

## Sarasota's Holiday Cheer in Summer Weather

Sarasota landmarks and attractions celebrate the holidays with festive events and special deals

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Sarasotans, snowbirds and winter visitors, rejoice: it's that time of year again. Holiday season in Sarasota means good food, great deals, fun events and no snow, unless you count the snowy white, soft sands of Siesta Beach.

Ringling Museum, Selby Gardens, Jungle Gardens, Mote Marine and Spanish Point will have your December calendar booked while the Ritz-Carlton Sarasota and other area hotels have special events and deals lined up for the season.

The **John and Mable Ringling Museum** will kick off its holiday season on December 2, with "Holiday Splendor." A new event, "Deck the Halls," will take place on December 3 and "Holiday Swing" is scheduled for December 9.

"Holiday Splendor" celebrates the sounds of the holidays with performances by Sarasota and Manatee County school groups in the decorated museum courtyard. The event will benefit the U.S. Marine Corps Toys for Tots program. Admission is free with the donation of a toy per person. Without a toy, the fee is \$10 for adults and \$5 for children 6-17. Children under 5 get in free. The Museum of Art, Ca' d'Zan, Circus Museum and Tibbals learning Center will all be open for tours during the event.

The event takes place on Thursday, December 2, from 6-9 p.m. For more information, call (941) 359-5700 ext. 5705.

"Deck the Halls" will be an intimate gathering featuring holiday music performed by carolers and a quartet, as well as a holiday dinner. Holiday-themed desserts like cinnamon mousse cups and holiday cocktails such as peppermint martinis will be served up by Treviso, the restaurant inside Ringling Museum. The event will benefit the Ca' d'Zan preservation fund and the Aeolian DuoArt Pipe Organ, which is one of only 30 built in Florida. Tickets for this special event are \$75.

The event will take place on Friday, December 3, from 6-9 p.m. For reservations and donations, call (941) 358-3180.

"Holiday Swing" will be a special presentation of Art after 5. The courtyard concert will feature the DeLeon Orchestra in the museum courtyard. The event will help raise money to benefit the Ringling Museum's educational programs and exhibitions. Admission is

free with the purchase of an Art after 5 ticket, \$10 for adults and \$5 for children 6-17. It is free for museum members. Food and drinks will also be for sale.

The event will take place on Thursday, December 9, from 6:30-8:30 p.m.

For more information on any of the events and everything else Ringling has to offer, visit [www.ringling.org](http://www.ringling.org).

Celebrate sea life and the holiday season with at **Mote Aquarium**. On December 21, Mote presents a special performance by the **Sarasota Orchestra** in the aquarium's courtyard. Performances will take place at 1 p.m. and 2:30 p.m. The event is free with admission, so be sure to check out the wonders of the sea in between listening to the holiday classics.

For more information, visit [www.mote.org](http://www.mote.org) or call (941) 388-4441.

**Selby Gardens** will hold its annual "Lights in Bloom" event beginning December 17. The beautiful gardens are decorated with floral-inspired light displays. Stroll through Selby to the tune of live holiday music. There are activities for children and Santa will also be present. Food and drinks will be for sale. Pop inside the Christie Payne Mansion to check out the holiday decor, as well. Tickets go on sale December 1 and will be available online or at the Selby Gardens Welcome Center.

"Lights in Bloom" will take place from 6-9 p.m. from December 17-27, with the exception of Christmas Eve and Christmas. For more information, visit [www.selby.org](http://www.selby.org) or call (941) 366-5731.

**Sarasota Jungle Gardens** also transforms its gardens into a winter wonderland with bright holiday lights. Check out the light display while also experiencing the displays of alligators, parrots and the infamous flamingos. A Jungle Buffet Dinner will feature food and drinks, a campfire will allow visitors to roast marshmallows and more and live magic shows will take place twice a night. Admission for adults over 13 is \$10, children 3-12 get in for \$5 and children 2 and under get in free.

The event will take place December 3-5, 10-12 and 17-23. For more information, call (941) 355-1112 ext. 306 or visit [www.sarasotajunglegardens.com](http://www.sarasotajunglegardens.com).

**Historic Spanish Point** presents "Heritage Holidays," running November 21, 2010-January 2, 2011. The event is a celebration of the holiday season and old Florida. Explore the butterfly garden and nature trails, experience history and a taste of pioneer life with tours and listen to classical music during a Sunset Stroll. The site is also decorated for the holidays.

On Friday, December 17, from 4-6 p.m., enjoy music and refreshments while watching the sunset, then tour the gardens of Spanish Point. Members get in free, guests of members are \$5 and the cost for the general public is \$10.

Call (941) 966-5214 for more information, or visit [www.historicspanishpoint.org](http://www.historicspanishpoint.org).

The **Ritz-Carlton Sarasota** has a packed events calendar for the holidays. On Thursday, December 10 at 6 p.m., attend the “Holiday Gingerbread Open House” to witness the gingerbread baked and built by the Ritz-Carlton pastry chefs. Cookies, hot chocolate and cider will also be served and carolers will be present singing holiday songs. The event will also allow patrons to donate to the toy drive.

The Ritz will also offer classes to prepare you for the holidays. On Wednesday, December 2, from 6-8 p.m., bring your children to the “Mimi’s Manners” children’s etiquette class (\$80). The class will teach children table manners for holiday meals. “Cheers to the Holidays” will take place Friday, December 4 from 5-7 p.m. and will teach adults how to choose the ideal bottle of champagne for holidays events. The class, which is \$35 per person, will also provide samples of several types of champagnes. A holiday style “Market Lunch” event will take place Saturday, December 5 from 9 a.m.-1 p.m. The class will teach you how to choose the best produce, as well as how to prepare your holiday meal. A three-course lunch is included for \$55 per person. “Raise Your Spirits,” taking place Wednesday, December 16 from 6-8 p.m., will teach you how to make festive holiday drinks. The class is \$35 per person and will be taught by the Ritz-Carlton’s seasoned bartenders.

Bring your children to have breakfast with Santa at the Ritz-Carlton on Saturday, December 12 at 8 a.m. Young children will get a gift from Santa (\$45/adult, \$35/child under 12). The same day, from 3-5 p.m., learn to decorate cookies and participate in a cookie contest (\$35). Saturday, December 19 at 11 a.m. is “Teddy Bear Tea,” which will include hot chocolate, finger sandwiches and tea cookies. Children receive a special teddy bear and a photo with Santa (\$50 for adults, \$42 for children 12 and under).

Christmas Eve dinner at the hotel’s restaurant, Vernona, is \$115 per adult and on Christmas Day, there will be a holiday brunch from 10:30-2:30 (\$95 per adult, \$25 per child 4-12). The Christmas Dinner Buffet is \$115 for adults and \$35 for children 4-12.

The Ritz-Carlton is also offering “Christmas to Go” dinners for those that want to simply celebrate the holidays at home (or in your hotel room)! Vernona, is preparing feasts good for 4-6 guests. The meal includes a turkey or ham plus sides. Call (941) 309-2008 for the whole menu. The cost is \$210.

For more details, visit [www.ritzcarlton.com](http://www.ritzcarlton.com).

## **Hotel Specials**

Make taking advantage of all the Ritz-Carlton holiday fun easy with the hotel's Resort Reconnect package. It includes overnight stays, daily breakfast for two each morning at Vernona and a daily \$50 resort credit. (941) 309-2000, [www.ritzcarlton.com](http://www.ritzcarlton.com).

The Lido Beach Resort is offering a holiday shopping special from November 26-December 24. The special includes a \$25 per night shopping credit, two cocktails daily and complimentary shuttle transportation to nearby St. Armands Circle, a shopping mecca. (941) 388-5634, [www.lidobeachresort.com](http://www.lidobeachresort.com).

The **Helmsley Sandcastle Hotel** is also offering a seasonal special. Visitors can save up to 35% on certain dates during the holiday season. Visit [www.helmsleysandcastle.com](http://www.helmsleysandcastle.com) or call (941) 388-2181 for reservations and details.

For more information on holiday events and hotel specials for this joyous season in Sarasota, visit [www.sarasotafl.org](http://www.sarasotafl.org). Happy Holidays!