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Captiva Island: Why This Florida Oasis Should Be On Your Travel Bucket List



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Travel

I cover adventure, luxury and family travel.

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Captiva Island, Florida, is an ideal laid-back vacation destination. BRIAN TIETZ

Captiva Island boasts pristine stretches of natural sand giving it the moniker (along with its sister island Sanibel) of seashell capital of the world. This region boasts more than 250 types of seashells and attracts nature lovers

from around the world. Birders come to see the more than 230 species of birds; cyclists will enjoy the more than 20 miles of bike paths, and if you're into fishing, this region boasts some of the best fishing experiences in Florida.

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Captiva Island is considered the sleepy, quiet, more laid-back sister to Sanibel. Couples and families flock to Captiva Island for some quality time in nature. Located west of Fort Myers in Southwest Florida, Captiva's main resort [South Seas Island Resort](#), is near J.N. "Ding" Darling National Wildlife Refuge, Lighthouse Beach, and the spring training facilities of the Boston Red Sox and Minnesota Twins.

But most people who come to South Seas Island Resort, often find that they prefer to stay at the resort—because there is so much to see and do and plenty of places to eat and drink.





Many of the resort's rooms have balconies with water views. SOUTH SEAS ISLAND RESORT

Not sure what type of room you want? You're in luck because South Seas Island Resort is massive. It has 434 accommodations (with 34 various accommodation types so you have plenty of options in terms of room type and size) and plenty of room to spread out. The resort lies on 330 acres with more than half of the resort a dedicated wildlife preserve and estuary, which means it doesn't feel like a giant behemoth, but instead the accommodations are spread out and tucked away in various parts of the island, so the overall vibe is one of relaxation and laid-back family fun.

What to do



There are three main pools at the resort. SOUTH SEAS ISLAND RESORT

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Well, you'll definitely not be bored while on property.

There are a variety of swimming pools located throughout the property including three main pools, one of which includes a waterslide. Hitting the beach is another favorite activity. This region is often considered the seashell capital of the world, and many people get up early (timing it to the tides) to collect their favorite shells on the 2.5 miles of beach at the resort. Beach sunsets are well worth experiencing each night.

For those feeling a bit more active, Bayside Marina, in the South Village, is not only a great place to spot manatees and dolphins, but it also has boat rentals including deck boats, pontoon boats, and center console boats (which are great for fishing). Sailing enthusiasts can take advantage of the Colgate Offshore Sailing School also located at the resort—it offers two-hour clinics, as well as three-, five-, and seven-day sailing classes.

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For some great wildlife viewing, people can board a Captiva Cruises vessel for an island shelling cruise, dolphin watch and wildlife adventure cruise, sailing cruise, group boat tour, private charter, or romantic sunset cruise.

Adventure seekers can book wave runners, sailing, parasailing, kayaking and stand-up paddle boarding right on property through Sunny Island Adventures. South Seas also offers guided kayak tours, guided wave runner island tours, and banana boat rides. South Seas also offers guided kayak tours, guided wave runner island tours, and banana boat rides.



Beachfront golf along the Gulf of Mexico is offered at the resort's 9-hole, par-27 executive course, ...

[+] SOUTH SEAS ISLAND RESORT

Those who prefer to stay on the ground, can take advantage of tennis, golf, spa, fitness classes at the gym and yoga.

Nearby Cabbage Key is a great day tour—there’s a chance you’ll see dolphins along the way. Once on Cabbage Key, you can climb to the top of the lookout tower for amazing views and walk on the nature path to see mangroves up close. The restaurant on the island is known for its cheeseburgers and fresh fish.

Where to Eat and Drink



The Latitudes Food Shack, located on the beach, is a great spot to watch the sunset. BRIAN TIETZ

South Seas Resort has five restaurants, which is great for those who are spending most of their time on the resort’s grounds. Harborside Bar & Grill has recently been renovated and has revamped its menu. It has a lot of great seafood choices, including the salmon, grouper, Chilean Sea Bass and crab cakes. The Pointe, which overlooks the pool, is a great spot for salads and sandwiches. The Super Foods salad with Mahi Mahi is a fan favorite. At Doc Ford’s Rum Bar & Grill, try the shrimp ceviche cocktail, oysters on the half shell, and peel-and-eat shrimp—all served up fresh. If you’re looking to grab a quick snack or mid-day treat, head to Scoops & Slices, which has a variety of pizza, ice cream, candy, shakes, burgers, and salads. The Latitudes Food

Shack is located on the beach and is a great spot for people watching or just relaxing in the sun. It is known for its tacos and many people get a variety of pork, chicken, fish, and vegan to share. The chicken taco salad is also quite popular.

If you're looking for an early-morning cup of coffee or a grab-and-go meal, the Ship's Store, Starbucks, and Captiva Provision Company are good options.

The Crowd (Who Visits)



Manatees can be spotted in the slip docks and harbor at South Seas Island Resort in Captiva Island, ...

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Couples tend to visit January through April. Spring break attracts a lot of multi-generational travel, and the summer months attract primarily families. In the shoulder season, there is a mix of both couples and families. The low season, which is Labor Day to mid-December, is a great time to visit because you get a good chunk of the resort to yourself. And because the resort is so family-friendly, it has a very high repeat visitor rate. The

property originally opened in 1946, and many families come back year-after-year and generation-after-generation.

In terms of where guests come from, the resort attracts people from everywhere (both in-country and international), but the top markets are Northeast, Midwest, and driving markets.

If you're looking for a laid-back, memorable Florida vacation, this one is hard to beat.

Check out my [website](#).



Judy Koutsky



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