

ABOUT THIS GUIDE

This is a Boating and Angling Guide to the resources of the Sarasota County inshore waters. The maps show both natural and human-made features of the waterway environment. Images and text offer more information on native habitats, common inshore fish, protected species, boating regulations and recreational opportunities. The guide includes a marine map of Sarasota County waterways that depicts main channels, seagrasses, boating speed zones, anchorages, artificial reefs, aquatic preserves, fishing piers, parks, marinas, and boat ramps that are open to the public. It also features information about bay habitats and animals, popular sport fish, boating safety and protocol, and a resource directory. This guide should not be used for navigation.

This guide provides useful information for boaters using Sarasota County waters. It also provides vital information to educate boaters about responsible use of the waterways and protection of natural resources. We hope that you will enjoy your time spent boating in Sarasota County and will carefully operate your vessel.

The *Boating and Angling Guide to Sarasota County* was produced by the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission's Fish and Wildlife Research Institute (<http://research.myfwc.com>) and Sarasota County Government (www.sarasotafl.org). We welcome your comments and inquiries. Contact the following agencies, or visit <http://research.myfwc.com/boating/>.

Fish and Wildlife Research Institute
100 Eighth Avenue S.E.
St. Petersburg, FL 33701
(727) 896-8626

Sarasota County Natural Resources
2817 Cattlemen Road
Sarasota, FL 34232
(941) 861-6230

The producers extend special thanks to the following organizations for their contributions to this guide:
U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Sport Fish Restoration Program
Southwest Florida Water Management District
U.S. Coast Guard
National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration
National Marine Fisheries Service
Florida Sea Grant
Florida Department of Environmental Protection
Sarasota Bay Estuary Program
Sarasota Audubon Society
Sarasota Convention and Visitor's Bureau

NOT FOR RESALE
2004

BOATING AND ANGLING GUIDE TO

Sarasota County



RESOURCE DIRECTORY

BoatU.S. Foundation Hotline Sarasota Power Squadron For information on boating skills and safety courses offered locally	1-800-336-BOAT 941-388-3532
County Cooperative Extension Service Provides scientific knowledge related to agricultural, human, and natural resources	941-861-9800
Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission Law Enforcement	1-888-404-3922
Fish and Wildlife Research Institute Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission For information about Florida's fish and wildlife resources and research	727-896-8626
Har's Landing 24-hour hotline for the latest tides and fishing information	941-366-TIDE
Note Marine Laboratory For assistance with injured marine mammals or sea turtles. A private, non-profit marine research and education facility including an aquarium open to the public	941-388-4441
National Marine Fisheries Service Southeast Regional Office Responsible for managing marine fisheries in federal waters	727-570-5301
NOAA Weather Service Broadcast 24-hour weather and marine forecast	813-645-2506 162-558-2767
Pelican Man Bird Sanctuary Provides assistance with, and operates a bird sanctuary for, injured seabirds	941-388-4444
Sarasota Audubon Society For information on the Roberts Bay Bird Colony or to get a copy of "Birding Hotspots" www.sarasotaaudubon.org	941-364-9212
Sarasota Bay Estuary Program Working to implement a Comprehensive Conservation and Management Plan for Sarasota Bay	941-955-6085
Sarasota Convention & Visitors Bureau www.SarasotaFL.org For information on attractions, amenities and events in Sarasota County	1-800-522-9799 941-957-1877
Sarasota County Government Natural Resources—Coastal Resources Unit Natural Resources—Resource Protection Unit Parks and Recreation—Beaches and Natural Areas Sarasota County Sheriff's Office, Main Switchboard	941-861-6230 941-861-6113 941-373-7894 941-861-5800
Sea Grant Marine Extension Agent For educational information about Florida's coastal zone and marine resources	941-722-4524
U.S. Coast Guard For search and rescue assistance VHF Channel 16; Emergency Call "CG" U.S. Coast Guard Boating Safety Hotline For answers to boating safety questions and to report safety defects	Emergency 941-794-1261 Non-emergency 941-794-1667 1-800-368-5647
West Coast Inland Navigation District For information on the Gulf Intracoastal Waterway	941-485-9402

WELCOME TO

Sarasota County

Sarasota County is a subtropical coastal community that offers the resources and amenities of a metropolitan community and also offers access to quality natural areas and recreation. Sarasota is located on the southwest gulf coast of Florida between Tampa and Fort Myers. Sarasota County waterways cover over 50 square miles, 211 miles of which are bay shoreline. These waters offer quality recreational opportunities for pleasure boating and fishing, as well as associated activities like birding and swimming.

Estuaries like Sarasota Bay, where salt water from the sea meets and mixes with fresh water from rivers and uplands, are nurseries for young fish, shrimp, and crabs. Over 70 percent of all fish, shellfish, and crustaceans spend some critical stage of development in these nearshore waters, protected from larger predators that swim the open sea.

Wildlife abounds along our shores. The coastal waters of Sarasota County are home to a variety of marine life, including bottlenose dolphin, loggerhead turtles, and West Indian manatees. A wide variety of shorebirds, such as the familiar Brown Pelican and the majestic Great Egret, are year-round residents. Others, including sandpipers and White Pelicans, are seasonal visitors.

Sarasota County offers enjoyable activities for everyone. Anglers will find an array of game fish and crustaceans within the bays and in the Gulf of Mexico, especially at the county's numerous artificial reefs. Outdoor enthusiasts can find numerous nature-based recreational opportunities in county parks and preserve lands. Sarasota County waterways provide ample opportunities for swimming and sunbathing on award-winning beaches, diving on numerous artificial reefs, boating on bay and gulf waters, and canoeing and kayaking. Adjacent to the waterways are shopping areas, restaurants, cultural events, galleries, and nighttime entertainment.

While the county is an interesting and exciting place to enjoy yourself, the coastal habitat is an important and sensitive natural area that requires protection. By boating safely and with greater awareness of the natural environment, you can help protect Sarasota County waterways and the wildlife that depend on these waters for survival.

HABITATS

Sarasota County waterways encompass a rich mosaic of fish and wildlife habitats that form life-sustaining links in an ecosystem as biologically productive as some of the world's most celebrated rain forests. From coastal mangroves and marshes to underwater meadows of seagrass, from Sarasota Bay to the salty mouth of the Gulf of Mexico, each interdependent habitat plays a vital role in this "Estuarine Machine."

Waterway habitats supply food and shelter for creatures as diverse as the Great Blue Heron and the spiny sea urchin. Seagrasses and mangroves, most notable among these habitats, contribute significantly to a dynamic food chain that draws nutrients from the bay floor. As seagrass and mangrove leaves decay, they provide food for small creatures that are ultimately consumed by fish and larger predators in an endless cycle of life.

OYSTER BARS

In their grayish-white, irregularly shaped shells, immobile oysters filter water as they feed. Live oysters and empty oyster shells form mounds on the bay floor, creating bars and reefs. Oyster bars, most prevalent near river mouths and sections of the bay that receive a steady diet of fresh water, are popular fishing spots that attract adult snook and redfish. Exercise caution in these areas. Oyster bars may severely damage boat hulls, and the shells' sharp edges are also treacherous for people on foot.

Florida regulates shellfish harvesting. For information on seasonal closures and size and bag limits, contact the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission's Division of Law Enforcement at 1-888-404-3922.

SALT MARSHES AND MUD FLATS

A rare habitat in Sarasota County, salt marshes, composed of salt-tolerant rushes, sedges, and grasses, occur along the shorelines of estuaries where wave action is minimal. These marshes, which periodically become submerged, nourish and

protect many fish and animal species. They also buffer upland areas from storms and help filter pollutants that run off the land. Mud flats around the bay's fringe are exposed at low tide. Although these flats are barren of visible vegetation, they are teeming with life. Fiddler crabs, clams, and worms, which burrow in the mud, supply a veritable feast for birds wading at low tide.

MANGROVES

Mangroves are tropical trees that thrive in salty environments along the water's edge. Like seagrasses, they provide food and cover for a vast array of small fish and animals. Their roots anchor shorelines, and their branches serve as nesting sites for a wide variety of birds. Shoreline development (i.e., dredge-and-fill activities, seawalls) has eradicated nearly half of the mangroves that once ringed Sarasota County waterways.

Loss of important mangrove habitat has contributed to a decline in fisheries throughout the area. To protect mangroves, local and state regulations restrict pruning and removal. Consult with the County Resource Protection unit before trimming mangroves.

Several species of mangroves are common in Sarasota County waterways. Red Mangroves are easily distinguished by their tangled reddish roots that branch out over the water. Mounds of oysters frequently colonize their base. Black Mangroves feature numerous pneumatophores, finger-like projections that surround the base of the tree. White Mangroves, which often occupy the highest elevations of the three species, have no visible aerial root system. Burtonwood Mangroves are also present in Sarasota County.

Many conservation and preservation areas exist along Sarasota County's shoreline. Please consult the Florida Department of Environmental Protection, at 813-744-6100, before trimming mangroves. For mangroves in conservation or preservation areas, please consult the county's Resource Protection unit at 941-861-6113.

SEAGRASSES

Seagrasses are flowering underwater plants found at shallow depths in protected bays and lagoons and in patches along the continental shelf of the Gulf of Mexico. The seagrass habitat is perhaps the most important of our bays. As a nursery environment, seagrass supports small fish, shrimp, and crabs that hide among the blades and feed on decaying leaves. Manatees also rely on seagrasses as a food source. Seagrasses help stabilize shifting sands on the bottom of the bay and improve water clarity by trapping fine sediments and particles.

Once plentiful, seagrass beds have declined significantly from their original acreage in Sarasota County waterways. These losses can be attributed to historical dredge-and-fill activities and declines in water quality. In addition, damage from motorboats is severe in areas as

boats carve through shallow grass flats, their propellers cutting sandy trenches that may remain barren up to 15 years.

Over the past 20 years, seagrass beds have begun increasing in the county. You can help maintain this growth and preserve the existing seagrass habitats in Sarasota County waterways.

- Stay within marked channels.
- Avoid shallow grass beds.
- If you run aground or enter grass flats to fish, stop your motor, tilt it up, and pole or push your boat through.
- Wear polarized glasses to reduce glare on the water so you can see shallow areas.

TAKE CARE OF SARASOTA COUNTY WATERWAYS

Residents and visitors share Sarasota County's waters and coastal beaches with a magnificent array of birds and marine animals, including species that are threatened or endangered. Boaters should be on the lookout for these creatures and take special care to protect them and to preserve their habitats. As a boater, you can also protect the waterways by following a few guidelines:

- Always stow your trash carefully for disposal on shore, and make it a habit to pick up plastics and other marine debris encountered while boating. Carelessly discarded trash can trap and kill birds, fish, and other marine animals.
- Properly collect and dispose of fishing line and hooks.
- When fueling your boat, be especially careful not to "top off" your tank, which can allow gas to spill over the tank and into the water. Small toxic spills can add up quickly.
- Discard sewage from holding tanks only at approved pump-out stations and marinas. A partial listing of pump-out facilities is provided in the *Boating and Angling Guide* marina listing. All state-designated "Clean Marinas" have pump-out facilities.

BOATER'S TIPS

For information on public boating safety, seamanship, and navigation courses offered by U.S. Power Squadrons and U.S. Coast Guard auxiliaries in the Sarasota County area, call BoatU.S. toll-free at 1-800-336-BOAT. An operator will provide up-to-date information on course schedules, local contacts, and course times and locations.

The Coast Guard Auxiliary offers a free boat inspection to advise boaters of state and federal safety requirements. Violations found during these courtesy exams will not be reported to authorities.

POPULAR SPORT FISH

Name and Habitat	Location	Fishing Tips
FLOUNDER —Channel edges on sandy bottoms, near tidal passes and docks	City Island flats, Ringling Causeway, Tony Sapirto Pier, Middleground (flats north of New Pass), Big Pass	Use live shrimp, sand fleas, sardines, pinfish, or jigs bounced along bottom as you drift.
REDFISH (RED DRUM) —Near docks and pilings, deeper holes and channels during warmest and coolest months; around grass beds and oyster bars	City Island flats, New Pass Bridge, Ringling flats, San Remo Basin, Roberts Bay (north of Phillippi Creek)	Use live shrimp fished on bottom or free-lined; use soft-bodied jigs bounced slowly on bottom, or use small silver spoons.
SHEEPSHEAD —Near bridges, docks, seawalls, pilings, and artificial reefs	Ringling Causeway, Tony Sapirto Pier, New Pass Bridge, San Remo Basin, Roberts Bay docks (Siesta Key)	Use live shrimp, sand fleas, or hermit or fiddler crabs on small hook. Fish just off bottom. On first tug, lower the rod, then strike hard. Skin fish before eating them.
SNOOK —Canals, tidal creeks, and other deep, warm waters in cool months; near tidal passes and mangrove fringe at high tide	Phillippi Creek (cold weather), New Pass Bridge (warm months), San Remo Basin, mouth of Alligator and Forked creeks	Use live pinfish, small mullet, shrimp, or sardines free-lined or fished with a bobber, or use jigs and minnow-like lures. Beware of snook's razor-sharp gills.
SPOTTED SEATROUT —Seagrass beds when water temperatures are moderate and deeper waters adjacent to beds during warmest and coolest months	Bird Key flats, Marina Jack flats, South Lido Park, City Island flats, Little Sarasota Bay grassflats, and Lemon Bay shorelines	Use live shrimp or pigfish (grunts) fished near bottom by free-lining or under a popping bobber, or use soft-bodied and fish-like lures. Cast with jigs or surface plugs as you drift.

Go to www.myfwc.com, or contact **FWC Law Enforcement** for license requirements and information on size and bag limits and seasonal closures.



The Monofilament Recovery and Recycling Program (MRRP) is a statewide effort to educate the public on the problems caused by monofilament line left in the environment, to encourage recycling through a network of line-recycling bins and drop-off locations, and to conduct volunteer monofilament line clean-up events. Outdoor recycling bins constructed of PVC are mounted at many piers, boat ramps, and marinas throughout the state. Indoor recycling bins are hosted by tackle shops and department stores.

Commit yourself to ethical angling. The future of your sport depends on it!

- Help fish stocks increase through catch-and-release.
- Limit your take and vary your target.
- Observe regulations and report violations.
- Only keep fish for food.
- Share what you know to help the sport grow.

You Can Help Manatees

Sarasota County is a year-round home to members of southwest Florida population of West Indian manatees. They travel throughout the bays and tributaries. These gentle, whiskered giants are found in the southeastern United States and in the Caribbean Sea as far south as Brazil. They grow to an average length of 10 feet. As adults, they can weigh 3,000 pounds.

In winter, manatees tend to gather in warm-water discharges. In the summer, manatees disperse throughout the waterways and along the west coast. It is not unusual to find manatees in water less than six feet deep because the seagrasses on which they feed grow in shallow water.

Collisions with boat hulls and propellers that slice their thick hides injure and kill many manatees each year. Most manatees in Florida bear telltale scars of encounters with boats. Manatees are listed as endangered at both the state and federal levels and are protected by several regulations.

- Watch for manatees; they are often difficult to see. When a manatee surfaces to breathe, only the tip of its snout is visible.
- When in shallow waters with seagrass beds, go slow, pole, or troll.
- Wear polarized glasses to reduce surface glare and to allow better visibility through water.
- Obey posted speed and manatee caution signs.
- Slow trash and properly discard monofilament fishing line. Manatees can swallow or become trapped in lines and other plastic debris that litter our waterways.
- Obey state and federal laws that make it illegal to harass, capture, hunt, or kill a manatee. Convictions can result in imprisonment and fines of up to \$100,000.

To report violations, manatee injuries, or deaths, call the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission 1-888-404-3922.

You Can Help Sea Turtles

Sarasota County beaches have the most sea turtle nests on the gulf coast of Florida and are important nesting habitat for several species of threatened and endangered sea turtles. Although three species—the loggerhead, the green turtle, and the leatherback—commonly nest along Florida's coastline, the majority of nests belong to loggerheads.

Nesting season begins May 1 and extends through October. To nest, sea turtles come ashore, where people and predators may pose a threat. Turtles produce many eggs, but few hatchlings survive the difficult journey back to sea. When sea turtle hatchlings emerge from the nest, they instinctively crawl toward the natural glow of the gulf waters. Any artificial light can lead hatchlings away from the water. Sea turtle mating occurs just offshore, where boats may hit the turtles.

- Never approach sea turtles coming ashore or disturb nesting sea turtles or hatchlings. Experts say your presence may deter them from nesting.
- In areas where nesting takes place, beachfront property owners should turn off exterior lights. Boaters should also be aware of light emanating from their vessels. Bright lights discourage nesting sea turtles from coming ashore and may disrupt hatchlings.
- Beach furniture should be kept off the beach at night to prevent obstacles and entanglement hazards.
- Keep animals off nesting beaches. Dogs can dig up and destroy sea turtle nests, which are federally protected. Dog owners may be held responsible and fined if their dogs disturb turtle nests.
- Properly collect and dispose of marine debris. Fishing line, plastic bags, balloons, and other trash can harm marine life.
- Protect nesting beaches and nearshore habitats such as seagrass beds and coral reefs.

South Sarasota County Speed Zones

- 25 MPH IN CHANNEL
- 35 MPH WATER SPORTS
- SLOW SPEED MINIMUM WAKE
- IDLE SPEED NO WAKE
- NO ENTRY*

*Please observe seasonal dates on manatee signs

For more information on Manatee Protection or to access the most current speed zone maps, please visit <http://myfwc.com/manatee/rules.htm> and <http://floridacoonervation.org/jpsm/gis/magrel.htm>

ARTIFICIAL REEFS

No.	Name	Material	Depth (ft.)	Lat./Long.
23	1-4	Venice Bridge and Pier	25	27°08.304' 82°28.565'
24	Venice Reef	Concrete Culvert	23	27°04.267' 82°27.509'
	D6	Fiberglass Boats and Mats	110	27°08.190' 82°03.032'
	M15	Concrete Rubble	38	27°05.001' 82°32.524'
	M9	Concrete Rubble	61	27°04.189' 82°42.103'
	M16	Concrete Culverts, Catch Basins	49	27°03.827' 82°35.255'
	M17	Reef Balls	63	27°02.674' 82°38.791'
	M10	Sailboat, Fiberglass Boats, Steel Barge	65	27°01.587' 82°42.583'
	M11	Reef Balls	70	26°59.045' 82°42.797'
	M13	Concrete Culvert	43	26°55.099' 82°27.862'
	D-9	Steel Crane Barge, Fiberglass Boats	100	26°54.719' 82°55.883'
	M14	Concrete Rubble	43	26°52.236' 82°26.411'

*Reef located outside of map extent

MARINAS

No.	Name	Location	Phone
20	Gulf Harbor Marina	100 Circuit Rd., Nokomis	941-488-7734
21	Crown West Marina	1968 Tarpot Center Dr., Venice	941-484-7661
22	Marina Max Of Venice	11485 S. Tamiami Tr., Venice	941-485-3388
23	Royal Palm Marina	779 W. Westworth, Englewood	941-475-6882

BOAT RAMPS

No.	Name & Location	Fac.	Ramp	Permit	Fee
15	Nokomis Beach Public Ramp	901 Casey Key Rd. on Dona Bay	1	2	
16	Lido Park	800 Lido Ct.	1	1	
17	Higel Marine Park	1330 Tarpot Center Dr. and Venice, Roberts Bay	1	1	
18	Venice Marina Park	216 East Venice Ave. at Venice By-Pass	1	1	
19	Snook Haven	5000 Venice Ave. (SR 770) on Myakka River	1	1	
20	Marina Park	7030 Chancellor Blvd.	1	1	
21	Manasota Beach	8570 Manasota Key Rd.	1	1	
22	Indian Mound Park	210 Wilson Ave. on Lemon Bay	1	2	

ANCHORAGES

No.	Description	Depth	Latitude	Longitude
17	East of Private Aids	6-12	27°06.637'	82°27.537'
18	Dona and Roberts Bay Junction	6-12	27°06.488'	82°27.489'

PARKS

No.	Name	Address	Phone	Acres
17	CMR	1801 Mabry Carlton Pkwy.	941-486-2547	24,578.0
18	Nokomis Community Park	234 Nippino Tr.	941-486-2556	17.5
19	Norm Jany Park	1000 Casey Key Rd.	941-486-2311	19.1
20	Brohard Park	1600 Harbor Dr. S.	941-316-1172	37.2
21	Casperson Beach Park	4100 Harbor Dr. S.	941-316-1172	113.0
22	Shannon Park	4100 W. Shannon Dr.	941-486-2706	96.4
23	Manasota Beach	8570 Manasota Key Rd.	941-474-9819	21.4
24	Lemon Bay Park	570 Bay Park Blvd.	941-316-1172	169.0
25	Binal Pass Beach	6725 Manasota Key Rd.	941-316-1172	66.0
26	Indian Mound Park	210 Wilson Ave.	941-316-1172	10.4

LEGEND

- Pier
- Artificial Reefs
- Anchorages
- Marinas
- Boat Ramps
- Navigation Markers
- 6' Depth Contour
- Intracoastal Waterway
- Channels
- Major Roads
- Railroads
- Bridge
- Fixed Bridge
- Drawbridge
- Parks
- Aquatic Preserves
- Seagrass
- Mangroves
- Salt Marsh
- Land