

10 CAPE CORAL FLORIDA SIDE QUESTS

Welcome to Cape Coral, the best city in Southwest Florida. I have worked here for 20 years and know every inch. This is what I consider an essential guide to exploring the Cape and surrounding areas, of course everyone is different so feel free to do your own thing but my hunch is that these are going to be your best choices.

1. Need some groceries? Why not check out a local favorite, **Farmer Joes \$**, 1401 SW Pine Island Road. And yes, Farmer Joe is a real person he was a farmer that owner Lee Snyder Sr worked for as a young man, waking up before dawn to source local produce and then set up roadside produce stands, using tomato boxes and plywood as tables. Beyond the role that Farmer Joe played in influencing Lee Sr's life, he has become a representation of the important things in life - like bringing real food back to the family dinner table and making our communities a better place by creating jobs and championing local products. An independent, family-owned, and operated grocery store that is committed to providing our customers with farm-fresh food for less.
2. Visit **Cape Harbor Marina** 5781 Cape Harbor Dr. The local hangout with live music upscale restaurants and boutique shops surrounded by gulf waters and million dollar yachts. You must visit the **Dockside Juicery \$** and say hi to my good friend owner Damon Pine, legendary fitness health guru and super nice guy. Drop my name and he will tell you a funny story. Then check out **Fathoms \$\$\$**, operated by French Chef Fabrice Deletrain, this modern upbeat restaurant is a favorite for 1/2 price pizzas on Wednesdays and features a large outdoor bar with a courtyard that plays live music. Oh yes there is **Rumrunners \$\$\$\$** but I would skip it. I have had great memories there but it is really hit and miss during the season, they are just too busy and the quality can suffer, but again, you may get lucky. Finally, the **French Press Coffee Shop \$** for home made gelato and organic hand crafted coffee. Finally, you can rent a boat with or without a fishing guide at **Venture Out**, located dockside (239) 945-2031. See if you can find the picture of the big redfish I caught hanging on their wall!
3. Not far from Cape Harbor visit **The Lobster Lady \$\$\$**, 1715 Cape Coral Pkwy, Units 2&3, Cape Coral, FL, a local favorite for seafood including a sushi bar. Live lobster tanks, live music and afresh fish market. My wife has won a free lobster from the lobster claw machine almost every time we go there (ask me about the trick she discovered). Yes... I know it is in a strip mall, trust me with this hidden gem. Downtown be sure to try **Indian Breeze \$\$\$**, 1414 Cape Coral Pkwy E Cape Coral, FL 33904 and **Slipway marina and Food Truck Park. \$\$\$** 1811 Cape Coral Parkway East. Located at the foot of the Cape Coral bridge on the beautiful Caloosahatchee River, offers 10 unique food trucks with boat access, waterfront dining, cocktails and live music.
4. **Tarpon Point Marina** 6179 Black Marlin Ln, Cape Coral, FL Located in the exclusive Rose Garden region Tarpon Point features the Westin Hotel and convention center (The place to stay while visiting Cape Coral). Always lots of action here with beautiful waterside shops and restaurants. Sit outside at **High Tide Social House, \$\$** Neapolitan Style Pizzeria/Fusion Comfort Food restaurant offers a casual atmosphere, and live music. Wagyu beef and home made pasta has never been better at **Next Door \$\$\$\$**, small and intimate with only a handful of tables or visit my top pick, **Gathers \$\$\$** and look around I may be sitting by the window at a high top. For super family fun check out **Pinchers Crab Shack \$\$**. The marina has live music, shops, ice cream and great views!
5. Next drive over the Veterans Memorial Bridge and check out **Down Town Fort Myers River District**, only 20 minutes away. You will find cobble stone streets, coffee shops and specialty bars. **Peter's German ice Cream & Coffee Shop \$\$** 1412 Dean Street, scratch made Breakfast, Coffee drinks better than Starbucks, in house baked cakes and ice cream, beautiful courtyard for outside seating. Swing by 1520 Hendry St (yes it is spelled this way) and grab a slice of the best pizza in Florida at the **House of Pizza \$**. There will be no where to sit except a few stools, it's a grab and go but with traditional pizza ovens and cold beer no one seems to mind. Afterwards walk a few doors down and drop in to **The World Famous Cigar Bar \$\$**, 1502 Hendry St., enjoy the laid back atmosphere and high end lifestyle. If you are into adventure, there is a sexy speakeasy **Escondido \$\$\$** (open 5:30 pm till 2 am!) the secret entrance is at the back of the **Taco Works Restaurant** is behind a big door at 1617 Hendry St #102, Fort Myers, FL 3390. I am not kidding, finding this is part of the adventure. One of a kind, not for children, serious speakeasy action, enjoy. Make sure you walk down to **The Old Lee County Courthouse**, a historic building at 2120 Main Street. It was designed by Francis J. Kennard and its cornerstone was laid on April 13, 1915. Here is a secret, there is a yoga studio and a little bar on the top of the building. Speaking of which there is no better place

to grab a cocktail than **The Beacon Social Drinkery** \$\$\$\$ located on the top floor of the Luminary Hotel (12th floor), 2200 Edwards Drive Fort Myers, FL 3901. This is the best view of the river, awesome drink menu with really decently priced food. It is where all the cool people hangout, so why not go yourself! Opened 3pm to midnight. **Bay Street Yard** \$\$ utilizes shipping containers amongst the repurposed riverside warehouses of Downtown Fort Myers to offer dining options, live music and an open concept variety, a community of fun, food and live music that is unique and fun, make sure you check this out, 2136 Bay St, Fort Myers, FL 33901. Also, I have to mention **Edison's Summer Home and Lab**, open to the public, 2350 McGregor Blvd. Fort Myers, FL. If you are into history or have kids, this would be a good choice.

6. **Veranda Restaurant** \$\$\$\$\$. An extensive wine list, and first class service staff will provide you with the most unique dining experience in Southwest Florida. Seating 5-9 PM and reservations are recommended. A Fort Myers tradition since 1978, the Veranda is consistently honored as one of the most award-winning restaurants in the area. You will find many of Fort Myers top lawyers hanging out in the piano lounge most weekdays. 2122 Second Street (at Broadway) Fort Myers, FL 33901 (239) 332-2065.
7. Looking for seafood? I bet you are, so head over to the **Deep Lagoon Restaurant and Oyster House** \$\$\$, 14040 McGregor Blvd, Fort Myers, FL 33919. Where you can breathe easy, be casual and take in the sights and sounds of everything that is "Real Florida". Located right on the water, open seafood bar, and extra special at night when they light everything up. I like the Grouper Oscar, my wife loves the drinks... I mean the Chili Rubbed Triple tail.
8. **Fort Myers Beach** is a dirty, bar invested strip, that is obviously a fun visit. It has a nice white sand beach with a fishing pier. Head to the northern end of the island for a less commercialized visit. During season parking is a problem so be patient. Check out **Margaritaville Beach Resort Fort Myers Beach**, the name says it all 251 Crescent St, Fort Myers Beach, FL 33931. Even if you don't stay there make sure you take a walkthrough the main level and grab a coffee or drink. It is a big fun place. The beach is currently being rebuilt, but there are lots of family friendly restaurants that are reopening everyday, go and support our beach community.
9. For a more relaxed experience visit **Sanibel-Captiva Island(s)**. Being a barrier island these beaches are some of the best. While on the island make sure you go by **Jerry's Grocery Store** (and excellent restaurant for breakfast or lunch \$\$) 1700 Periwinkle Way Sanibel, FL, pick up any supplies and while there shop some local stores and say hi to one of several talking parrots found in cages throughout the stores, kids love this! **Doc Ford's** \$\$\$ provides a unique balance of flavors from the Caribbean Rim. Be sure to pick up some merch including some of their Yucatan Sauce! 2500 Island Inn Rd, Sanibel, FL 33957 (239) 472-8311 The beaches are the best with great shelling, two of my choices are **Gulfside City Beach Park** 2001 Algiers Lane, Sanibel, FL 33957 and of course **Sanibel Lighthouse Beach** 112 Periwinkle Way Sanibel, FL 33957. Sanibel is rebuilding, visit the locals and support this unique community.
10. No trip is complete without a visit to Pine Island. Right over the bridge check out **The Blue Dog Bar & Grill** \$\$\$ 4597 Pine Island Rd, Matlacha, FL 33993. The logo is, "Come, eat well, have a brew and sit with us for a while...and the dog is happy". For a more upscale experience book a sunset dinner at **Tarpon Lodge** \$\$\$\$ 13771 Waterfront Dr, Bokeelia, FL 33922. This is a hidden treasure and hard to find, use a GPS (it's a dirt road). The old school Florida experience. A 1926 fishing lodge that has been upgraded into a small resort. Savor lunch, dinner or an overnight stay with waterfront views of Pine Island Sound. Listen to live music and order a Manhattan from the piano bar. You just will not believe this place until you are sitting in the dining room watching the sunset.

Welcome to paradise everybody, enjoy our beautiful weather and more beautiful people but watch out for the UFOs (oh I am not kidding). Just text me if I can be of more help with anything

Stephen Stokes, (239) 645-2405

