parking fee is \$1 an hour or a maximum of \$5 per stay.

19. Take a trip to [Lovers Key State Park](#).

The island is home to West Indian manatees, bottlenose dolphins, roseate spoonbills, marsh rabbits, and bald eagles. The two-mile-long beach, popular for shelling and swimming, is accessed by boardwalk or tram with over five miles of trails for hiking and bicycling! Kayaks, bicycles, canoes, paddleboards, beach chairs, and umbrellas are all available to rent. Enjoy a nice day on the beach!



20. Experience luxury at [Mercato in Naples.](#)

Mercato has 12 notable restaurants, over 20 upscale retailers and luxury residential condominiums. Mercato offers year-round events, free and open to the public. The plaza also has dog-friendly places to enjoy with your furry friend. Shop at Tommy Bahama, Nordstrom Rack, Ulta and more!



21. Plan to enjoy the [Edison Festival of Light Parade.](#)

Thomas Edison's contributions and character hold an unequalled significance in Fort Myers and SW Florida. The Edison Festival of Light has become the premier winter event celebrating his life and legacy. The Festival is held in February each year, culminating with its signature event, the Grand Parade, on Saturday evening. Stand or sit along the road and watch the astonishing floats go by. Participate as a vendor, volunteer, or enter a float of your own in the parade.

22. Tour [Wicked Dolphin Rum Distillery.](#)

Cape Coral's own Wicked Dolphin Rum Distillery, established in 2012, produces award winning rums available throughout Florida and the Southeastern United States. Florida's rich and fertile sugarcane fields are 35 minutes from the distillery (over half of the sugarcane produced in the United States is produced right here in Florida). Using only local, natural ingredients, Wicked



Dolphin is "Florida's Rum." Guests are also able to visit the distillery, where you can tour, taste, and see how this premium rum is made. Tours are available Tuesdays, Thursdays and Saturdays.

23. Face your fears at SW Florida Skydive.

Experience the beautiful views of Peace River when you jump out of “a perfectly good plane”. Once you arrive at SW Florida Skydive, you will go through about an hour of training, practicing and gearing up before boarding a plane and climbing to roughly 10,000’ AGL before freefalling at 120mph. Call to reserve your spot today!



24. Enjoy a day at Fort Myers Beach Pier.



Fort Myers Beach pier is a great destination day or night. Relax at the beach, parasail, watch dolphins play, listen to live music, check out the fish people are catching and watch the sunset. Halfway down the pier there is a small bait, snack and gift shop.

25. Walk in butterfly heaven at the Butterfly Estates.

Butterfly Estates opened in 2009 and it offers a 3600 square foot glass butterfly conservatory, a unique souvenir shop, and a café. Located in Gardner’s Park in Downtown Fort Myers River District, it is home to The Florida Native Butterfly Society. Butterfly Estates is dedicated to the protection and preservation of Florida’s native butterfly species!



26. Visit [Marco Island Historical Museum](#).

Marco Island Historical Museum explores the Calusa Indians; bringing the vanished civilization to life with informative displays and recreated village scenes. The exhibits trace the settlement from its early roots as a fishing village, pineapple plantation and clam cannery! Marco Island has many secret features to discover!

27. Let [Barbara B Mann](#) entertain you!

Come see National Touring Broadway musicals along with prominent entertainers, dance performances, popular ensembles and classical music concerts throughout the year.

28. Explore the islands of Matlacha and Pine Island.

We've borrowed the following text from Coast Living Magazine and travel write, Jeff Book:

Just past the Island Time Zone road sign, the tiny town of Matlacha (Mat-luh-shay) – an islet west of Fort Myers – welcomes visitors with art galleries and shops but retains the charm of a quiet fishing village. Tethered to the mainland by the “fishingest bridge in the U.S.A.” over Matlacha Pass, it's surrounded by dozens of mostly empty isles, an ideal habitat for fish (and the anglers who catch them). Kayakers come here to paddle placid backwaters, but be sure to spend time on dry land, checking out the eclectic collections at galleries such as Lovegrove Gallery & Gardens, where owner and artist Leoma Lovegrove's vibrant paintings cover every surface.



Route 78 from Matlacha continues to peaceful Pine Island. The land on this 17-mil-long slice of Old Florida is largely home to plantations replete with palm, citrus, avocado, guava, macadamia and mango trees. The island's Annual Mango Mania festival – with games for the kids, recipe contests, and arts and crafts is held in July.

Pine Island's sparse traffic – and the bike path running from one end to the other – makes it ideal for cycling. Hikers take the Calusa Heritage Trail, which winds among ancient shell mounds and the remnants of an impressive cross-island canal built by the Calusa Indians, who settled here around A.D. 1. Trail signs illustrate the thriving seaside village that greeted Spanish explorers in the early 1500's.