In and Around Naples
A Series of Presentations
for the Collier County Library
by Paul Pacter

**Rookery Bay
National Estuarine
Research Reserve**

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www.paulvisits.com

Rookery Bay National Estuarine Research Reserve

Website: https://rookerybay.org/

Comment: Rookery Bay National Estuarine Research Reserve stretches across 110,000 acres from Gordon Pass in Naples to the western Everglades of pristine mangrove forest, uplands, and protected waters.

Three main locations: Next slide.

Rookery Bay has several locations of interest to day-trippers:

1. Environmental Learning Center: 300 Tower Rd, Naples. On Collier Blvd one mile south of US-41.

2. Shell Island Road (boardwalk, hiking trails, nature boat cruises): Collier Blvd 3 miles south of US-41. West on Shell Is. Rd.

3. Keewaydin Island. Also called Key Island. Can only get there by boat.

In addition to these, there is camping, fishing, geocaching, canoeing, kayaking.

Rookery Bay - 3 Main Locations

Keewaydin Island

Environmt. Learning Center

Shell Is Rd.

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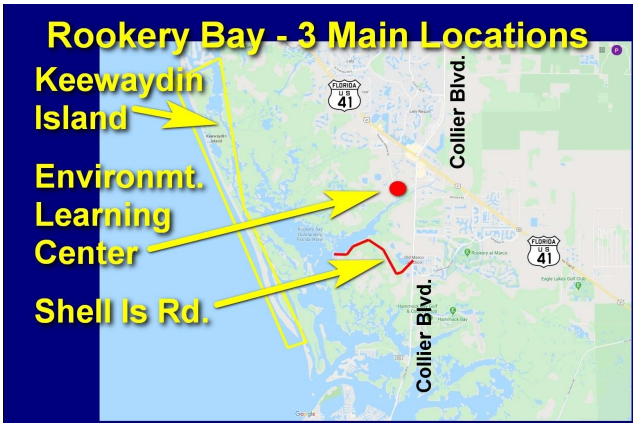
1. Environmental Learning Center:

Admission: Adults $8. Boat tours $109.

When: Mon-Fri 9am to 4pm. Closed Sat-Sun.

Learning center: 16,500-square-foot educational, research and training facility with research laboratories, classrooms, auditorium, aquariums, visitor center, art gallery, cultural exhibits.

Observation bridge across Henderson Creek. Three half-mile walking trails.

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2. Shell Island Road:

Briggs Boardwalk: Half-mile boardwalk. Small nature center. Self-guided tours dawn to dusk. Guided tours Jan-March

Nature trails: 4 trails each approximately ¼ mile long. Can be overgrown and muddy.

Boat tours: 3 hours. $109.

Guided kayak tours: 2 hours. $65 to $75.

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3. Keewaydin Island:

Barrier island. 8 miles long. No roads or cars. Wildlife sanctuary. Recreation: Swimming, fishing, walking, shelling, and boating. Accessible only by boat.

Commercial boat shuttle to/from Marco Island: $22 each way (children $12). www.hemingwaywatershuttle.com/.

Several boats offer lunch food for sale.

No bathroom facilities on the island.

Rattlesnake Hammock Road

Rookery Bay National Estuarine Research Reserve

Collier Blvd 1 Mile South of US-41

Rookery Bay Environmental Learning Center
Cross Bridge Over Henderson Creek to
Get to Walking Trails

Rookery Bay Environmental Learning Center
Authentic Seminole Chickee

Rookery Bay Environmental Learning Center
Bridge Over Henderson Creek
Creek is Brackish and Tidal (flow changes direction)

Rookery Bay Reserve
View of Henderson Creek from the Bridge

Rookery Bay Estuarine Research Reserve
Henderson Creek
Manatees during dry season!

Three trails, each ½ mile long
Snail Trail has viewing platform on the Creek

Rookery Bay Environmental Learning Center
Snail Trail

Rookery Bay Environmental Learning Center
Snail Trail

Rookery Bay Environmental Learning Center Viewing Platform on Henderson Creek

Rookery Bay Environmental Learning Center Viewing Platform on Henderson Creek
Egret
Two Wood Storks
Wood Storks in Tree
Many Birds
Egret at Treetop

1860s Homestead Act allowed pioneer settlers of Florida to purchase farmsteads for 25 cents an acre

Pioneers in Paradise...?

In the 1860s the Homestead Act encouraged Americans to find new opportunities for prosperity. During this time much of Florida was just beginning to be explored. Pioneering families began putting down roots near Rookery Bay in 1885, after the conclusion of the Indian Wars made it safer to set up their homesteads.

Despite difficult terrain, oppressive heat, potentially dangerous wildlife and intense storms, several families established the "Little Marco Settlement" in the area of Henderson Creek. Boats were their primary source of transportation. In fact, many of the homes' front doors faced the waterway.

In 1899, this very site was purchased by the Kirkland family for about 25 cents per acre. Part of this 100-acre homestead was believed to have been a farm. It was staked out with hand-hewn posts and rail fencing which likely secured livestock. Because their crops were easily flooded the Kirklands constructed an extensive system of open ditches around their land to aid in drainage.

While the Kirkland home is long gone, a visible remnant of the family's existence here is this large water storage cistern in front of you. Made from cement mixed with oyster shells, this five-foot-deep cistern was built to capture rainwater running off the roof. This water had to sustain the family during long periods without rainfall. Bathing and washing would often be done in the creek to save water.

Look around and imagine what it was like living here 100 years ago, without air conditioning, supermarkets, or mosquito repellent!

Snail Trail Remains Dry But the Other Two Are Primitive and Often Wet July-Dec

Rookery Bay Learning Center Exhibits

Rookery Bay Learning Center Exhibits Calusa Axe

Rookery Bay Environmental Learning Center Exhibit
FLORIDA'S LEAST WANTED

Rookery Bay Learning Center Exhibits Aquarium