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Fall Into Vacation In Sarasota

Sarasota, Fla. (Oct. 1, 2009) – Sarasota & Her Islands celebrates the 2009 fall season with a cornucopia of events complete with all trimmings for a memorable family vacation.

From festivals to spooky outings, Sarasota offers families plenty to completely immerse themselves in traditional fall experiences while also enjoying what will seem like an endless summer's worth of attractions, beaches, shopping and dining.

In addition to plenty to do in Sarasota, there are many options for places to stay at great rates. Accommodations ranging from boutique hotels, luxury resorts and quaint bed and breakfasts offer some of their best rates of the year during the fall months.

The Ringling International Arts Festival (www.ringlingartsfestival.org), Oct. 7 - 11 kicks off fall festivities with premier art, theater, dance and music. The festival, which is a partnership between The John and Mable Ringling Museum of Art and the (Mikhail) Baryshnikov Arts Center, New York City brings together more than 100 artists from all over the world to perform a rich diversity of ideas and forms. This is the festival's inaugural year.

Music is always surging the atmosphere in Sarasota, but in fall 2009 it truly energizes the town with the October Jazz Festival (www.jazzclubsarasota.com), Oct, 23 - 25 and the Sarasota Blues Festival (www.sarasotabluesfest.com), Oct. 24.

Ethnic-themed festivals including the Hispanic Latino Festival (www.hispaniclatinofestival.com), Oct. 3 and the Hungarian Festival

(www.globalfriendshipfoundation.org), Oct. 18 will celebrate the diverse heritage that thrives in Sarasota.

Halloween can be celebrated just as memorably on vacation in Sarasota with the Pumpkin Festival (<http://sarasotapumpkinfestival.eventbrite.com>), Oct. 30-31; Sarasota Zombie Pub Crawl (<http://sarasotazombiepubcrawl.com>), Oct. 17; House of Terror Haunted House at the PAL Sailor Circus (www.sailorcircus.org), Oct. 22 - 24 and Oct. 29 - 31; Creaky Bones III, the Arthritis Foundation's 5K run/walk (www.runnergirl.com/races/creaky/creaky.html), Oct. 18; Hallowkey annual Halloween bash (www.hallowkey.com), Oct. 31; and Mote Aquarium's Night of Fish, Fun and Fright (www.mote.org), Oct. 23 featuring the signature underwater pumpkin carving in the shark tank.

Halloween wouldn't be complete without some drama and to take in more traditional forms, the Asolo Repertory Theatre (www.asolo.org) presents *Contact*, Oct. 23 - Nov. 22 and Sarasota Opera (www.sarasotaopera.com) delivers *Verdi's La Traviata*, Oct. 30, Nov. 1, 3, 5, 8 and 11.

Unique shopping experiences are highly anticipated in Sarasota with the 21st Annual St. Armands Art Festival (www.artfestival.com), Oct. 10 - 11 and the 15th Annual Sarasota Art and Craft Festival (www.artfestival.com), Oct. 17 - 18.

The annual Sharktoberfest at Mote Aquarium (www.mote.org) welcomes the fall season with fins held high. Every Saturday and Sunday during October, children wearing Halloween costumes will receive a treat bag and free admission when accompanied by a paying adult.

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Vacationers can also support a cause while having a great time with two area galas. The Ringling Museum of Art's UnGala Gala (www.ringling.org), Oct. 17 and Mote Aquarium's

Oceanic Evening (www.mote.org), Oct. 31 offers cocktails, dinner and dancing under the stars and among the marine life, for truly unique Sarasota experiences. Both galas benefit each organization's missions.

Sarasota welcomes K-9 friends with the Gulfcoast Dog Magazine 2009 Pet Extravaganza (www.gulfcoastdog.com), Oct. 17 and Halloween + Dog Event at Payne Park (www.sarasotagov.com), Oct. 31 with a costume contest for dogs, kids and adults.

The fall festivities continue into November with Siesta Key Sand Festival (www.siestakeychamber.com), Nov. 6; Annual Downtown Venice Festival, Nov. 7 - 8; Mixon's Harvest Festival (www.mixonevent.com), Nov. 12 - 15; Stonecrab, Seafood and Wine Festival (www.colonybeachresort.com/stonecrab), Nov. 12 - 15; and the Sarasota Medieval Fair (www.sarasotamedievalfair.com), Nov. 21 - 22.

For additional information and a complete list of events in Sarasota & Her Islands, 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 discovering Sarasota & Her Islands, call the Sarasota Convention & Visitors Bureau at (800) 522-9799 or visit www.sarasotafl.org.