

Florida's
best-kept
secret

The wonders of Marco Island & S. Naples are being recognized around the country. We hope that you will enjoy this article published in the Tennessean newspaper. We look forward to hearing from you soon!

*Alan & Linda,
Cathy, Nancy, Tom, Mari-Jo, Rachel & Robin*

THE TENNESSEAN

TRAVEL



The Everglades, home to all sorts of swamp critters, is a short drive from Marco Island. More than 500 varieties of fish inhabit the waters of the Ten Thousand Islands.

The isle of Marco is where the natives sneak off for fun in the sun

By **JAMES DAVIS**

The Dallas Morning News

MARCO ISLAND, Fla. – As the sun sets on the emerald waters and white sands, seashell lovers take delight in another bountiful catch.

During the day, people of all ages walk the sandy Marco Island beaches and stroll out into clear waters looking for shells in all shapes, sizes and colors. Early risers scan the seashore for exotic treasures left by the sea overnight. In the evening, others walk

along the surf's edge, using flashlights to find special shapes overlooked by day bathers.

"This is the only place to be for seashell enthusiasts," says Sam Morris, a valet at a beach resort. "It's where the locals come, and nothing beats word-of-mouth."

Taking' It easy

This tiny island off southwest Florida offers visitors a laid-back style that seems out of step with busy America. The speed limit is 35 mph,

bicyclists and walkers are everywhere, and there are no fast-food signs.

Miles of clean, family-style beaches (no nudity) attract visitors and locals from sunup to sundown, and water sports are abundant at most resorts and condominiums. With banana-boat rides, personal water-craft rentals and parasailing, it's almost more fun in the sun than time allows.

There's also a special pick-up boat service that arrives behind the resorts and carries seashell lovers to a secluded stretch of the Gulf Coast. Visitors also can take a two-hour morning or afternoon catamaran excursion to remote barrier islands. There they may collect an array of shells and sand dollars while bald eagles soar overhead.

The fine dining

Great restaurants abound. One special attraction is the Marriott Resort and Golf Club. Stone crab claws, shrimp scampi, fried Gulf shrimp, blackened trout, grouper, prime rib and lobster fettuccine are featured.

Night life on Marco Island is plentiful from the fabulous Esplanade offerings to the casual Snook Inn on the River to Comedy Clubs and more. Others stroll through the numerous shops, treat themselves to late-night ice cream or take in a movie.

Venturing out

Along Interstate 75, visitors are confronted with an array of offers. They may take a swamp buggy tour or an airboat ride to view alligator farms and exotic birds. Big Cypress National Preserve, with 712,000 acres, is only 30 miles from Marco Island.

Fishing boats go out for half-day and full-day deep-sea excursions and scenic dinner cruises are offered as well.



At Marco Island, a tiny island off southwest Florida, visitors can bask in the sun, swim in emerald waters, scan the beach for rare and beautiful seashells, enjoy parasailing or venture out on the water on banana boats or catamarans. For a change of pace, Big Cypress National Preserve, at right, with more than 700,000 acres of wildlife, is only 30 miles away.



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