

Beaches of Ft. Myers & Sanibel Sparkle with Holiday Cheer

Aug 5, 2008

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

August 2008

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The Beaches of Fort Myers & Sanibel sparkle with warm, tropical holiday cheer Music, entertainment, luminary trails, theater and more!

LEE COUNTY, FL –The holiday season is one of the most beautiful times of year to visit The Beaches of Fort Myers & Sanibel in southwest Florida. Visitors have many opportunities to celebrate the season in this tropical paradise with special events galore.

Holiday House at the Edison & Ford Winter Estates in Fort Myers is one of the area highlights of the holiday season. Millions of lights celebrate Thomas Edison's contribution to modern life and the festivity of the season at this 33-year Lee County tradition enjoyed by more than 30,000 visitors each year.

Spend the holidays with southwest Florida's first "snowbirds," the Edison and Ford families and enjoy the lights and seasonal decorations that fill 20 acres of gardens, the recently restored Edison buildings and the Estates' historic homes. Holidays at the Estates places historical decorations amidst the orchids, exotic trees and plantings that fill the gardens. Events include artists and craftsmen exhibits and appearances, as well as book signings and demonstrations in the Creative Cottage located in the Ford Caretaker's House. Nightly entertainment is presented by local school and community groups. Santa visits and a Children's Tree Trail with lights and handmade ornaments from Lee County students add to the festive atmosphere. Holiday items will be available for sale in the Creative Cottage, Museum Store, Garden Shoppe and historic Cottage Shoppe. The Estates Museum and Edison's Lab will be open nightly as well as the Estates Banyan Caf for refreshments.

The 2008 Holiday House opens daily Dec. 13-Jan. 3, 2009, 5:30 to 9 p.m., except Christmas Eve and Christmas Day. Cost of admission is \$12 for adults, \$1 for children ages 6-12 and free for children under 6. For information call (239) 334-7419 or visit www.efwefla.org.

In its 24th year, the annual **Christmas Luminary Trail and Open House on Sanibel and Captiva islands** draws visitors from all over the world as they join local residents to celebrate the season. Three miles of luminary candles line Periwinkle Way from 5:30-9 p.m. **Dec. 5 on Sanibel Island and Dec. 6 on Captiva Island.** One of the most popular island events, area businesses are decorated for the holidays with 2000 candles illuminating the island pathways, storefronts and homes. Call the Sanibel-Captiva Chamber of

Commerce at (239) 472-1080 or visit www.sanibel-captiva.org.

Irving Berlin's "White Christmas" takes place at Broadway Palm Dinner Theatre in Fort Myers from Nov. 20-Dec. 27. Set in 1954, two army buddies-turned-show-biz-partners follow a duo of singing sisters to Vermont where the girls are scheduled to perform over Christmas. Bob, Phil and the girls decide to put on a show to save the inn that is run by their former commanding officer. The Irving Berlin score includes "Happy Holidays," "Sisters," "Blue Skies," and the title song, "White Christmas." This extravaganza embraces the season with Broadway-style dancing, stunning costumes and the traditional holiday favorite songs. All shows include a luncheon or dinner buffet. For schedule and prices, call (239) 278-4422 or visit www.BroadwayPalm.com.

The Southwest Florida Symphony presents many special performances over the holidays including the Christmas portion of Handel's immortal "**Messiah.**" Performances are scheduled for **Dec. 13** at 7:30 p.m. at Faith United Methodist Church in Fort Myers and **Dec. 14** at 4 p.m. First Baptist Church of Cape Coral, featuring the Symphony Chamber Orchestra, Symphony Chorus, Chamber Chorus and guest soloists.

The symphony will present "**A Very Merry Pops**" **Dec. 20 at 8 p.m. and Dec. 21 at 7 p.m. at Barbara B. Mann Performing Arts Hall** in Fort Myers. This heartwarming holiday tradition is a family favorite and offers the perfect opportunity to celebrate the season with great music. This year's concert has a Celtic flair. For tickets, call the Symphony box office at (239) 418-1500 or purchase tickets on line at www.swflso.org.

The **Schoolhouse Theater on Sanibel Island** will present the "**Holly Jolly Follies,**" an **American Holiday Revue Dec. 16-31.** For prices, times and reservations call (239) 472-6862 or visit www.theschoolhousetheater.com.

The 21st Annual Fort Myers Beach Christmas Boat Parade takes place Dec. 6. Boats decked out in festive holiday array depart from Pink Shell Beach Resort & Spa at 6 p.m. Call (239) 454-7500 or visit www.fortmyersbeach.org.

The **Imaginarium Hands-on Museum in Fort Myers** plans its annual **Holidayland** celebration with special activities from 11 a.m. to 3 p.m. on Dec. 8. Kids enjoy visits and photos with Santa, printing holiday T-shirts, decorating holiday cookies, face painting, shrinky-dink ornaments and other activities exploring winter holidays around the world. Call (239) 321-7420 or visit www.cityftmyers.com/imaginarium.

Seminole Gulf Railway in Fort Myers is offering several holiday-themed activities. Christmas Railboat Trips on Dec. 8, 9, 15, 16, 22 and 23 include a holiday train to Punta Gorda for the sights and sounds of Christmas as well as a five-course dinner and a Christmas lights canal tour. Train leaves at 3 p.m. and returns at 9:30 p.m. The Jingle Bell Special on Nov. 26, 29, 30 and Dec. 3, 6, 7, 10, 13 14, 15-24 and 26-28 includes stories, games, crafts, singing, punch and cookies. Guests are invited to bring an unwrapped gift for the Harry Chapin Food Bank. Call for times and prices.

The railway's **Holiday Murder Mystery** is scheduled for Nov. 28-Dec. 24 and has a holiday twist. The adventure includes a five-course dinner and is available for parties. On New Year's Eve, ring in the New Year on the Murder Mystery Train with five-course dinner and live whodunit show from 7:30 p.m.-1 a.m. For additional information and reservations, visit www.semgulf.com or call (800) SEM-GULF (736-4853).

For more information on special holiday events and packages or for planning a vacation to The Beaches of Fort Myers & Sanibel, visit www.FortMyersSanibel.com. Be sure to check out "Great Deals" for the latest special rates.

Editors' Note: The Beaches of Fort Myers & Sanibel include: Sanibel Island & Captiva Island, Fort Myers Beach, Fort Myers, Bonita Springs, Estero, Cape Coral, Pine Island, Boca Grande & outer islands, North Fort Myers, Lehigh Acres. To access a comprehensive media kit, log onto www.FortMyersSanibel.com and click on Media Central.

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