



# Visitors' Guide

2024 Annual Magazine

*Making the Most of Tampa Bay's Gulf Beaches*

**Everything  
you need to  
plan your  
vacation!**



**The Story of Peaches the Flamingo  
...Page 26**

**Embark on Ecotour Adventures  
...Page 46**

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**Visit the [BeachWelcomeCenter.com](http://BeachWelcomeCenter.com) website for a live look at this beach scene from our webcam located at Indian Shores, Florida.**

*Photo Credit: VK Photo LLC*



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**you'll find the Gulf towns of the Barrier Island Beaches. Located on the 15-mile-long barrier island of Sand Key, our communities offer the very best of Florida. Whether you visit for a week or a month, we guarantee that your stay will be filled with wonderful memories. Our area is free from the hustle and bustle of everyday life, while still conveniently located between Clearwater Beach (voted TripAdvisor's best beach in America) and St. Pete Beach.**

**A variety of lodging options are offered in our locale – from quaint beachside cottages to luxury condominiums that provide all of the amenities of home. Award-winning restaurants are our specialty – from the freshest seafood caught right off our shores to a tasty, hand-tossed gourmet pizza.**

**No matter your pleasure - whether shopping, boating, golfing, or just lying in the sun - Indian Rocks Beach, Indian Shores, and the surrounding island beaches have something for everyone.**



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*The odyssey of Carribean flamingos blown off course by Hurricane Idalia. One flamingo later named Peaches was found floating in the Gulf and rescued by boaters.*

### **Embark on Ecotour Adventures ...Page 46**

*Immerse yourself in the beauty and wildlife of Florida's natural worlds. There are so many unique ecosystems to choose from.*

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# Map of the Gulf Beaches

The barrier islands between Clearwater Beach and St. Pete Beach are famous for being home to some of the most beautiful beaches in the world.







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# Festivals & Happenings

**Here are some of the many 2024 events** on and around the Tampa Bay Beaches that happen annually—and that you might want to consider planning your vacation dates around. This is only a sampling of what's ahead. Continue to follow us on our Facebook and Instagram pages for more updates and local information as the year rolls along. We're looking forward to a year of fun at the beach and hope you'll be here to join us.

<b>February 2024</b>	Busch Gardens Mardi Gras Festival – Fridays, Saturdays, and Sundays Florida State Fair, Tampa, February 8-19 St. Petersburg Fine Art Festival, February 10-11 Winterfest on the Rocks, Indian Rocks Beach, February 17 MLB Spring Training: Philadelphia Phillies in Clearwater, and Toronto Blue Jays in Dunedin, begins February 24
<b>March 2024</b>	Firestone's Grand Prix, St. Petersburg, March 8-10 Valspar Championship PGA Tournament, Palm Harbor, March 18-24 Busch Gardens Food & Wine Festival begins March 19 MLB Season Opener for Tampa Bay Rays vs. Toronto Blue Jays, March 28
<b>April 2024</b>	Pier 60 Sugar Sand Festival, Clearwater Beach, March 29 – April 14 Mainsail Art Festival, St. Petersburg, April 20-21 Taste of IRB, Chic-A-Si Park, Indian Rocks Beach, April 20
<b>May 2024</b>	Busch Gardens Food & Wine Festival through May 19
<b>June 2024</b>	Tampa Bay Rays MLB Baseball, Tropicana Field, St. Petersburg Tampa Bay Rowdies Soccer Games, St. Petersburg
<b>July 2024</b>	4th of July celebrations along the beaches and in neighboring towns Clearwater Celebrates America - The area's largest fireworks display.
<b>August 2024</b>	Bucs Preseason NFL Football, Raymond James Stadium, Tampa Gulfport Gecko Fest, August 31
<b>September 2024</b>	Clearwater Offshore National Championship, September 27-29
<b>October 2024</b>	Clearwater Jazz Holiday, Clearwater, October 17-20 Oktoberfest on the Beach, Indian Rocks Beach Busch Gardens Howl-O-Scream/Spooktacular
<b>November 2024</b>	Sanding Ovation's Master's Cup Sand Sculpting, Treasure Island, Nov. 21-24 Christmas Town at Busch Gardens Tampa begins November 15 Holiday Lights at Florida Botanical Gardens, Largo begins Nov. 29
<b>December 2024</b>	Holiday Boat Parades in beach cities and towns every weekend. IRB Holiday Tour of Homes, Indian Rocks Beach, December 7
<b>January 2025</b>	ReliaQuest Bowl, Raymond James Stadium, Tampa, January 1 Johns Pass Seafood Festival, Madeira Beach Treasure Island Kite Festival Gasparilla Pirate Festival, Tampa Pirate Invasion, boat parade between John's Pass and Indian Shores



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# Indian Rocks Beach: A Family Friendly Beach Town



**Indian Rocks Beach**, or IRB as the locals call it, is a laid-back haven where time seems to slow down.

Forget all of the high-rise hotels and tourist traps. Indian Rocks Beach is a low-slung town of bungalows, cottages, and condo complexes that don't rise over 10 stories. Palm trees sway lazily in the warm breeze. There are restaurants where everybody knows your name and how you like your latte. The locals like to drive around the island in golf carts or on bicycles. Here are some highlights that make Indian Rocks Beach a special place.

## THE BEACH

IRB's pristine shores are ideal for swimming, sunbathing, shelling, and building sandcastles. The 27 public beach accesses make it easy to find your own slice of paradise. Watersports rentals let you get out on the water by power boat, kayak, paddleboard, or jet ski.

## ENJOY THE NATURAL BEAUTY

Explore the Indian Rocks Beach Nature Preserve, where a boardwalk winds through lush mangroves teeming with birdlife. Visit the Seaside Seabird Sanctuary in Indian Shores, a rehabilitation center where you can learn about rescued birds and witness their remarkable recoveries. Find more ways to discover Florida's natural beauty and diverse wildlife in the story, Embark on Ecotour Adventures on page 46.

## FAMILY FUN

This is a family-friendly place where there is fun for all ages. Splash Harbour Water Park provides thrills with its towering slides, lazy river, and a treasure mine. There are mini golf courses, a skate board park, bicycle rentals, and ice cream shops within walking distance of vacation rentals.

## PROXIMITY TO MAJOR ATTRACTIONS

While IRB offers its own unique charm, it's also conveniently located near some of Florida's most popular destinations. Take a day trip to the excitement of Clearwater Beach or St. Petersburg, explore the Salvador Dalí Museum, or cruise through the John's Pass Village shops and restaurants. Busch Gardens Tampa is a short drive away.

Indian Rocks Beach is a place where you can truly unwind and reconnect with yourself and your loved ones. It's a destination that offers something for everyone, from sun-seekers to nature lovers to adventure enthusiasts. So come experience the magic of IRB for yourself and discover why it's called one of Florida's best-kept secrets.

We hope this Visitors' Guide magazine gives you a good taste of what the small towns of Tampa Bay's beaches have to offer. If you have any questions or would like to know more about specific things to do or see, feel free to ask the staff at the Beach Welcome Center!







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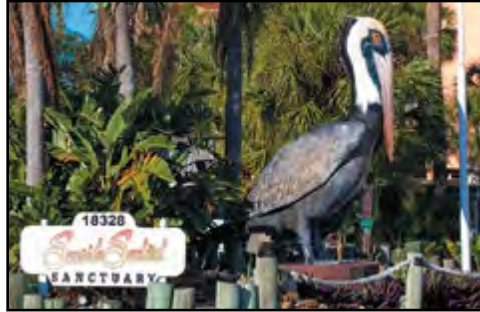


# 6 Things You Might Not Know About Indian Shores, Florida



## 1. Indian Shores was once part of Indian Rocks Beach.

With Indian Rocks Beach to the north and Redington Shores to the south, Indian Shores is located right in between. But it wasn't always so independent. In 1927, the government filled the pass just north of the present day town limits, joining the upper Sand Key to the lower beaches. Incorporated in 1949 and called Indian Rocks Beach South Shore, the name was shortened to Indian Shores in 1973.



## 2. Indian Shores is home to a seabird sanctuary.

The Seaside Seabird Sanctuary is the largest, non-profit, wild bird hospital in the United States. It is dedicated to the rescue, rehabilitation and release of sick, injured and orphaned wild birds. The Sanctuary provides a home to non-releasable patients. See pelicans, herons, egrets, owls, hawks and other regional birds up close. Admission is free and it is open 7 days a week.



## 3. You have access to the best of both water worlds.

Because Indian Shores, Florida is a barrier island located just west of St. Petersburg and Tampa, it is perfectly situated between the Gulf of Mexico and the Intracoastal Waterway. Not only do you get to enjoy 2.65 miles of pristine beach, but you also get close and convenient access to both bodies of water. That translates into two times the water fun for you and your family.



## 4. You can play mini golf with pirates and gators!

Smugglers Cove Mini Golf is more than a putt-putt course. It's a pirate and alligator adventure, too! Along with your 18 holes, you'll navigate through caves, pirate ships, and waterfalls. Oh, and live alligators! Take it up a notch and feed the alligators, if you dare. Try your hand at the cane fishing pole technique and give those gators a tasty snack. Take your family on a golf adventure like no other!



## 5. Sea turtles love the beach on Indian Shores.

Indian Shores beach is home to nesting sea turtles every year. Sea turtle nesting season on Florida's Gulf Coast brings these amazing aquatic reptiles to our shoreline from May through October. They love our soft sands just as much as we do. Sea turtles are pretty awesome creatures who fight steep odds for survival. You can help them by limiting outdoor lights at night and filling in holes in the sand.



## 6. Indian Shores beach is not the only piece of paradise.

Town Square Nature Park in Indian Shores is a nature lover's dream. Find peaceful bliss in this local park. Walk the boardwalk, watch the egrets, and enjoy the fishing pier. There are family-friendly facilities including free parking, picnic pavilions, restrooms and observation areas. It is a hidden gem and well worth the visit. Be sure to keep an eye out for manatees and dolphins, too!





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# Public Boat Ramps & Docks

## Park Boulevard Boat Ramp, 18651 Gulf Blvd., Indian Shores

This 6.5 acre boating facility is located on the Intracoastal Waterway. The facility is open 24 hours a day. It features 73 vehicle and boat trailer parking spaces, 6 boat launching lanes, 3 floating docks, restrooms, and night lighting.

## Indian Rocks Beach Public Docks, at 3rd Ave. & 1st Street

Indian Rocks Beach has a 17-slip transient boat dock on the Intracoastal Waterway, about 200 yards south of the Walsingham Bridge. These docks provide boaters access to a wide variety of restaurants and shops in the Downtown area. Dockage is free and the Gulf of Mexico beach is only 200 yards away.

## Belleair Causeway Boat Ramp, 541 S. Belleair Causeway, Belleair Bluffs

The facility offers 108 boat trailer parking spaces, 98 passenger parking spaces, 10 boat launching lanes, 5 courtesy docks, and a fishing pier. The boat ramp is open 24 hours per day. Portable restroom facilities are on site.

## Pinellas County's fee schedule for boat ramp parks:

- \$6.00 per day for vehicles with trailers
- \$2.00 per day for vehicles without trailers

Power boat cruising through a colorful Gulf Coast sunset.

Photo Credit: Alan Phares



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# Public Beach Parks

Here are 2 of our local beaches where you can readily find parking for a day at the beach.

## 1. Indian Rocks Beach Park, 18th Avenue & Gulf Blvd.

Amenities include: 80 parking spaces, restrooms, outdoor showers. In addition, Indian Rocks Beach has another 26 public beach accesses each with its own unique character and style.

## 2. Tiki Gardens, 19601 Gulf Blvd., Indian Shores

Amenities include: 170 parking spaces, restroom facilities, benches, water fountain, outdoor showers, and a pedestrian crossing light at Gulf Boulevard.

Find more public Gulf of Mexico beach accesses and parks at [Pinellas.gov/beaches](https://pinellas.gov/beaches).

## Noteworthy Beaches of the Tampa Bay Area

Clear blue water and sugary white sand are trademarks of the Gulf Coast beaches. These beaches have their own vibe, types of people, wildlife, and sea shells. Enjoy your stay with us by doing some beach hopping at some of the best beaches in the U.S.A. Here we go from north to south along Pinellas County's shoreline.

**1. Honeymoon Island State Park** - There are four miles of beach to explore along with a three-mile trail through one of the last remaining virgin slash pine forests. Look for squarish shaped rocks along the shoreline that may contain amethyst geodes. Find delicate, white baby's ear and angel wing seashells. The ferry to the next park in our list, Caladesi Island, departs from Honeymoon Island.

**2. Caladesi Island State Park** - Voted No. 2 beach in the U.S.A. by Dr. Beach in 2022. Stroll along the island's pristine beaches or take a nature trail walk to the historic Scharrer Homestead through the island's interior and listen to the ocean breeze whisper through old-growth trees.

**3. Clearwater Beach** - Voted the best beach in the U.S.A. in 2019, 2018, and 2016. Clearwater Beach is known for lots of activity at its beach hotels and night life. Rollerbladers glide along a winding beachfront promenade lined with restaurants and cafes. Come sunset, Pier 60 hosts a nightly festival with street performers and craft vendors.

**4. Indian Rocks Beach** - Located directly between Clearwater Beach and St. Pete Beach. The island getaway is known for beautiful, uncrowded beaches. It's a laid-back, family-friendly beach with a small town vibe. Enjoy local seafood at award-winning restaurants.

**5. Madeira Beach** is best known for the sea-themed John's Pass Village and Boardwalk, which serves up shops, eateries, and boat tours along a 1100-foot boardwalk. Swim out to the sandbar and find sand dollars. Find some of the most colorful seashells on our shores.

**6. St. Pete Beach** was named TripAdvisor's No. 1 Beach in the U.S. in 2021 (and 5th in the world)! The historic pink Don CeSar Hotel built in 1928 looms over the shore. The Pass-A-Grille area offers galleries, shops and restaurants. The Gulf Beaches Historical Museum displays postcards and other artifacts in a 1917 church.

**7. Fort DeSoto Park** - This much-loved county park covers five islands and 1,136 acres on the Gulf of Mexico and Tampa Bay. There is a historic fort to explore. It is a nature preserve and bird sanctuary. Snorkel to find fish, snails, sea cucumbers, octopi, and probably the biggest variety of seashells in the area.

**8. Egmont Key** - Ferries depart daily to Egmont Key from Fort DeSoto Park, John's Pass, and Gulfport. You'll find a deserted fort and town. Some parts of the fort are under shallow water and make great places to snorkel.



# Dog Parks

## Dog Beach Parks

1. **Fort DeSoto Park** – 3500 Pinellas Bayway S.,  
Tierra Verde
2. **Gandy Bridge Causeway** – 11231 Gandy Blvd.  
N., St. Petersburg
3. **Honeymoon Island Dog Beach** – 1 Causeway  
Blvd., Dunedin

## Doggie Parks

4. **Bicentennial Park** – 591 Tom Stuart Causeway,  
Madeira Beach
5. **Boca Ciega Millennium Park** – 12410 74th Ave.  
N, Seminole
6. **Chief Chic-A-Si Park** – 4th Ave & 2nd St.,  
Indian Rocks Beach
7. **Crest Lake Dog Park** – 201 S. Glenwood Ave.,  
Clearwater
8. **Indian Rocks Beach Dog Park** – 107 10th Ave.  
N., \$50 permit from City of Indian Rock Beach  
required for non-residents.
9. **Kolb Park** – 1508 Bay Palm Blvd.,  
Indian Rocks Beach
10. **North Shore Dog Park** – 901 7th Ave. NE.,  
St. Petersburg
11. **R.O.C. Park** – 200 Rex Place, Madeira Beach
12. **Sand Key Dog Park** – 1060 Gulf Blvd.,  
Clearwater
13. **Taylor Park** – 1100 8th Ave. SW., Largo
14. **Walter Fuller Park** – 7901 30th Ave. N.,  
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15. **Walsingham Park** – 12615 102nd Ave. N.,  
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*Review from Devon G. on Facebook*

**Background photo shows one of the 27 picturesque  
public beach accesses on Indian Rocks Beach.**

Photo Credit: VK Photo, LLC



# Shopping



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Cory, Pete, Anne, and Shea Lopez  
in the mid 1980's.





# The Story of Peaches the Flamingo

Peaches the Flamingo on release day at Fort DeSoto Park. Peaches was treated at the Seaside Seabird Sanctuary on Indian Shores and was later tagged and released. It is only the second flamingo to be tagged in the United States. Photo Credit: Kara Cook, Audubon Florida

***In a churning force of wind and rain,*** Hurricane Idalia plucked a most unexpected cargo from the sky - ***flamingos!***

## WHERE DID THEY COME FROM?

These bright pink birds found their migration path rudely interrupted by the storm's fury. Tossed from their intended path between Mexico and Cuba, these tropical birds found themselves deposited right here on the shores of Pinellas County, Florida. Hurricane Idalia likely carried the pink birds throughout the Eastern United States. Displaced flamingos have been spotted in Florida, Ohio, Texas, and as far north as Wisconsin.

## ARE FLAMINGOS NATIVE TO FLORIDA?

Most wild flamingos disappeared from Florida around the turn of the 20th century due to overhunting for their colorful feathers and habitat loss. In the mid 1920's, people started captive colonies of flamingos in South Florida, including a breeding colony at Hialeah Park Race Track in

the 1930s, which still remains. The Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission (FWC) treats flamingos as a native species protected under the Federal Migratory Bird Treaty Act.<sup>2</sup>

## HOW BIG ARE FLAMINGOS?

The American Flamingo is one of the largest species of flamingo in the world, averaging up to 5 feet tall thanks to long legs and an elongated neck. Average weights are between 4-8 pounds.<sup>2</sup>

## HOW DO FLAMINGOS FIND FOOD?

Flamingos use their webbed feet to stir up shallow water to find food. The way they move around in the water to stir up food is called "The Flamingo Dance." They eat algae, small seeds, tiny crustaceans (like brine shrimp), fly larvae, and other plants and animals that live in shallow waters. When it's time to eat, a flamingo puts its head upside down in the water to scoop up food. Flamingos get their pink to red colored feathers, because of the pigment in their food, such as shrimp.<sup>2</sup>

## WHAT HAPPENED TO PEACHES?

On September 1, 2023 a flamingo was rescued floating in the Gulf of Mexico off St. Pete Beach by boaters. The next day SPCA Tampa Bay took the bird to the Seaside Seabird Sanctuary on Indian Shores for rehabilitation.



The staff determined that the flamingo was in overall good condition, but quiet and clearly exhausted. After a day of rest and supportive care, the bird began self-feeding, and by week's end became much more active and vocal. The flamingo was affectionately named Peaches for the bright color of its feathers. The staff at the Seaside Seabird Sanctuary continued supportive care to allow Peaches to gain weight and get stronger.



*Peaches the Flamingo was suffering from hunger and exhaustion on the day of admittance to the Marie L. Farr Avian Hospital at Seaside Seabird Sanctuary on Indian Shores. Melissa Edwards, Avian Hospital Director, gently examines Peaches. September 2, 2023.*

## WHERE WILL THE FLAMINGOS GO NEXT?

The Seaside Seabird Sanctuary collaborated with Jerry Lorenz of Audubon Florida and Frank Ridgley of Zoo Miami who started the Florida Flamingos Working Group. They fitted Peaches with a federal band, a resight band, and a satellite transmitter to track its movements. Peaches is only the second flamingo ever to be banded in the United States, and the transmitter will provide incredibly valuable data and insight into Peaches' movements for at least 2-3 years. The banding was done under appropriate federal permitting and special permission from the USGS banding lab. The bands and transmitter weigh about as much as a pen, and while they may be a little annoying for the bird at first, it will not cause pain or distress.<sup>3</sup>

With its new tracking device, Tampa Bay's "Peaches" will give scientists a lot of information about flamingos in Florida.

There are so many questions! Will the flamingos brought to our shores stay here? If they return to the Yucatan and Cuba, will they come back later? Florida once had breeding flamingos year-round. Maybe we'll see wild flamingos here again, with the protection and recovery of their habitat, such as coastal wetlands, the Everglades and Florida Bay.<sup>1</sup>

(Continued on page 28)

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## PEACHES DOES THE FLAMINGO DANCE

When Peaches was released the bird's caregivers were treated to a show of rousing, bathing, preening, and even the quintessential "Flamingo Dance" as Peaches stirred up the sediment while foraging in the water. After about an hour, Peaches took flight! While there were no other flamingos seen at the release area, there had been daily reported sightings of a flock nearby. By the way, a flock of flamingos is called a "flamboyance," because of the bright color of their feathers. The release area in Fort DeSoto Park was chosen for its ideal habitat, foraging opportunities for food, and being a good distance away from the dangers of major roadways. Areas of Fort DeSoto Park are blocked off from humans to serve as a wild bird sanctuary.

## PLEASE BE KIND

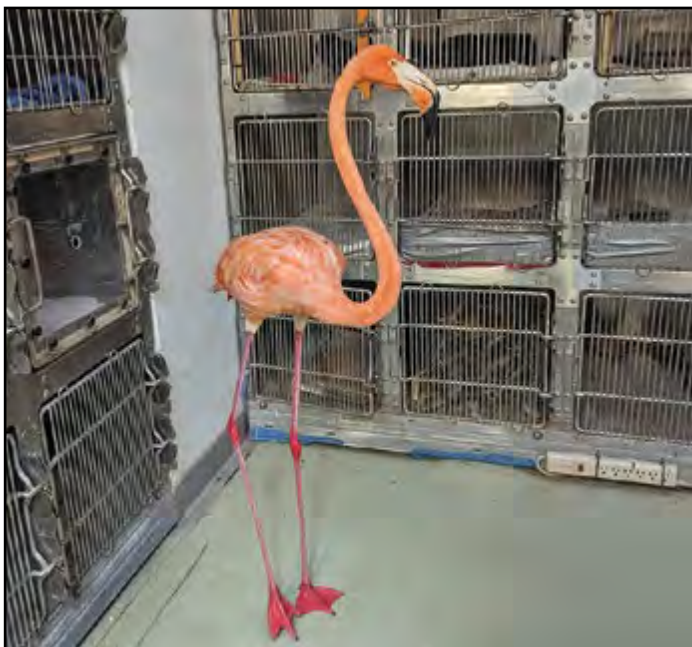
You may see wild flamingos visiting public places where there are people. There have been reports, unfortunately, involving some people harassing Peaches to get up close for photos. The biggest message Seaside Seabird Sanctuary has tried to share throughout this experience is that people need to give these birds space and respect. It's not a good idea to chase flamingos to get a selfie. It can be very dangerous for them. Please do not try to approach wild flamingos that you see. People can enjoy them by being kind and keeping a distance.<sup>3</sup>

If you want to see flamingos up close there are places in the Tampa Bay Area where you can see captive flamingos such as Busch Gardens Tampa, Sunken Gardens, and Zoo Tampa.

The presence of these hurricane-blown birds offers a reminder of the interconnectedness of the natural world. A big storm, while destructive, could also encourage unexpected encounters, forcing creatures to venture beyond their known horizons. And while the future of these pink-feathered voyagers remains uncertain, their arrival in Pinellas County serves as a testament to the enduring beauty and adaptability of life in the face of unexpected winds.

## REFERENCES

1. Audubon Florida (September 2023) *American Flamingo Released in Tampa Bay Will Shed Light on Flamingo Invasion* Available at: <https://fl.audubon.org/news/american-flamingo-released-tampa-bay-will-shed-light-flamingo-invasion>
2. Florida Fish & Wildlife Conservation Commission (No Date) *American Flamingos* Available at: <https://myfwc.com/wildlifehabitats/profiles/birds/waterbirds/american-flamingo/>
3. Seaside Seabird Sanctuary (September 2023) *Facebook Posts from September 2 – 10, 2023* Available at: <https://www.facebook.com/SeasideSeabird/>



*Peaches the Flamingo during "Recess Time" at the Seaside Seabird Sanctuary hospital on September 4, 2023. Birds are released from their kennels regularly for exercise and socializing with other birds. This reduces stress.*



*Peaches the Flamingo on the day of release at Fort DeSoto Park on September 9, 2023. Photo credit: Kara Cook, Audubon Florida.*





# Shelling Our Beaches



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**Sea Urchin**



**Florida Worm Shell**



**Turkey Wing**



# Parks & Recreation

## Florida Botanical Gardens

Explore a variety of subtropical gardens featuring Florida native and exotic plants from around the world. The Gardens are open daily, sunrise to sunset, and admission is free. Located next to Heritage Village at 12520 Ulmerton Road in Largo. [FLBGFoundation.org](http://FLBGFoundation.org)

## Fort DeSoto Park

The park consists of 1,136 acres made up of five interconnected islands. The beaches are all natural settings. You'll find yourself absorbed in the abundance of natural beauty for as far as the eye can see. The fort for which the park was named, was listed in the National Register of Historic Places in 1977. There are nature trails, picnic areas, and picnic shelters that can be reserved for events. 3500 Pinellas Bayway S., Tierra Verde. [PinellasCounty.org/park/05\\_ft\\_desoto.htm](http://PinellasCounty.org/park/05_ft_desoto.htm)

## Heritage Village

Natural pine and palmetto landscape features some of Pinellas County's most historic buildings. Explore 33 historic attractions, including a variety of historic homes, general store, railroad depot, two schools, church, and more! 11909 125th Street N., Largo. [PinellasCounty.org/Heritage](http://PinellasCounty.org/Heritage)

## Indian Rocks Beach Nature Preserve

Located on the east side of Gulf Blvd. between 9th and 10th Avenues. Enjoy a one-half mile boardwalk through the mangrove wetlands and an idyllic view of the Intracoastal Waterway. The west end is a pet-friendly area with a leash-free dog park. [Indian-Rocks-Beach.com/park\\_locations.php](http://Indian-Rocks-Beach.com/park_locations.php)

## Lake Seminole Park

Facilities include 13 picnic shelters which may be reserved up to one year in advance. Amenities include a boat ramp with spaces for vehicles/trailers, grills, picnic tables, playground, water fountains, and restrooms. Great bike trails! 10015 Park Blvd N., Seminole. [PinellasCounty.org/park/08\\_seminole.htm](http://PinellasCounty.org/park/08_seminole.htm)

## Largo Central Park

The park's rolling grounds, fountains and playground set it apart as one of the finest parks in the county. Rainbow Rotary Playground is one of the only playgrounds in the Bay area completely accessible to disabled users. Enjoy free train rides around the park on the first full weekend of every month. The train is also available for birthday parties. 101 Central Park Dr., Largo. [PlayLargo.com](http://PlayLargo.com)

## McGough Nature Park (Turtle Park)

A beautiful park located along the Intracoastal Waterway. It includes nature trails, picnic areas and shelters, a playground, restrooms and a boardwalk, which leads to a panoramic view of the Intracoastal. Enjoy feeding the turtles around the turtle pond. Nature walks, environmental programs and numerous eco-courses are available throughout the year. 11901 146th St. N., Largo. [PlayLargo.com](http://PlayLargo.com)

**See Florida flora and fauna at nearby Pinellas County parks.**

Photo Credit: All photos on this page by Alan & Christine Phares





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# TJ's Inspiration Delivered

## *Celebrating over 35 years of Perfection,*

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We are delighted to share our newest creations to Chef TJ's special menu, extensive wine list and not to be forgotten, our decadent desserts you can't refuse.



### *Food Talks!*

Chef TJ suggests its more accurate than imagined, food is fuel for the body and the mind, and a happy gut has a profound influence on mood. How often have you had a great feeling about something? And how often have you come to regret ignoring it? Chef TJ describes how the brain and body are connected in more ways than people realize



*Dine outside on our Queen-Anne Victorian inspired porch.*

and it's proven that his food doesn't just nourish the body ~ it also has a profound effect on mood ~and this is why customers repeatedly come back ~ over and over again for over 35 years! This happy kitchen where Chef TJ and team create his feel-good-foods, focuses on identifying mood-boosting, mental stimulating food and recipes. He suggest people often ignore their "gut feelings". "I think that it's absolutely fascinating that there are microorganisms in your gut that can influence your mind", says Chef TJ.

"I create authentic Italian fare,

blending classic techniques with adventurous Pacific Rim flavors, you'll savor traditional cuisine in a sophisticated yet casual setting. Our menu features tastes from Northern Italy- starting with fresh salads, succulent veal dishes and our local catch from our very own Gulf of Mexico." Chef TJ prepares the art of culinary in every dish, sautéed then baked to perfection. Signature dishes ~ lasagna, pasta al dente, NY brick oven pizza, prime steak and lobster ~ offering a wide variety of marinated vegetables and seafood, meats and Artisan cheeses and more. Plus, enjoy

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# Best of 2023

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## *Slow, Slip, and Savor*

This casual yet elegant dining establishment boasts accolades from the most discriminating palates.

Designed with a relaxed sense of modern beach cottage comfort, Chef TJ invites guests to “taste their way” through his diverse menu. Offerings include fresh salads, catch of the day, succulent veal dishes and Northern Italian specialties. This Indian Rocks Beach gem invites you to create your own means of escape with a sip of wine, paired with your favorite dish and a little imagination. Cheers to you, your families and friends!

### *~Chef TJ*

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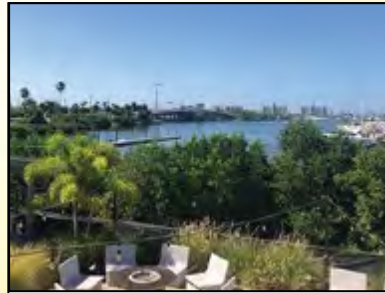
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Indian Shores

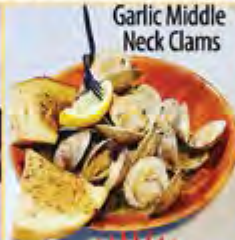
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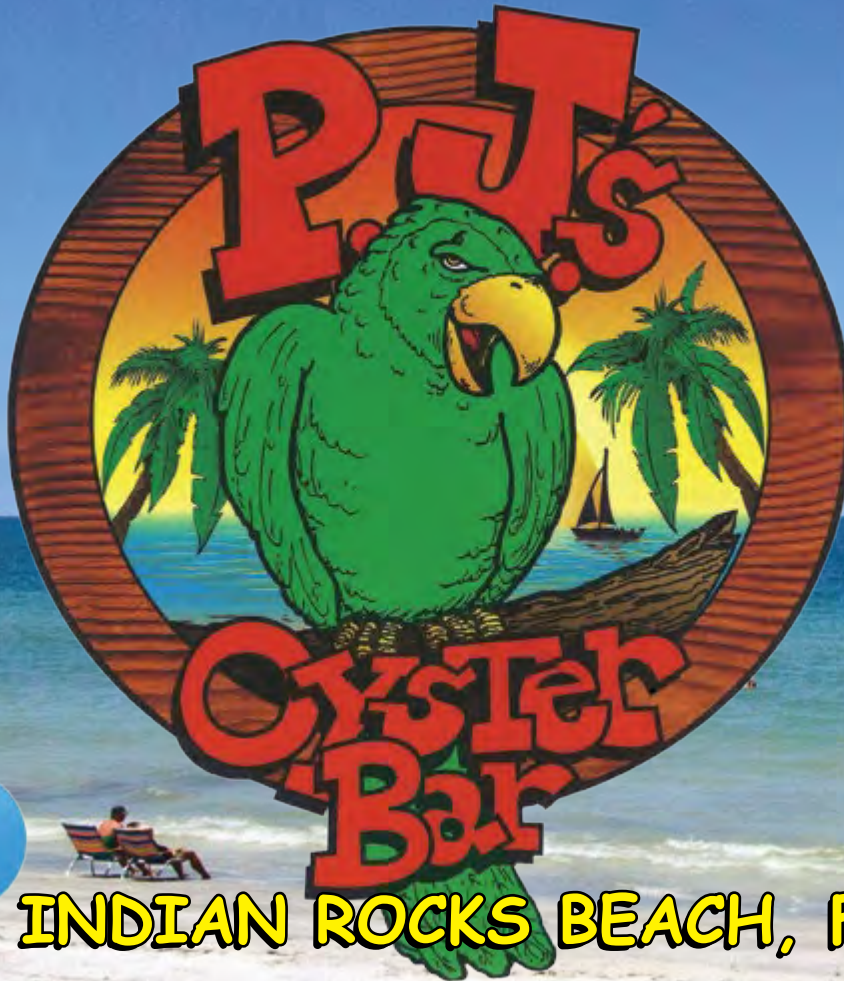
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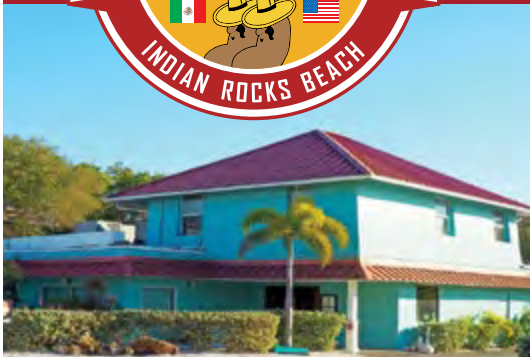
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727-595-8356

Holiday Inn Harbourside  
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Indian Rocks Beach, FL 33785  
[www.hiharbourside.com](http://www.hiharbourside.com)  
800-726-0865

Splash Harbour Water Park  
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Indian Rocks Beach, FL 33785  
[www.SplashHarbourWaterPark.com](http://www.SplashHarbourWaterPark.com)  
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# EMBARK ON ECOTOUR ADVENTURES

**Paddle through tunnels of mangroves by kayak. Encounter Florida wildlife up close like long legged wading birds, fish, and mangrove crabs.**

## Imagine this:

A sun-drenched island embraced by the Gulf of Mexico on one side and the Intracoastal Waterway on the other. The natural world around Indian Rocks Beach is brimming with diverse ecosystems, from salt-kissed beaches to whispering pine forests. There is so much to explore and discover!

## EXAMPLES OF ECOSYSTEMS

### Coastal Playground

Step onto sugar white beaches where gentle waves lap against the shore and seabirds pirouette above. Hidden beneath turquoise waters, accessible by snorkel or kayak, Indian Rocks Beach is teeming with life. Dolphin pods frolic offshore, while majestic manatees graze on seagrass, their gentle presence reminding us of the ecosystem's fragility. Take your family and friends island hopping on a captained tour or rent a boat or jet skis.

### Mangrove Magic

Venture into the labyrinthine world of mangrove islands, where gnarled trees with aerial roots filter brackish water, creating a haven for wading birds like ibis and egrets, their long legs navigating shallows teeming with tiny fish and crabs. Kayaking through these emerald tunnels offers a glimpse into this unique ecosystem.

### Oak Hammock Enchantment

Pine flatwoods, dominated by towering pines and carpeted with saw palmetto, beckon you to hike amidst the scent of sun-warmed needles. See the fluttering of colorful butterflies along the trail. Listen for the rhythmic drumming of woodpeckers and the melodic calls of songbirds like the chatty mockingbird. These sandy havens are also home to the gopher tortoise, whose burrows provide shelter for numerous other creatures.

## TYPES OF TOURS

### What is an ecotour?

Ecotours allow guests to immerse themselves in their surroundings while making as small a footprint as possible on the ecosystem.

### Self-Guided Tours

Enjoy a stroll in a nature preserve and look for turtles and manatees in the water. Wander through a wildlife



sanctuary to see animals up close. Rent a kayak, jet ski, or boat and go exploring. Here are some places near our beaches.

- Fort DeSoto Park
- Indian Rocks Beach Nature Preserve
- McGough Nature Park (nicknamed Turtle Park)
- Seaside Seabird Sanctuary
- Weedon Island Preserve

## Guided Tours

A guided tour is fun with a local guide who knows the area and its wildlife and takes out a small group, like a family. Formal boat tours may have 50-75 people. There is a planned route and a guide who makes a formal presentation. There may be marine animals pulled from the water that you can look at up close and touch. Some tours offer light snacks and beverages.

- Local Guides: See a selection of boat tours and charters in the Watersports listings on pages 56 and 57.
- Clearwater Marine Aquarium – Sealife Safari
- Dolphin Snorkeling Cruise
- Hubbard’s Marina – Dolphin Watching Cruise and Nature Eco Tour
- Sunshine Scenic Tours – Dolphin Quest

## Educational Programs and Camps

Educational ecotours have a hands on class or an opportunity to collect data for scientific studies. There are programs of half day or all day hands on fun exploring the environment and discovering the secrets of nature. Programs are designed for different ages groups and even for people with disabilities.

- Clearwater Marine Aquarium
- Tampa Bay Watch Discovery Center

There is a wealth of adventure to be had at the beach and beyond. Pinellas County’s diverse ecosystems hold a kaleidoscope of life waiting to be discovered. So, lace up your hiking boots, grab your kayak paddle, and open your heart to the wonders that await. Remember to respect the wildlife, tread lightly, and leave only footprints, to ensure this paradise thrives for generations to come.



A boy looks at tiny sealife in floating seaweed during Clearwater Marine Aquarium’s Sealife Safari.



An up close encounter with dolphins during Hubbard’s Marina’s Dolphin Watching and Nature Eco Tour.



Cruise around Boca Ciega Bay with a local guide telling stories about local history and wildlife during Sunshine Scenic Tours’ Dolphin Quest.



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# Story of the Starfish

**Once upon a time**, there was a wise man who used to go to the ocean to do his writing. He had a habit of walking on the beach before he began his work.

One day, he was walking along the shore. As he looked down the beach, he saw a human figure moving like a dancer. He smiled to himself when he thought of someone who would dance through the day. So he began to walk faster to catch up.

As he got closer, he saw a young man, but the young man wasn't dancing. Instead, he was reaching down to the sand, picking up something and very gently throwing it into the ocean. As the wise man came closer, he called out, "Good morning! What are you doing?"

The young man paused, looked up and replied, "Throwing starfish into the ocean."

"I guessed that, but why are you throwing starfish into the ocean?"

"The sun is up, and the tide is going out. And if I don't throw them in, they'll die."

"But, young man, don't you realize that there are miles and miles of beach and starfish all along it? You can't possibly make a difference!"

The young man listened politely. Then he bent down and picked up another starfish. He threw it into the sea, past the breaking waves and said, "It made a difference for that one."

There is something very special in every person we meet. We have all been given the ability to make a difference in another person's life, and if we can become aware of that gift, we gain, through the strength of our visions, the power to shape the future.

We must each find our starfish. If we throw our starfish wisely and well, the world will be a better place.



# Street Rentals



A great way to explore the beaches with family! Six seat golf cart rentals. Free delivery and pickup.

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# Museums & Art Galleries

## Local Museums and Art Galleries

### ***Beach Art Center***

1515 Bay Palm Blvd., Indian Rocks Beach, FL 33785

[BeachArtCenter.org](http://BeachArtCenter.org)

Supporting local art and artists for over 40 years, the Beach Art Center offers exhibits of local artists' works as well as art classes and workshops. Local art is for sale in the Gift Shop.

### ***Indian Rocks Historical Museum***

203 4th Avenue, Indian Rocks Beach, FL 33785

[IRBMuseum.com](http://IRBMuseum.com)

Enjoy a very visual experience with selected "Big Shot" images and a wide range of photographs, postcards, maps, and other graphics that bring history to life.

## Shops that Carry Local Art

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Indian Rocks Beach, FL 33785

[Island-Cove.com](http://Island-Cove.com)

### ***Sign of the Dolphin***

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Seminole, FL 33776

[SignoftheDolphin.com](http://SignoftheDolphin.com)

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***of Western & Wildlife Art***

150 Central Ave.

St. Petersburg, FL 33701

[JamesMuseum.org](http://JamesMuseum.org)

### ***The Dali***

One Dali Blvd.

St. Petersburg, FL 33701

[TheDali.org](http://TheDali.org)

### ***Morean Arts Center***

719 Central Avenue

St. Petersburg, FL 33701

[MoreanArtsCenter.org](http://MoreanArtsCenter.org)

### ***Imagine Museum***

1901 Central Avenue

St. Petersburg, FL 33713

[ImagineMuseum.com](http://ImagineMuseum.com)

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[MFAstpete.org](http://MFAstpete.org)







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# Watersports

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Hustler Fishing Charters



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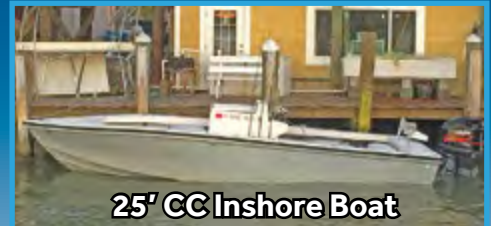




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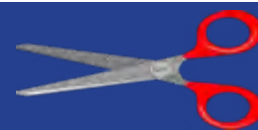
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With the purchase of any entree  
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401 2nd Street  
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Please present coupon.  
Limit 2 per table.

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