



Fact Sheet

Description: Punta Gorda/Englewood Beach, the Charlotte Harbor Gulf Island Coast is a collection of 10 charming coastal communities and four barrier islands clustered around the state's second-largest harbor. As Florida's premier eco-tourism destination, the area is known for its unspoiled beauty and is an outdoor enthusiast's haven. Eight hundred thirty miles of shoreline defines this expansive estuary-based escape which includes more than a dozen miles of sandy beaches and nearly 200 miles of the Charlotte Harbor Blueway Trails. Charlotte Harbor offers undeveloped vistas where 84 percent of the shoreline is protected preserve. Activities and festivals make year-round use of this beautiful setting and encourage families, couples, groups, and individuals to relax and explore.

Location: The area is nestled along Florida's Southwest Gulf coast, about 50 miles south of Sarasota and 30 miles north of Fort Myers. Punta Gorda/Englewood Beach is served by five airports for travel convenience: Punta Gorda Airport (PDG) with private, charter and scheduled air service predominantly by Allegiant Air, Sarasota-Bradenton International Airport (SRQ), Southwest Florida International Airport, Ft. Myers, (RSW), St. Petersburg-Clearwater International Airport (PIE) and Tampa International Airport (TPA).

The entire area is also accessible via U.S. Highway 41 or Interstate 75 exits, both major north-south arteries in Southwest Florida.

Recognition: Punta Gorda/Englewood Beach has received recognition for its lifestyle and expansive natural settings:

- ❖ "Best in America," by *Golf Digest*, ranked third in the nation for a place to live and golf
- ❖ "One of the most popular sport-fishing locales in Florida," National Wildlife Federation and the Florida Wildlife Federation
- ❖ The City of Punta Gorda, "Best Healthy Place to Retire," by *U.S. News & World Report*
- ❖ Englewood, Fla. was named as #2 of the Top Ten emerging travel destinations in the U.S.
- ❖ National Register of Historic Places lists 16 Charlotte County properties
- ❖ Heritage Landing Golf & Country Club was named #11 of "Top 50 U.S. Public Golf Courses – Golfers' Choice," by [Golf Pass](#)
- ❖ Aileron Golf Club was named one of the "Best Courses to Play in Southwest Florida" by [PGA of America](#)
- ❖ "Best Places to Live in the South," [Money Magazine](#)
- ❖ "America's Most Popular Place to Retire" by [Money Magazine](#)
- ❖ "One of the top ten sailing destinations," *Sail Magazine*
- ❖ "Best in America," by [Golf Digest](#), ranked third in nation for place to live and golf
- ❖ "One of the most popular sport-fishing locales in Florida," National Wildlife Federation and the Florida Wildlife Federation

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- ❖ “50 Best Yachting Towns,” [Yachting Magazine](#)
- ❖ [Tarpon Fishing Capital of the World](#)
- ❖ “2023 Readers’ Choice Award Best Places to Meet” by [Convention South](#)
- ❖ “Best Small Town Food Scene” by [USA Today’s 10Best](#)
- ❖ “Signature Event of the Southeast” Awarded to Englewood Beach Waterfest by [Southeast Tourism Society](#)

Recreation: The natural setting of Punta Gorda/Englewood Beach invites exploration from visitors all over the world:

- More than a dozen miles of sandy beaches for strolling, swimming, jogging, and birding
- Nearly 200 miles of Charlotte Harbor Blueway Trails for kayaking and canoeing; local outfitters can supply all gear and guides
- Birding with more than 330 species recorded by the Peace River Audubon Society
- Fishing: 830 miles of shoreline, two dozen marinas, and boat ramps give visitors access to the Gulf of Mexico, Charlotte Harbor, and the Peace and Myakka rivers for some of Florida’s most diverse salt and fresh-water fishing
- Golf: Year-round golf on 20 courses ranging from executive to championship level, each with scenic vistas and spectacular landscapes
- Hiking and biking trails, running tracks, tennis courts, pickle ball courts and more can be found among over 70 parks scattered throughout Charlotte County

The Beaches: The beaches include four barrier islands and two state park beaches. Easily accessible, yet quiet and remote enough to attract abundant birds, dolphins, sea turtles, and other local wildlife treasures. There are no big crowds here, just plenty of sand lapped by gentle waves from the Gulf of Mexico and decorated with colorful shells.

Natural Appeal: Nearly 84 percent of the Charlotte Harbor shoreline is protected from development providing vistas with broad appeal. With more than 70 parks, preserves, and recreational areas – including four state parks – the Charlotte Harbor Gulf Island Coast encourages inland exploration, as well as waterfront strolling. Nature enthusiasts will want to hike and bike along park paths for expectant encounters with birds of almost every feather including red-cockaded woodpeckers, Osceola turkeys, swallow-tailed kites, ospreys, roseate spoonbills, and the seasonal white pelicans. Diverse local wildlife viewing by land and by sea includes gopher tortoises, otters, dolphins, and manatees. Several area environmental centers offer guided tours and educational programs.

Climate: The area rises only 5 to 25 feet above sea level, which equates to a sub-tropical climate where the temperature in both summer and winter are tempered by the gentle breezes of the Gulf of Mexico. Mild winters, from January to March, draw many visitors from colder climes.

Communities: The Charlotte Harbor Gulf Island Coast ranges from Englewood on the northwest side of Charlotte Harbor to Punta Gorda on the south. Four barrier islands along the Gulf of Mexico include quaint and charming Boca Grande, secluded Don Pedro Island, accessible-only-by-ferry Knight Island, and alluring Little Gasparilla Island. An artsy and cultural personality distinguishes Punta Gorda, Englewood Beach, Placida, and areas of Port Charlotte. Surrounded by nature and water, the

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picturesque fishing communities of Manasota Key, Cape Haze, and Placida beckon in the soft, warm Gulf winds. Babcock Ranch, America's first solar-powered town, welcomed its first residents in January 2018.

Accommodations: Whether visitors come to Punta Gorda/Englewood Beach for fishing, kayaking, golfing, the beaches, shopping, or just plain relaxing, there are accommodations for every taste and budget. From waterfront resorts to cozy vacation villas, hotels and motels to rental condominiums and homes, the range of accommodations runs the gamut from budget to luxury. With many visitors opting to take their recreational vehicles on the road, warm and friendly RV parks and campgrounds await.

Dining: Favorite eateries include a waterfront ambiance with an ever-growing selection of award-winning chef-owned and fine dining restaurants complementing elegant steakhouses, ethnic cuisine, and cozy bistros. Of special note, the selection of restaurants and pubs offering entertainment ranging from jazz to reggae to country and everything in between makes dining out in Punta Gorda/Englewood Beach a cultural experience.

Shopping: Fishermen's Village, a waterfront mall, resort, and marina in Punta Gorda boasts a selection of boutique retailers and restaurants right on the harbor. It is the crown jewel of a shopping scene that offers an endless supply of choices. To complement waterfront boutiques, stroll historic downtown Punta Gorda for specialty shops including fine jewelry and clothing. As a bonus, the destination is a haven for artists, so there are plenty of galleries featuring local artwork offering tropical landscapes and collectibles throughout the area.

Cultural Attractions: Anchored by the Charlotte Performing Arts Center and the Visual Arts Center, the Charlotte Harbor Gulf Island Coast offers a profusion of art galleries, festivals and exhibits, theatrical productions, museums, and historical sites. Specialty museums include the Military Heritage Museum, the Blanchard House Museum of African American History & Culture, and the Charlotte County Historical Center.

Film Industry: It's all about "location, location, location," and Punta Gorda/Englewood Beach, with its dedicated film office, myriad natural environments, diverse architectural and geographic spectrum, acknowledged "film-friendly" reputation and entertainment industry incentives, is ideal for filmmaking, television, or even print production. Portions of *HOOT*, *Out of Time*, *Tale of Two Buds*, *Palmetto*, *Gone Fishing*, *Just Cause*, and *Pink Cadillac* were filmed in Charlotte County.

ABOUT PUNTA GORDA / ENGLEWOOD BEACH

Punta Gorda/Englewood Beach is Florida's best-kept secret of a charming natural paradise located on the idyllic Southwest Gulf Coast. This coastal community surrounding the state's second-largest harbor sits conveniently between Tampa and Naples. Outdoor enthusiasts will find a haven of vibrant experiences in the sun-soaked oasis of the Southwest Florida islands, characterized by almost year-round sunshine and sub-tropical weather. Relaxation and discovery await miles of waterways and inland exploration trails filled with unspoiled natural beauty. From beaches to boating, hiking to harbor tours, fishing to nature paths; sun, shelling, and fossilized sharks' teeth, Punta Gorda/Englewood Beach immerses lively locals and active adventurers in a pure island experience. Most notably known for its 830 miles of pristine unparalleled shoreline, including captivating river passages, a mangrove-edged aquatic preserve, and more than a dozen miles of natural Gulf beaches, the

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Charlotte Harbor Gulf Island Coast includes the areas of Boca Grande, Don Pedro Island, Englewood, Cape Haze, Little Gasparilla Island, Manasota Key, Knight Island, Placida, Babcock Ranch, Port Charlotte, Charlotte Harbor and Punta Gorda.

To learn more about Punta Gorda / Englewood Beach, visit www.PureFlorida.com, call 941.743.1900, or discover the destination on Instagram, Twitter, and Facebook @RealPureFlorida.

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Press Releases

Charming Communities in Our Natural Paradise

Punta Gorda/Englewood Beach, FL is the embodiment of the charming Florida coastal community that makes up the Charlotte Harbor Gulf Island Coast on Florida's Southwest Gulf Coast. Surrounding Charlotte Harbor, the state's second-largest marine estuary into which the Peace and Myakka rivers flow, this diverse blend of artsy towns, serene fishing communities, and barrier islands brim with unparalleled natural beauty, recreation, pristine beaches, arts, culture, and historic sites. The expansive landscape of unspoiled islands, upland pine flatwoods, meandering waterways, mangrove shorelines, and dune-fringed beaches is a watercolorist's dream.

From Englewood Beach south to Punta Gorda, the coastal communities of Charlotte County share a common bond with Charlotte Harbor, but each has its own distinctive personality:

Babcock Ranch, America's first solar-powered town and welcomed its first residents in January 2018. It was carved out of 91,000 acres of wilderness and ranchland. In 2006, 73,000 acres were sold to the state of Florida creating Babcock Ranch Preserve. Of the 18,000 acres left, half of it is set aside for preservation, leaving 90 percent of the original 91,000 acres preserved, and the other half developed into Babcock Ranch. More than 300,000 solar panels overseen by Florida Power and Light contribute energy to the town.

Boca Grande, a historic fishing village and beach town set on Gasparilla Island at Boca Grande Pass, is highlighted by a circa-1890 lighthouse, a host of charming shops and boutiques, and a walking and biking friendly downtown where captains of industry and President's play.

Don Pedro Island, just about the most perfect beach anywhere with plenty of shells and warm water, is a secluded barrier island accessible only by boat. Picnicking, birding, and wildlife viewing are popular here, but the star attraction is the mile-long beach fronting the azure blue waters of the Gulf of Mexico.

Englewood-Cape Haze, fronted by the Gulf of Mexico and Lemon Bay, has all the frills of a Florida beach town: nature parks, cultural events, fishing — the tarpon that runs here are among the greatest in the world, arts, unusual boutiques and galleries along Englewood's Dearborn Street, and of course, the beach.

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Manasota Key, home to Chadwick Park at Englewood Beach and Stump Pass Beach State Park where beachgoers can comb for shells or sharks' teeth; take in an afternoon of sunning and swimming, or surf fish for the main course for that night's dinner.

Knight Island, accessible only by car ferry has three miles of beaches where it's easy to get Florida sand in your shoes. A prototype for white sand, blue sky and clear water beaches, Palm Island is home to Palm Island Resort and is the perfect antidote for today's stressful lifestyles.

Little Gasparilla Island, accessible only by boat. More than two miles of secluded beaches are perfect for swimming, fishing, shelling, and bird watching. A boater's paradise, accommodations are available in rental condominiums and homes, but guests need to bring their own supplies as there are no stores or restaurants on-island.

Placida, yet another secluded waterfront community providing instant access to the Charlotte Harbor Blueway Trails. Professional outfitters complement the wealth of natural resources, and a great selection of vacation rentals, restaurants, and shopping lend a civilized touch.

Port Charlotte, the heart of Charlotte County, is centrally located between Englewood to the west and north and Punta Gorda to the south. There are endless things to do near Port Charlotte, but it's also a destination unto itself, featuring a wide variety of golf courses, an incredible array of restaurants and shopping, and hotel and vacation rental choices. Port Charlotte is also home to the Charlotte Sports Park, the award-winning base of Tampa Bay Rays Spring Training. For harbor-front relaxation, the Port Charlotte Beach Park offers 15 acres of amenities including a pool, picnicking, basketball, fishing, and boat ramp access to Charlotte Harbor.

Punta Gorda, perhaps the most well-known of Charlotte County's communities and is the only incorporated city in the county. It is the cultural heartbeat of Charlotte County with diverse performances at The Center for Performing Arts & Education and juried exhibits and workshops at the Visual Arts Center. As the Charlotte Harbor Gulf Island Coast typifies Florida and its great diversity, so does Punta Gorda illustrate distinctive images as a waterfront neighborhood. The streets, lined with towering royal palms, restored period homes complete with wide verandahs, and boutique shopping at Fishermen's Village, is highlighted by flowering shrubs, streetlamps, and town benches. Featuring palate-pleasing restaurants, privately owned boutiques, and a 140-slip marina where fishing, cruising, and boating are but moments away, Punta Gorda easily enchants even the most jaded of travelers.

Whether visiting the beaches and communities of Punta Gorda/Englewood Beach, the Charlotte Harbor Gulf Island Coast as an angler, a beachcomber, honeymooner, nature lover, boater, kayaker, hiker, bicyclist, shopper, or just plain vacationer in need of rest, the array of activities available here is endless.

Best Places to Golf

PUNTA GORDA/ENGLEWOOD BEACH, FL is ranked the "Third Best Place in America to Live and Play Golf" by *Golf Digest*, the Charlotte Harbor Gulf Island Coast offers year-round play on more than 15

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courses—450 scenic holes of golf—including two courses on Golfer’s Choice top courses in Florida list and two Audobon International Cooperative Sanctuary Program (ACSP) courses.

A few of the top golf courses in Punta Gorda/Englewood Beach include:

[Riverwood Golf Club](#) is consistently rated in the Top 50 courses in the US and in Florida. Riverwood features truly unique design features, natural beauty, and varying challenges. Riverwood is a Par 72 Championship golf course with a full-length practice range, multi-faceted short game practice area, and putting green. The front nine flows through heavily wooded terrain, rich in stands of natural pine. The back nine meanders through saltmarsh and wetlands. This is a lush par 72 championship course, rich with native vegetation and stretching almost 7,000 yards. The front nine flows through heavily wooded terrain, while the back nine lies among salt marshes and wetlands.

[Aileron Golf Club](#) is a newly redesigned golf course, formerly Kingsway Golf Course owned by the new Sunseeker Resort Charlotte Harbor and exclusive to resort guests. The club is located just ten minutes from the resort. Renowned golf architect Kipp Schulties, who has designed more than 50+ championship level golf courses in the state, led the revnovation and is known for his work on Boca Raton Resort & Club and Quail Lodge Resort & Club. Aileron Golf Club made its fully reimagined debut in December of 2023, offering a brand new 10,800 square foot clubhouse, restaurant, bar, and pro shop. The course, which features 17 water holes, delivers the ultimate resort-level golf experience.

[Lemon Bay Golf Club](#) offers an Audubon ASPC-certified 18-hole golf course on 90 acres of land in harmony with the local ecosystem. The western edge of the course overlooks the mangrove forests of Knight Island (Palm Island Resort) and Don Pedro Island State Park. To the east lie the Rotonda and Port Charlotte communities and the pine and palmetto scrubland flats of southwest Florida. While Lemon Bay is a private golf club, they do open to the public during the summer months of June through August.

[Babcock National Golf Club](#) features an 18-hole course layout that provides a unique golfing experience. They have multiple tee lengths to cater to players of all ages and skill levels. Designed by Gordon Lewis be prepared to play through idyllic scenery, pristine fairways, and strategically placed bunkers.

[Rotonda Golf & Country Club’s](#) 5 courses and 99 premier holes on the Cape Haze Peninsula make it a golfing paradise. The Hills, Long Marsh, The Palms, The Links, and Pinemoor are set in a spectacular setting bathed by gulf breezes. Challenging, well-maintained fairways that provide a new golfing experience with every round.

[Deep Creek Golf Club](#) offers a challenging 6,000 yard, Mark McCumber design golf course, encompassed by a world of native Florida wildlife and natural landscape. Lined with meandering waterways and plenty of bunkers for sand play, this course is uniquely designed to test players’ skill-of-course management.

Unrivaled Eco-Experiences

Punta Gorda/Englewood Beach, FL - From sea turtles to sea otters, to white pelicans and roseate spoonbills, nature lovers love nature in Charlotte Harbor.

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Travelers seeking to learn about the environment, how to become better environmental stewards, and escape life's stresses have been enjoying this amazing destination and our nature-based tourism. Perhaps no place better presents a firsthand look at nature and the environment than Punta Gorda/Englewood Beach on the Charlotte Harbor Gulf Island Coast, with its 830 miles of shoreline incorporating barrier islands, unspoiled beaches, mangrove habitats, pine Flatwoods, meandering rivers, canals and creeks, all outlining Florida's second-largest marine estuary.

Punta Gorda/Englewood Beach is a place of ecological and ornithological wonders where outdoor enthusiasts can observe nature in its undisturbed state. Ideal for photography, shelling, hiking, bicycling, kayaking, and standup paddleboarding. The area beckons fans of the natural environment to come to play in their backyard. In addition to hundreds of bird species such as osprey, bald eagle, anhinga, cardinal, wood stork, white pelican, and Roseate Spoonbill, a veritable patchwork quilt of biology, zoology, and oceanography abounds with 256 fresh and saltwater fish species, 39 species of mammals, 67 species of reptiles, and 27 species of amphibians.

A favorite activity of nature lovers is paddling either kayaks, canoes, or standup paddleboards through the Peace or Myakka rivers and throughout the expansive aquatic preserves of the Charlotte Harbor watershed. These adventures offer a special, up-close look at the unique features of an estuarine ecosystem. Experience mangrove canopies while paddling among secluded, hidden coves of Coral Creek & Gasparilla Sound along the Intracoastal Waterways. Nearly 200 miles of the Charlotte Harbor Blueway Trails have been mapped out identifying 53 trails rated for access, experience level, and scenic value.

For further exploration, boat tour operators offer inshore and deep-water safaris along with sightseeing cruises into Charlotte Harbor, Florida's second-largest estuary, which has mangroves and sea-grass beds that provide habitat for manatees, sea turtles, wood storks, young fish, and dolphins. [King Fisher Fleet's Peace River Nature Cruise](#) offers a 3 ½ hours eco-tour with interpretation by naturalists from the well-known Charlotte Harbor Environmental Center. Visitors can experience the flora and fauna of four different ecosystems as they journey into the winding waters of Peace River. The banks are lined with overhanging trees, native grasses, basking alligators, bald eagles, ospreys, herons, endangered wood storks, and tons of other wildlife.

Inland, [Babcock Ranch Eco-Tours](#) takes its visitors on an entertaining, educational 90-minute swamp buggy adventure through some of the woods and pastures of the 70,000-acre Crescent B Ranch, a working cattle farm, and Telegraph Cypress Swamp. Sightings of wildlife such as the boar, alligators, Osceola turkey, and whitetail deer are not uncommon.

Complementing Babcock Ranch Eco Tours is the [Charlotte Harbor Environmental Center \(CHEC\)](#), a 3,000-acre nature center with four miles of nature trails. Visitors will get to know the nature of Charlotte County up close through free interpretative programs including a Wading Adventure, where participants don waders and go out into the estuary with dip nets in search of the cool, gross, and bizarre: sponges called Dead Man's Fingers, sea cucumbers that eject their stomachs, worms that decorate their own homes, shell cases shaped like ice cream cones and an abundance of fish that are just starting their life here in nature's nursery. [The Peace River Wildlife Center](#) an active wildlife rehabilitation center and park; and the [Gasparilla Island State Park](#) and [Cape Haze Pioneer Trail Park](#), two former railroad-turned-bicycle trails Boca Grande Bike Path, also offer diversions of the natural order.

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Florida is certainly well known for its potpourri of state recreational areas, and Charlotte County contains four of them, each different from one another and offering even greater opportunities for naturalists to explore the wild side of the Sunshine State. From [Babcock/Webb Wildlife Management Area](#) and [Charlotte Harbor Preseve State Park](#) to [Don Pedro Island State Park](#) and [Stump Pass Beach State Park](#), the area is host to a plethora of nature programs and events and provides exceptional recreational opportunities that include plenty more opportunities for bird watching, bicycling, hiking, swimming, and more.

With more than 330 spectacular and colorful species of birds migrating to and inhabiting about 70 parks, preserves, and natural areas and roughly 830 miles of shoreline edging Charlotte Harbor and the Gulf Islands on Florida's Southwest coast, bird watching here is at a premium. Lemon Bay Sunrise Rotary Park, Cedar Point Environmental Park and Alligator Creek Preserve are just three of 26 sites recognized by the Peace River Audubon Society for excellent birding. Endangered wood storks with their four-foot wingspan, the rare white pelican, and the purple gallinule are part of the extensive Southwest Florida Bird List.

Punta Gorda/Englewood Beach Welcomes Allegiant's Sunseeker Resort

The new-build resort officially opened December 15

Punta Gorda/Englewood Beach, FL – [The Punta Gorda/Englewood Beach Visitor & Convention Bureau](#) is thrilled to announce the official opening of Allegiant Travel Company's [Sunseeker Resort Charlotte Harbor](#), marking a significant milestone in the region's hospitality, meetings, wellness and culinary landscape. The new-build property is the first with over 750 rooms to open in Southwest Florida in over thirteen years. Sunseeker Resort Charlotte Harbor Resort is expected to bring more visitation to the area, boosting an already impressive \$1B of total economic impact to Punta Gorda/Englewood Beach generated from visitors in FY2023. The property is expected to employ over 1,200 hospitality workers in Southwest Florida, further contributing to the region's economic growth.

The resort has a total of 785 guest rooms and suites available for reservations, along with the following exciting key features:

- 20 original food & beverage concepts; including seven stand-alone restaurants, 11 bars & lounges, two poolside offerings and a 25,000 sq. ft. food hall dining experience.
- 60,000-square-feet of meeting and conference space: Two waterfront ballrooms available for meetings, groups or weddings
- Two expansive pools, including a 21,000-square-foot adults-only rooftop retreat. *(The 117,000-square-foot ground-level pool experience is set to become the largest pool in Southwest Florida)*
- Scenic harborside promenade with retail outlets
- State-of-the-art 7,100-square-foot fitness center and full-service spa, Lorelei Spa
- An exclusive 18-hole golf course, Aileron Golf Club, available only to resort guests

Its prime waterfront location overlooks the stunning Charlotte Harbor, providing guests with breathtaking views and proximity to all that the area has to offer from world-class fishing to island-hopping. While Sunseeker Resort Charlotte Harbor provides an abundance of amenities and activities within its sprawling grounds, the Punta Gorda/Englewood Beach area compliments the resort experience with its distinct experiences. Guests are invited to make the most of their visit by exploring

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the local breathtaking beaches and parks, creating a well-rounded trip that blends a luxurious resort stay with the charm and allure of a peaceful and natural paradise.

The resort's convenient location, just ten minutes from Punta Gorda Airport (PGD), ensures easy access for guests traveling to and from their flights. Sunseeker Resort Charlotte Harbor is situated at 5500 Sunseeker Way, Charlotte Harbor, FL 33980, or visit [Sunseeker Resort Charlotte Harbor](#) to learn more.

Spotlights

Creekside RV Resort: Creekside is Punta Gorda's newest RV Resort. They are a premier gated-community located a quarter mile east of I-75 at Exit 161 in the charming, waterside town of Punta Gorda, Florida. The Resort is among Florida's newest RV resorts with a total of 208 RV sites on 47 acres, featuring premium sites with Casitas, a clubhouse with amenities and three comfort stations with laundry facilities, private bathrooms and showers, an outdoor recreation area, a five-acre lake and cul-de-sacs, dog run and much more.

Whichever your preference, Creekside RV Resort offers options with beautiful lake views as well as relaxed, scenic and rustic settings nestled alongside and with direct Creek access where guests enjoy hours of peaceful kayaking and fishing. They are conveniently located to downtown Punta Gorda, grocery, shopping, restaurants and Punta Gorda Airport.

World's First Solar-Powered Town is in Charlotte County, Fla.

Babcock Ranch, the world's first solar-powered town located in southeast Charlotte County, just northeast of Fort Myers on Babcock Ranch Road/State Road 31, commemorated the town's official grand opening on March 10, 2018, with a celebration that featured tours of 20 furnished model homes and FPL's Babcock Ranch Solar Energy Center, where a newly constructed observation platform provides sweeping views of the 440-acre solar field. Babcock Ranch was created by Kitson & Partners with respect for the natural environment and the philosophy that smart growth and sustainability work hand in hand. Half of the town's 18,000-acre footprint is set aside as greenways, parks, and expansive lakes, providing recreation and scenic backdrops for Babcock Ranch's homes and the Founder's Square downtown district. Babcock Ranch promotes healthy living through a walkable community plan, 50 miles of planned biking and hiking trails, interconnected lakes for paddling enthusiasts, a robust calendar of exercise classes, and the Healthy Life Center.

Outfitter Makes Paddling Accessible to Almost Everyone

Selkie Adaptive Paddle offers amazing guided adaptive adventures to people of all abilities, and for their friends and families to enjoy the experience with them. There are 54 million disabled Americans, over 3 million in Florida. This population includes a wide range of disabilities; physical, emotional, and intellectual challenges. This may be a Veteran, a person with disabilities from birth, a person going through challenges from the normal aging process, or someone who has had a traumatic injury. They launch from Buck Creek Preserve to explore the waters of Englewood, and Placida by kayak and paddleboard. Adventures may include creature finding, fishing, birding, and shelling expeditions. Exploring by paddleboard and kayak, while learning about our marine life, coastal ecosystems, and all the creatures we encounter in this beautiful area we call home.

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Unique Wildlife Up Close & Personal

[Peace River Wildlife Education Center](#): The Peace River Wildlife Center, often referred to as PRWC, is a non-profit organization dedicated to the rescue, rehabilitation, and release of injured and orphaned wildlife. The center's primary goal is to provide compassionate care and medical attention to animals in need, with the aim of returning them to their natural habitats whenever possible. Since its beginnings, the wildlife center has treated over 50,000 birds and small mammals, offering a high level of skilled care by trained and permitted wildlife rehabilitation specialists with years of experience in treating native fauna disease and trauma. At the PRWC, visitors witness first-hand the incredible work being done to rehabilitate animals. The center's staff and volunteers work tirelessly to provide veterinary care, proper nutrition, and a safe environment for the animals in their care. From orphaned birds to injured mammals, the center accommodates various species. Visitors to the new PRWC will be able to explore the numerous exhibits and enclosures that house the resident wildlife. These exhibits serve as temporary homes for animals undergoing rehabilitation but also provide an educational opportunity for visitors to learn about native wildlife species. Informational signage and knowledgeable staff members will be available to answer questions and provide insight into the animals' natural behaviors and conservation needs.

Art AND Nature? What a Beautiful Combo!

Abutting the Peace River, the [Peace River Botanical & Sculpture Gardens](#) is a 30-acre waterfront oasis that encompasses the diversity of five ecosystems including marshlands, wetlands, mangroves, uplands, a tidal basin, and an island amphitheater. Flowering trees and plants will bloom throughout the year. More than a dozen large-scale sculptures adorn the landscape of the 27-acre property. Flowering trees bloom throughout the year and more than 15,000 sq. ft of boardwalks and docks are planned. Sculptures have been installed and the master plans for the Gardens were developed in 2010. The property is developed and primarily financed by Roger E. and Linda A. Tetrault Foundation, a 501 c. (3) private foundation.

Unlock Your Inner Archaeologist

Chances are if you've been shell hunting before, there was a time or two you find something cool and unexpected like a shark tooth or fossil. If you love finding these gems, there's a place in Florida where the fossil supply has been known to be high; you can hunt for fossils at Canoe Outpost - Peace River.

At this watersport outpost, rent yourself a canoe or bring your own kayak and trek the river in search of fossilized treasures. Fossils are known to be found along the Peace River's tea-colored banks – particularly after a storm and when the water level is low. Fossil hunters begin their trip with a short bus shuttle ride up to the launch point, where you can start searching for your treasures. Rent a sifter and swish and swash for fossils from giant sloths, bears, tapirs, capybaras, giant armadillos, jaguars, saber-tooth cats, llamas, camels, mammoths, horses, mastodons, sharks' teeth, and the prized megalodon tooth.

Sports Anyone?

A fixture in Punta Gorda/Englewood Beach since 2009, we are proud to call Charlotte Sports Park the [Tampa Bay Rays Spring Training](#) home. The Rays' involvement in the Charlotte County community goes well beyond baseball and Spring Training. Their year-round community initiatives support youth activities, charitable causes, and local events.

History Buff

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This incredible museum is a great family-friendly attraction for all ages. [The Military Heritage Museum](#) utilizes multiple methods to educate its visitors on the heritage aspects of US military history. With thirty-thousand-plus artifacts, veterans serving as museum guides, flight and ship simulators, virtual reality experiences, thousands of infographics, live performances, and audiovisual displays, the Museum provides unique and innovative experiences throughout its 17,000 square foot facility.

Trace the City's Roots through a Magnificent Collection of Hand-Painted Murals

An artistic way to learn the roots of Punta Gorda is through its 30 (and counting) beautifully painted murals that are scattered around the city on its historical buildings. [The Punta Gorda Historic Mural Society](#) (PGHMS) is a non-profit, 501c(3) organization founded in 1994 whose objectives are to revitalize, preserve, and economically enhance the community through the painting of murals that depict the history of the area. Each mural tells its own unique story of the authentic city.

Travel through Four Different Ecosystems on a Swamp Buggy Bus

Discover the natural heart of Florida on a thrilling tour that has you seeing alligators, wild hogs, deer, wild turkeys, sandhill cranes, and cracker cows with [Babcock Ranch Eco-Tours](#). The beautiful landscape takes you through four different ecosystems including a telegraph cypress swamp. The experienced guides will enhance your experience with their commentaries. Get back to nature on this adventure.

A Bustling Waterfront Fishing Village

[Fishermen's Village](#) is a bustling waterfront mall, resort, and marina that offers something for everyone. Shopping, dining, live entertainment, and water adventures await locals and travelers. With over 30 boutiques shops and restaurants galore, you are sure to find something that pleases you and your family.

Ride Green, Ride Free, Ride Like the Wind to Discover the Real Charlotte Harbor

Punta Gorda features the first Florida free bike loan program. The city has been recognized as a "Florida Bike-Friendly Community" by the Florida Bicycle Association for their volunteer organization called TEAM Punta Gorda which offers a complimentary Yellow Bike Loaner Program. All that is required to enjoy a [biking](#) adventure for an hour or a day is a credit card, driver's license (copies made for collateral), and signature of a waiver. Bicycles are offered on a space-available basis at various downtown locations. Since Punta Gorda is a bicycle-friendly community, the Punta Gorda Pathways, which is an 18-mile loop trail connecting pedestrian and bike paths around the city, was established to allow the city's bicyclists a more convenient way to get around. Four bicycle routes were also established and marked and range in length from 17 miles to a 31-mile ride.

Undiscovered Beaches

Punta Gorda/Englewood Beach has 28 miles of uncrowded [beaches](#) for every interest. Romantics can watch the sun slip into the Gulf at Englewood Beach on Manasota Key or walk hand-in-hand along the shore. Many nearby restaurants offer nightlife. Adjoining Chadwick Park offers volleyball and basketball courts and plenty of fishing. At Port Charlotte Beach Park, families and athletes love the heated swimming pool, basketball, tennis, beach volleyball, bocce, horseshoe courts, and playground. Picnic shelters, a fishing pier, and boating access ramps add to the appeal.

Explorer's beach: Stump Pass Beach State Park, with wide-open coastlines and nature trails for viewing wildlife and native plants, is ideal for shelling and gathering fossilized shark's teeth.

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Most secluded: Don Pedro Island State Park, which can only be reached by private boat. There are plenty of shells and few people to compete for them! Look for manatees, bald eagles, and gopher tortoises. Far removed from civilization, yet amenities include restrooms, outdoor showers, picnic pavilions, and barbecue grills.

From Blue Crab Picking to Dining Like James Beard, The Flavors of Charlotte Harbor

The [dining scene](#) in Punta Gorda/Englewood Beach is an eclectic mix of seafood shacks, sidewalk cafes, waterfront eateries, fine dining, award-winning kitchens and sweet spots. Primary dining districts include downtown Punta Gorda (which has more than 50 independently owned restaurants), Fishermen's Village, and Englewood's Dearborn Street. Familiar corporate-owned restaurants are bountiful, too. Notable culinary experiences include: dinner at Golden Spoon recipient The Perfect Caper, headed by a multi-time nominee for the James Beard Foundation Best Chef in the South, Jeanie Roland who beat chef Bobby Flay on national television; Peace River Seafood is housed in a Florida cracker shack and for more than 15 years, they've been serving up boat-to-table blue crabs, shrimp, and other fresh seafood. Great spots like Farlow's On the Water, Landy's Restaurant, F.M. Don's and Lock N' Key can cook the catch of those who reeled in dinner earlier that day. If you're feeling indecisive, Sunseeker Charlotte Harbor has 20 food and beverage concepts ranging from bar bites to fine dining, all under one roof.

Paddle Through Paradise - Blueway Trails

Part of the Florida Greenways and Trails System, 200 miles of Blueway Trails are mapped for paddlers whether they're in a [kayak, canoe, or standup paddleboard](#) with 53 trails rated for access, difficulty, and scenic value. Veteran aficionados say these trails are some of the most beautiful in the U.S. Nearly 84 percent of the 830 miles of shoreline is protected from development, providing shelter and habitat for an amazing variety of species. With a guide, one might see hundreds of birds flying home to roost, wild boar, otters, manta rays, and horseshoe crabs. Experienced sea kayakers can enjoy challenges out on the Gulf. Learn kayak fishing, where one can sneak up on the prey. Several outfitters/guides offer wilderness trips, photographic forays, and tailored tours for beginner to expert, perhaps accompanied by manatees or dolphins. One even offers an affordable kayak wedding or vow renewal package for couples who want to add some splash to their romance.

Tasty Sips

Along with world-class food, Punta Gorda/Englewood Beach has the drinks to go with every meal. Punta Gorda/Englewood Beach has its own craft taproom and distillery. [Alligator Bay Distillers](#) is owned and operated by the Voss brothers, who create spirits and rum from 100 percent Florida molasses. Be sure to schedule a *free* tasting tour on their website! [TT's Tiki Bar](#) situated on Charlotte Harbor has great piña coladas as well as other tiki-inspired beverages to sip on while listening to live music. [Lock N' Key](#) allows visitors to drink like locals with frozen beverages ranging from the Tropical Hooter to new concoctions like the Roasty Toasty.

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