

# Explore the Gulf Coast Heritage Trail

Pause and immerse yourself in Anna Maria Island and you'll find there's always something new to discover. The last Wednesday of each month in Coast Lines, we feature another facet of this sparkling jewel of the Gulf to enlighten both those who call it home and those who have adopted it as their home away from home.

**H**it the trail! The Gulf Coast Heritage Trail winds through Anna Maria Island on its route from St. Petersburg's Sunshine Skyway Bridge south to Englewood Beach. Accessible by car, motorcycle, trolley, bicycle or on foot, 10 of the trail's 117 stops are here on the Island, showcasing some of the best cultural, historic, and scenic areas around. Have fun touring the trail!

## Anna Maria

1. The path to Bean Point beach at North Shore Drive and North Bay Boulevard marks the spot where the Island's first homesteader settled 100 years ago.

2. Rod n' Reel Pier, 875 North Shore Drive, was built in 1947 and offers fishing, a restaurant and views of Egmont Key and the Sunshine Skyway Bridge.

3. The Anna Maria City Pier at 100 Bay Blvd. in Anna Maria was built in 1911 as a dock for excursion boats from Tampa. It's now a restaurant and fishing spot with views of Egmont Key and the Sunshine Skyway Bridge.

4. Bayfront Park on North Bay Boulevard in between the two piers features a playground and picnic tables.

5. The Anna Maria Island Historical Society Museum at 402 Pine Ave. features exhibits of Island life, the Belle



Haven Cottage, formerly attached to the Anna Maria City Pier and the Old City Jail, built in 1927.

6. The Island Players at 10009 Gulf Drive N., founded in 1948, was once a community center and now stages dramatic and musical productions.

## Holmes Beach

7. Manatee County Public Beach at Manatee Avenue and Gulf Drive has indoor and outdoor dining areas, a gift shop, restroom facilities with showers, lifeguards and beach equipment rentals.

## Bradenton Beach

8. Historic Bridge Street was once connected to the mainland by the old Cortez Bridge, now the Bridge Street Pier, which features an indoor/outdoor restaurant with dockage.

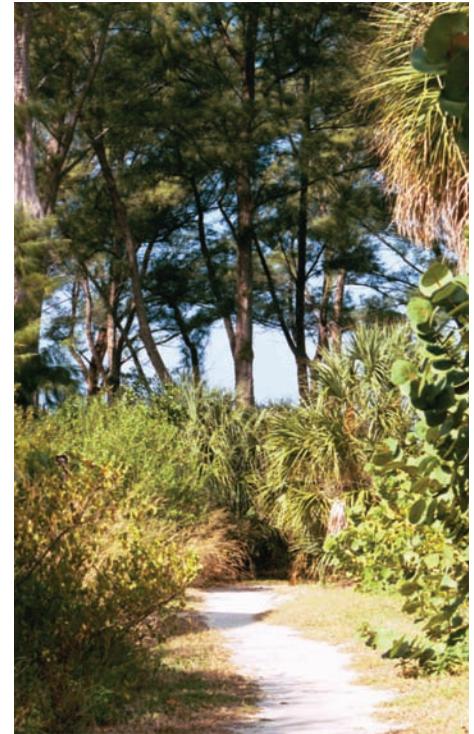
9. Coquina Beach on the southern end of Anna Maria Island on the Gulf of Mexico has lifeguards, picnic tables and covered pavilions, grills, shaded parking, restroom facilities with showers and a concession stand with outdoor dining.

10. Coquina Baywalk at Leffis Key, across Gulf Drive from Coquina Beach, is a 30-acre waterfront park featuring shell hiking paths, mangrove-shaded boardwalks and scenic overlooks on Sarasota Bay. Coquina Bayside Park to the south has a boat ramp and restroom facilities.



SUN PHOTOS/CINDY LANE

Above, a Heritage Trail marker; at right, the path to the beach at Bean Point in Anna Maria; and, below, the Rod and Reel Pier in Anna Maria.



SUN PHOTO/CINDY LANE

Above, Bayfront Park on North Bay Boulevard in Anna Maria and, at right, Belle Haven Cottage at the Island historical complex on Pine Avenue in Anna Maria.

