

Marco Island Is A Sparkling Gem In South West Florida

By: [Nick Messe](#)

Florida is the spot for a [perfect vacation](#) for so many reasons. Northerners can load up the van and with drivers taking shifts, they can cross the state line within twenty-four hours. Or you can hop on a plane and be there in less time than it took you to drive to the airport.

For many people, their first trip to Florida is a family pilgrimage to Disneyworld. Or maybe it was a university break to the chilly Atlantic shores of Daytona Beach.

But once you get rid of the theme park itch, and outgrow the non-stop urge to party, why not check out the shocking beauty and perfect tropical weather of [south west](#) Florida.

Here you will experience the real Florida, with its talcum powder beaches, sparkling water, and endless blue sky. You can watch the hawks circling overhead as you soak up the sun by the pool. Tomorrow, take a boat ride. Maybe you'll see an alligator or two. The day after that, do a little fishing or check out the gift shops down on the beach.

There are many, many islands in Florida, most of them uninhabited. However, Marco Island, just a short drive from the city of [Naples](#) has a permanent population of 15,000, which balloons to 35,000 in the tourist season.

The history of this island is fascinating. It was once the domain of the ferocious Calusa Indians. It is believed that they made their way to Florida about 4000 years ago. By 1492, when Christopher [Columbus](#) began to explore the new world, these hardy souls were thriving on the plentiful resources of the gulf coast. The rich harvest from sea and land provided the Calusa with raw materials for homes, clothes and tools.

Archeological digs on Marco Island revealed that the Calusa were very advanced woodworkers. They used the abundant trees growing on the island for boards and beams for their houses and docks. From the largest trees, they hollowed out canoes.

These Calusa warriors also had an artistic side. Hand carved masks, gods, and animals have all been uncovered. The Smithsonian Institute now houses a wooden, six-inch panther-like carving that has been dubbed the Key Marco Cat.

It was not until after the Civil War that the island began to be populated by souls hardy enough to manage in the wild mosquito infested mangrove swamp. They hunted, fished and sent any extra crops down to Key West. Eventually, around 1824, the island began to look like well maintained plantations.

In 1927 the island was incorporated as Collier City, then later it was unincorporated.

Years went by. Then on August 28, 1997, an election was held and the city of Marco Island was born.

Visitors will be impressed with the cultural diversity of the island which adds a distinctive flavor to the various street festivals and eateries. One unique way to experience local color is to visit one of the many outdoor chickee bars.

Professional artists and musicians flock to Marco Island, drawn by this rich mix of cultures. Tourist season buzzes with outdoor art fairs, band concerts, and troupes of street dancers.

Visitors can enjoy, and be a part of vibrant community theater performances. With more than one hundred art galleries, an art lover can simply get lost for hours. If you are feeling especially creative, visit a working art studio and sign up for a few lessons.

Back home, as you gaze at your work of art, and remember the warm white sand, blue skies and friendly people, you vow to return to your Marco [Island paradise](#).

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