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FREE AND CHEAP ADVENTURES ABOUND IN SARASOTA & HER ISLANDS

20 Things to Do in Sarasota Under 5 Dollars

Sarasota, Fla. (July, 2010) -- A down economy may mean a decline in spending, but it doesn't have to equal a decline in fun. Sarasota has many ways for visitors to explore and make long-lasting memories, even without a lot of padding in their pockets.

The Sarasota Convention and Visitors Bureau is unveiling its 2010 list of ways to have fun for free or nearly free despite the recession. Here are 20 things you can do with less than a 5 dollar bill.

1. **Spend the day at the beach.** Sarasota is home to Siesta Beach, the number 2 beach in the country, according to Dr. Beach's 2010 list. Lido, Longboat, Nokomis and Manasota beaches all have beautiful scenery and public access and the beaches of Venice are known for their shark teeth--included free of charge.
2. **Drum, dance or get a live show.** Live music performances are free every Sunday night on Siesta Beach...and you can even join in. Bring a drum or just yourself and play or dance the night away or pull up a beach chair or towel and get a front row experience.
3. **Be artsy.** Come on a weekend to enjoy free art and live music at the first Friday Palm Avenue Art Walks or the third Friday Towles Court Art Walks. Palm Avenue is lined with galleries and Towles Court, an artists' colony, opens its galleries and studios to the public. www.palmavenue.org, www.towlescourt.com
4. **Grill out.** Have a BBQ, picnic or combination of the two at Siesta Beach or Lido Beach. Both have grills and picnic areas with tables and pavilions, so bring your own food and have a scenic, waterfront lunch or dinner on a budget.
5. **Go camping.** Get in touch with nature on a primitive campsite at Myakka State Park. The cost is just \$5 per person. While the primitive campsites are several miles away from the trailhead, that's just an excuse to go hiking or biking before setting up camp. Don't forget to bring supplies to make s'mores! www.myakkariver.org
6. **Go to the movies with just a couple bucks.** Despite movie ticket costs snaking up and the economy remaining down, Sarasota's Parkway 8 Cinema makes it possible for you and the whole family to enjoy go to the movies for less than the price of one adult ticket at the average movie theatre. Matinees tickets are \$1.50 and evening showings are just \$2. www.omcinemas.com
7. **Take a dip.** The Lido Pool is a hidden gem of a public pool right on Lido Beach. Open seasonally (Tuesday-Friday 10:30 a.m.-4:45 p.m.; weekends noon-4:45 p.m.), the pool charges just \$2 for children under 11 and seniors and just \$4 for adults.
8. **Go to Happy Hour.** Happy Hour often means cheaper food and drinks, but rarely this cheap and this gourmet. Upscale Asian restaurant Pacific Rim has happy hour from 4:30--6:30 p.m. on weekdays and offers up its delectable cocktails and small plates for a mere \$4 and sushi for just \$3. www.pacificrim Sarasota.com

9. **Read a book.** Or go online, roam around, check out the architecture outside and more at Selby Library. Its prime downtown location makes it a fun (and free) stop before or after swinging by the marina at Island Park (also free).
<http://suncat.co.sarasota.fl.us>
10. **Relax in Island Park.** Located at One Marina Plaza, Island Park is home to lots of great, free things--a sprawling lawn, beautiful blue water, a fountain for children, sun, shade, massive and inventive sculptures, big boats and docks to roam on.
11. **Spend Monday at the museum.** The John and Mable Ringling Museum of Art opens its doors free of charge every Monday from 10 a.m.-5 p.m. www.ringling.org
12. **Grab some fresh produce.** Find fresh fruits and vegetables, plants, crafts and more at the downtown Farmers Market every Saturday morning or the Siesta Key Farmers Market on Sunday mornings. www.downtownsarasotafarmersmarket.com, www.siestafarmersmarket.com
13. **Enjoy music on the bay.** Van Wezel Performing Arts Hall holds Friday Fest one Friday a month. Check out the live music on the waterfront from 5-9 p.m.
www.vanwezel.org
14. **Play sports.** It's free to play tennis or volleyball at Siesta Beach. Bring a friend or the family or join in on a game with Sarasota's friendly residents.
15. **Go window shopping.** Even in a downtrodden economy, it doesn't hurt to look. Take a peek in the boutiques of downtown Sarasota and St. Armands Circle. After all, it's free! You may even find a great deal.
16. **Go for a walk, drive or bike ride.** No matter what mode of transportation you prefer, there are many ways to see Sarasota. Drive through beautiful Casey Key and marvel at the homes, take a long walk on the beach or along Ringling Bridge or bike on the Legacy Trail.
17. **Get a cupcake.** Cupcakes are in right now and you can get a delectable one for just a few bucks at Heavenly Cupcakes in Gulf Gate or on Siesta Key or at Whiteberry on Main St. www.myheavenlycupcakes.com, www.whiteberryusa.com
18. **Watch the sunset.** Sometimes it's hard to believe it's possible to experience something so beautiful without spending a dime. Taking in a sunset is free and simple and you can do it from almost anywhere in Sarasota. The beaches, the marina and Ringling Bridge are favorite spots among locals.
19. **Split a drink with friends.** All you'll need is a few bucks and a few straws when going in on the "Village Idiot" with a group of friends. The massive, fruity alcoholic beverage is served in a beach pail and can be found at Siesta Key Oyster Bar in Siesta Village. It's the perfect afternoon refresher or nightcap after a long day on the beach and when you split the tab, you're no idiot.
20. **Get festive.** Sarasota has a packed festival schedule year-round and all of the festivities are free and open to the public. Arts, crafts, food and music abound, from the Venice Sharks Tooth Festival to the Siesta Fiesta to the St. Armands Craft Festival. For dates and details, visit www.sarasotafl.org.

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Sarasota and her string of eight islands are located along Southwest Florida's Gulf Coast between Tampa and Ft. Myers. Sarasota and Her Islands is comprised of Sarasota, Longboat Key, Lido Key, St. Armands Key, Manasota Key, Siesta Key, Casey Key, Englewood, Nokomis, North Port, Osprey and Venice. In addition to sandy beaches, Sarasota and Her Islands also offer numerous cultural and ecological attractions. For more information on saving and discovering in Sarasota, call the Sarasota Convention & Visitors Bureau at (800) 522-9799 or visit www.sarasotaf1.org.