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SEPTEMBER 2021

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Calendar

Casa Del Mar
on Longboat Key



Sand-sational Sarasota

One of Florida's premiere Gulf Coast cities, Sarasota is the perfect weekend getaway for Central Floridians.

By Karen Nimetz

ONLY A TWO-HOUR DRIVE SOUTH from Orlando, Sarasota is known for its pristine white sand beaches, superb dining, unique shopping, not to mention, its endless cultural and recreational amenities.

Home of The John and Mable Ringling Museum of Art, the official state museum of art, it's no wonder that Sarasota is often referred to as Florida's Cultural Coast. Its nearly 40 miles of idyllic shoreline are a beachgoer's paradise. Not surprisingly, nearby Siesta Key Beach was named "Best Beach in America" in 2020 by travel site TripAdvisor. Whether you are seeking a mini-vacation with family, a getaway with friends or a romantic weekend with your significant other, this seaside city has something for everyone.

Accommodations

Regardless if you desire a luxurious five-star hotel or seek a more budget-friendly stay, Sarasota has an abundance of options to accommodate your lodging needs. From relaxing beachfront resorts to quaint boutique hotels right in the heart of the vibrant downtown, the choices are bountiful.

Located on Longboat Key, **Casa del Mar** offers guests true serenity with access to its own private beach as well as unparalleled views of the Gulf of Mexico. The boutique rental condominiums feature all the comforts of home in a luxurious, intimate beachfront setting. Each private unit offers a unique view of the Gulf, pool or courtyard. The heated pool and large

Casa Del Mar photograph courtesy of Duane Lee Wade, Inc.

sun deck, with complimentary lounge chairs, provide the ideal setting for picturesque sunsets and dolphin watching. The resort is conveniently located near a paved bicycle path that offers 9.5 miles of beautiful tropical and Gulf views to traverse on foot or by bike, and just 10 minutes from St. Armands Circle, an outdoor dining and shopping mecca.

True opulence abounds at **The Ritz-Carlton Sarasota**, where this downtown resort takes relaxation to a whole new level. From its spacious suites and guest rooms to the onsite spa, with a full menu of treatments, guests are truly pampered. Dining options at the resort consist of four top-notch restaurants providing a variety of choices including local cuisine, fresh seafood and waterfront dining. The resort offers plenty of outdoor activities including exclusive access to their nearby award-winning Golf Club and the private paradise that is The Beach Club on Lido Key, to ensure that no stone has been left unturned.

Tired of paying for hotel amenities you never use? Then check out **Kompose Hotel**. This boutique hotel allows guests to personalize their stay by selecting à la carte add-ons. Budget-friendly guests will appreciate paying for only the bare necessities while those looking for more amenities will love the selection of add-ons, which even includes access to a podcast studio. This unique and trendy hotel is conveniently located less than a mile from the Sarasota Bradenton International Airport.

Dining and Drinks

Foodies flock to dine at the more than 800 restaurants in Sarasota County and it is easy to see why given that Sarasota is home to over 20 Zagat-rated restaurants.

Start your day off right with a hearty breakfast at **Sunnyside Café**. This quaint eatery has plenty of down-home menu choices as well as vegan options. The café offers both indoor and outdoor seating.

If you are looking for a casual yet unique dining experience, look no further than **Owen's Fish Camp**, in downtown Sarasota. Diners will feel right at home as they walk past a century-old Banyan tree into the renovated historic cottage that offers an ode to old Florida living.

The menu features Southern classics like jambalaya, shrimp and grits, and cornmeal-crusted catfish with spicy collard greens, as well as a wide selection of craft beer and wines.

For fine dining, try **Summer House Steak & Seafood** in Siesta Key. Aside from the bounty of seafood options, such as the Colossal Lobster Tail, the restaurant offers hand-cut steaks that are specially selected.

Those with a sweet tooth will want to check out one of the **Meaney's Mini Donuts** in St. Armands Circle or in nearby Siesta Key. In addition to the unique variety of mini doughnuts, Meaney's also serves ice cream and coffee.



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For some playful seasonal handmade craft cocktails, head over to **Pangea Alchemy Lab** in downtown Sarasota. The bar has an intimate speakeasy feel and features both old-school and new-age concoctions.

Select Attractions

It is nearly impossible to be bored in Sarasota. This lively city is bustling with activities.

Now in its 82nd year, **Sarasota Jungle Gardens** is a family-owned and -operated attraction with a rich history. This attraction features unique experiences to get up close and personal with a variety of animals, most notably a flock of free-roaming flamingos. Guests are able to walk among and hand-feed these exquisite birds. There are many parrots and other large birds that guests may hold. Additionally, they offer a variety of exhibits including the newly launched—and first in the area—Butterfly House and Garden. There are also large and small reptiles, birds of prey, a petting zoo and other mammals on exhibit.

Kids and adults alike will enjoy strolling around **Marie Selby Gardens**. This beautiful oasis is the only botanical garden in the world dedicated to the study and conservation of epiphytes (air plants) such as orchids and bromeliads, while offering breathtaking views of Sarasota Bay. Activities include a children's

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Sarasota's Favorite Family Attraction*
SarasotaJungleGardens.com



rainforest garden, tropical glass house conservatory and luxuriant grounds with two historic homes, the Selby House and the Museum of Botany and the Arts.

For an experience that's full of fun and learning, visit the **Mote Marine Laboratory & Aquarium**. This independent, nonprofit marine research organization features more than 100 marine species such as sharks, sea turtles and fish of all shapes and sizes. Patrons can enjoy the stingray touch tank and revel in watching manatees in the nearby mammal center.



The Ringling Museum Complex

You could easily spend a day (or two) exploring **The Ringling**, the 66-acre estate of circus mogul John Ringling and his wife Mable. A majestic must see is the *Ca' d'Zan*, which translates to "House of John" in Venetian dialect. The five-story, 36,000-square-foot waterfront home overlooks Sarasota Bay. Completed in 1926, the house and grounds, featuring the lavish Bayfront Gardens, are available to tour. Also on property is **The Ringling Circus Museum**. Here you will find fascinating circus relics, including the railroad car used by John Ringling when traveling across the county with the circus. Lastly, be sure to visit the property's **Museum of Art**, which showcases John and Mable's love of art through their extensive collection of works from the Medieval, Renaissance and Baroque periods. The museum is also home to contemporary works and regular exhibitions.

For more information on Sarasota and all of its upcoming events, be sure to check out VisitSarasota.org.

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