

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

December 2009

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The Beaches of Fort Myers & Sanibel offers 37 green properties/markets, dining and more for environmental responsibility

LEE COUNTY, FL –Visitors to The Beaches of Fort Myers & Sanibel have many opportunities to implement environmentally responsible practices while on vacation in Florida’s unspoiled island sanctuary. Known worldwide for its shell-strewn beaches, wildlife refuges, and sparkling waterways, The Beaches of Fort Myers & Sanibel offers an ideal location for reconnecting with southwest Florida’s most valuable natural resources. It is for this reason that the destination has always had a strong commitment to the protection and preservation of the environment.

The area’s most famous residents, Thomas Edison and Henry Ford, were way ahead of their time in searching for renewable resources. According to Chris Pendleton, Edison & Ford Winter Estates president and CEO, in 1927, the Edison Botanic Research Laboratory, in Fort Myers was formed by Ford, Edison and Harvey Firestone to find a source of natural rubber from a plant that could grow in the U.S. Ford’s interest in renewable resources continued with soybean based plastics used in Ford automobiles in the 1930s; corn as a fuel source; and an automobile Ford patented in 1942 which was made almost entirely of plastic.

Today, in an effort to conserve and protect the area’s resources and to save energy, the hospitality industry is working to do its part. Thirty-six area accommodations have been named to the *Florida Green Lodging Program* and the area’s first certified “green building” opened in April 2008 to visitors at Six Mile Cypress Slough Preserve.

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Going “Green” on The Beaches of Fort Myers & Sanibel/Page 2

Certified “green” accommodations

Fort Myers Beach:

- DiamondHead Beach Resort, Fort Myers Beach, www.diamondheadfl.com, 239-765-7654.
- Hampton Inn & Suites, Fort Myers Beach, www.fortmyersbeachsuites.hamptoninn.com, 239-437-8888.
- Mango Street Inn, Fort Myers Beach, www.mangostreetinn.com, 239-233-8542.
- Pink Shell Beach Resort & Spa, Fort Myers Beach, www.pinkshell.com, 239-463-6181.
- The Riviera Villas, Fort Myers Beach, www.therivieravillas.com, 920-203-0018.

Sanibel Island:

- Blue Dolphin Cottages, Sanibel Island, www.bluedolphincottages.com, 239-472-1600.
- Castaways Beach & Bay Cottages, Sanibel Island, www.castawayssanibel.com, 239-472-1252.
- Ocean’s Reach Condominium Resort, Sanibel Island, www.oceansreach.com, 239-472-4554.
- Sanibel Inn, Sanibel Island, www.sanibelinn.com, 239-472-3181.
- Seaside Inn, Sanibel Island, www.sanibelcollection.com/seaside_inn, 239-472-1400.
- Song of the Sea, Sanibel Island, www.songofthesea.com, 239-472-2220.
- Sundial Beach & Golf Resort, Sanibel Island, www.sanibelresort.com, 239-472-4151.
- Sunset Beach Resort, Sanibel Island, www.sanibelcollection/sunset_beach, 239-472-1700.

Fort Myers:

- Best Western Fort Myers Inn & Suites, www.bwfortmyers.com, 239-276-3949.
- Crown Plaza, Fort Myers, www.cpfortmyers.com, 239-482-2900.
- Comfort Inn & Suites Airport, Fort Myers, www.choicehotels.com/fl795, 239-939-5002.
- Country Inn & Suites Sanibel Gateway, Fort Myers, www.countryinns.com, 239-454-0040.
- Courtyard by Marriott Fort Myers at I-75 and Gulf Coast Town Center, Fort Myers, www.marriott.com/hotels/travel/rswap, 239-332-4747.
- Crowne Plaza Hotel, www.cpfortmyers.com, 239-482-2900.

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- Hilton Garden Inn, Fort Myers, www.fortmyers.stayhgi.com, 239-790-3500.
- Holiday Inn Downtown Historic District, Fort Myers, www.holidayinn.com, 239-332-3232.
- Homewood Suites by Hilton Fort Myers, www.homewoodsuitesfortmyers.com, 239-275-6000.
- Hotel Indigo, downtown Fort Myers, www.hotelindigo.com, 239-337-3446.
- La Quinta Inn & Suites Airport, Fort Myers, www.lq.com, 239-466-0012.
- Residence Inn by Marriott, Fort Myers, www.residenceinn.com/rswri, 239-936-0110.
- Sanibel Harbour Resort & Spa, Fort Myers, www.sanibel-resort.com, 239-466-4000.
- Shell Point Guest House, Fort Myers, www.shellpoint.org, 239-454-2275.
- Spring Hill Suites by Marriott, Fort Myers, www.marriott.com/rswsh, 239-561-1803.
- Suburban Extended Stay Hotel, Fort Myers, www.suburbanhotels.com, 239-938-0370.

Bonita Springs:

- Holiday Inn Express, Bonita Springs, www.holidayinnexpressbonitasprings.com, 239-248-0699.
- Hyatt Coconut Plantation, Bonita Springs, www.hyattcoconutplantation.hyatt.com, 239-947-7300.
- The Hyatt Regency Coconut Point Resort & Spa, Bonita Springs, www.coconutpoint.hyatt.com, 239-444-1234.
- The Inn at the Springs, Bonita Springs, www.theinnatthesprings.com, 239-949-5913.

Estero:

- Hampton Inn & Suites, Estero, www.hampton.com, 239-947-5566.

Pine Island:

- Bokeelia Tarpon Inn, Bokeelia, www.tarponinn.com, 239-283-8961.
- Bridgewater Inn, Matlacha, www.bridgewaterinn.com, 239-283-2423.

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In addition, the Cayo Costa Park cabins have received the green lodging designation. With nine miles of beautiful beaches and acres of pine forests, oak-palm hammocks, and mangrove swamps, this barrier island park is a Gulf Coast paradise. Accessible only by private boat or ferry, overnight stays are available in the 30 primitive cabins. Call 239-283-0015 for ferry information. Call 800-326-3521 for overnight reservations. www.floridastateparks.org/cayocosta.

Launched in 2004, the *Florida Green Lodging Program* is a voluntary effort by the Florida Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) to encourage the lodging industry to conserve and protect Florida's natural resources. The program designates and recognizes lodging facilities that make a commitment to conserve and protect Florida's natural resources. Its environmental guidelines allow the hospitality industry to evaluate its operations, set goals and take specific actions to continuously improve environmental performance. For more information about the *Florida Green Lodging Program* or to locate information on a Florida Green Lodge, visit www.floridagreenlodging.org.

Building “green”

The first certified “green” building in Lee County is located at Six Mile Cypress Slough Preserve in Fort Myers. The preserve's new Interpretive Center is certified by the Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) Green Building Rating System. This is the nationally accepted benchmark established by the non-profit U.S. Green Building Council for the design, construction and operation of high-performance green buildings.

A certified green building is one that has minimal negative effects on the environment, achieved through the careful selection of materials, construction methods, energy use strategies and maintenance practices.

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The center contains space for exhibits, administration, and education and interpretation to orient and educate visitors. Window viewing areas of a pond connect visitors to the wonders of the slough, and an outdoor teaching deck enhances educational opportunities and aids in the visitors' transition to the boardwalk trails.

www.leeparks.org/sixmile, 239-432-2004.

Green markets

It's a bit of nostalgia visiting a farmer's market to pick out fresh vegetable, fruits, breads, pastries, fresh flowers and lots of other treats! It's fun, there is often entertainment and it is a great place to mingle with the locals. It also helps to support local growers. Area markets include:

- **Green Market at the Alliance for the Arts**, 10091 McGregor Blvd, Fort Myers: fresh seafood, jams, organically grown produce, tropical fruit and more. When: 8 a.m.-noon every Saturday. Live music and face painting for the children. Call 239-939-2787 or visit www.artinlee.com.
- **Cape Harbor Farmers Market**, 5703 Cape Harbor Drive, Cape Coral: seasonal fruit, vegetables, dog bakery and flowers. When: 8 a.m.-noon Saturdays May through mid-October. Call 239-945-6116.
- **City of Fort Myers Farmers Market**, Fort Myers Centennial Park parking lot, under the U.S. 41 Caloosahatchee Bridge, at the corner of Heitman and West First Streets: For 14 years this year-round green market has offered convenient, inexpensive, market facilities for local farmers and vendors to sell their products at reasonable prices. Fruits, vegetables, fresh flowers, local seafood, plants, palms, fruit trees, flowering shrubs, and doggie treats are available. When: 7 a.m. until 2 p.m., Thursday, October through May; 7 a.m. until 1 p.m. June through September. Call 239-321-7098 or visit www.cityftmyers.com/Attractions/FarmersMarket/tabid/763/Default.aspx.
- **Fort Myers Beach Farmers Market**, under the Sky Bridge between Second and Third Streets: Fruits and vegetables, flowers, seafood, baked goods, snacks, plants. When: 7:30 -11:30 a.m., Friday, November through April, Call 239-765-0202 or visit www.fortmyersbeachfl.gov.
- **Bonita Springs Farmers Market**, adjacent to Riverside Park, Old 41, downtown Bonita Springs: Visitors are able to purchase directly from growers. Vegetables, plants, seafood, flowers and more. When: 8 a.m.-1 p.m., Wednesday, November through April.

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Dining green

For visitors looking for an organic menu and incorporating earth-friendly practices, Pizza Fusion in Fort Myers uses a variety of innovative sustainable methods. The company delivers its pizza with hybrid vehicles, encourages customers to use its pizza box recycling program, dresses employees in eco-apparel made from 100 percent organic cotton and more. Even the Pizza Fusion stores are LEED-certified, meaning they are constructed according to strict standards for sustainability. For information on the company's sustainable initiatives, visit www.PizzaFusion.com or call 239-337-7979.

Green travel information

To provide information on green travel and why it is good business, the U.S. Travel Association has joined its travel partner, American Express, to produce www.travelgreen.org. The site includes the latest details on sustainability within the travel industry and offers valuable information for destinations, accommodations, attractions, business travel, transportation, restaurants and more.

Business travelers seeing “green”

A recent survey commissioned by the consulting firm, Deloitte, indicates that 34 percent of the 1,155 business travelers surveyed seek out green lodgings. The survey also finds that business travelers have a desire to reduce their environmental impact and that 28 percent are willing to pay 10 percent more to stay in a green lodging. Green efforts expected by these travelers include recycling, energy efficient lighting, energy-efficient windows, cards in room allowing guests to request that linens not be changed daily and environmentally safe cleaning products.

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Destination partners with Conservation Fund to offset meeting's footprint

To help address habitat loss and climate change, The Beaches of Fort Myers & Sanibel in southwest Florida is making donations to The Conservation Fund's Go ZeroSM program to offset the carbon footprint of meetings in the area. The Lee County Visitor & Convention Bureau (VCB), which markets the destination for leisure travel and meetings, is the first to offer such a partnership with the Fund – one that is designed to serve as a model for the nation.

Specifically, the VCB has agreed to donate to The Conservation Fund 100 percent of the cost of offsetting the CO₂ emissions that result from any event within the destination, including attendee travel, facility energy use and off-site functions.

The VCB already offsets its own events with the Fund and is encouraging meetings properties and meeting planners to do the same.

Participation is simple and free for planners. The Beaches of Fort Myers & Sanibel provides interested planners with a worksheet, which the Fund uses to estimate CO₂ emissions associated with the meeting. Once complete, the VCB will make a donation to the Fund to offset those emissions. The worksheet is available by visiting the destination's meetings Web site at www.FortMyersSanibelMeetings.com or by request from any participating meetings property.

For information on planning a vacation to The Beaches of Fort Myers & Sanibel, visit www.FortMyersSanibel.com.

EDITOR'S NOTE: The Beaches of Fort Myers & Sanibel in southwest Florida includes: 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.