

## News, Apps, Deals, and Gear from New England and Beyond

## HERE

## 'MOMMIE QUEEREST' IN MAINE

To celebrate the 30th anniversary of the cult classic film "Mommie Dearest," the Camden Harbour Inn in Maine presents the comedy "Mommie Queerest," Nov. 2 only, at the Camden Opera House (\$25). Jamie Morris's award-winning play tells the story of Joan Crawford and her rocky relationship with her adopted daughter, Christina, with a twist: What if Crawford had really been a man? Ticket holders meet the cast at an after-party with complimentary hors d'oeuvres at the inn's restaurant, Natalie's. Pre-show dinner package (\$67) includes a three-course meal and reserved orchestra seats. Two-night accommodation package includes dinner and theater tickets the night of the show, a five-course tasting menu on the second night, and breakfast daily (\$333 per person). *Theater tickets: 207-236-7963, www.camdenoperahouse.com. Packages: 207-236-7008. www.nataliesrestaurant.com*

## FREE EVENTS FOR VETERANS DAY

In honor of Veterans Day, the Massachusetts Office of Travel and Tourism has compiled a list of free events for service members, their families, and citizens alike. The National Park Service is offering free admission to historic sites during the holiday weekend, including Minute Man National Historical Park, the Salem Maritime National Historic Site, and more. Battleship Cove and Fall River Marine Museum are also pitching in, offering all active duty, retired, and reserve military personnel the opportunity to tour the largest collection of preserved US Navy ships in the world at no cost. Boston Duck Tours is offering its own deal, Nov. 8-12; veterans and their family members can hop on a tour for free. 800-227-MASS, [www.massvacation.com/blog](http://www.massvacation.com/blog)

## THERE

## FREE STAYS FOR THE MILITARY

More good news for veterans: Many inns and B&Bs throughout the United States are offering active and retired military (and a guest) a complimentary stay on Nov. 11, Veterans Day. Rooms at participating properties are offered on a space available basis, and can be seen (though not booked) through the website BetterWaytoStay. Offers are updated daily and may be sorted by state and province. Make arrangements for your free stay by contacting the inn or B&B directly by phone or e-mail. [www.betterwaytostay.com/current-promotions/bbs-for-vets/](http://www.betterwaytostay.com/current-promotions/bbs-for-vets/)



## SHORTS REQUIRED FOR SARASOTA, FLA., SWEEPSTAKES

Enter the "Sarasota in Shorts" sweepstakes for a chance to win a trip to Florida. Through Dec. 5, travelers have two opportunities to score round-trip travel packages: either by sharing an Instagram photo that depicts their ideal vacation in shorts using the hashtag #SarasotaInShorts, or by submitting their favorite style by means of an online sweepstakes form. One winner in each category receives two round-trip tickets to Sarasota Bradenton International Airport (SRQ) from any airport served by JetBlue Airways, two nights at Helmsley Sandcastle Hotel or Hotel Indigo Sarasota, and gift certificates to local attractions. 800-522-9799, [www.sarasotainshorts.com/sweepstakes](http://www.sarasotainshorts.com/sweepstakes)

## APP FOR HOLLYWOOD HOT SPOTS

Tour homes of classic movie stars and other famous Hollywood hot spots with the Turner Classic Movies Hollywood Tour app. Visit 100 destinations, including palatial mansions, movie studios, celebrity hangouts, and legendary film locales. The app offers extensive background information, history, videos, photos, and more for each place. Use the geo-location services to find homes of such stars as Gene Kelly, Kirk Douglas, and Bette Davis, as well as famous landmarks like Schwab's Pharmacy, The Hollywood Bowl, Grauman's Chinese Theatre, and the Hollywood Forever Cemetery. Available for iPhone, iPod Touch, and iPad, \$2.99. [www.tcm.com/mobile](http://www.tcm.com/mobile)

## EVERYWHERE



## A CADDY FOR YOUR WATER

Love your water bottle but hate to cart it around? The Go Caddy keeps a bottle by your side while offering hands-free travel for other activities. Each bag holds bottle sizes up to 1.5 liters, and includes a cooler sleeve. The 54-inch extra-long adjustable 1-inch-wide strap allows you to wear it over your shoulder or sling style. Store valuables in the front pocket. An elastic back pouch is roomy enough for a cellphone, camera, map, or glasses. Packs flat, \$19.99. 727-834-8944, [www.thegocaddy.com](http://www.thegocaddy.com)

## RIDEJOY LAUNCHES MOBILE APP

Ridejoy is a community-driven online marketplace for sharing rides, allowing fuel-conscious travelers a way to split the cost of a road trip while filling their cars' empty seats with friendly people. With the recent launch of the Ridejoy mobile app, getting from point A to point B just got a whole lot easier. How does it work? With 3,000 active rides listed at any time, you can post an offer or request, view other users' references and bios before booking a ride, and activate a one-click autopilot feature that does the trip planning for you. Free. [www.ridejoy.com](http://www.ridejoy.com)

NECEE REGIS

## Caladesi stays a Gulf Coast isle au naturel

By Diane Bair and Pamela Wright  
GLOBE CORRESPONDENTS

CALADESI ISLAND, Fla. — "I bet not 10 percent of our visitors get out to this side of the island," said Peter Krulder, Caladesi Island State Park manager. We were hiking a trail through coastal dunes and groves of ancient live oaks, leading into an upland slash pine forest. A gaggle of pink-hued roseate spoonbills and snowy white egrets were feeding in the nearby tidal flats; schools of mullet flip-flopped on the surface of the murky water; hawks, herons, and ospreys flew overhead. We stopped short when we heard something move, and then spotted a pair of armadillos wrestling in the bush. "This is my favorite place in the world," Krulder said with a sweep of his hand. "This is where I come to escape."

Caladesi Island State Park, a delightfully undeveloped barrier island, is one of the few completely natural islands remaining along Florida's Gulf Coast. Measuring 3 miles long and up to a half-mile wide, the sun-drenched island, within the protected waters of St. Joseph Sound, boasts secluded mangrove forests, sea grass beds, tidal flats, windswept dunes, and one of the top-ranked beaches in the country. (So says Dr. Beach, Stephen Leatherman, who named Caladesi the number one beach in America in 2008.) It's hard to believe that this still-wild gem (some call it Sanibel without the condos, hotels, and restaurants) is minutes from the charming center of Dunedin (pronounced duhn-EE-d'n) and about a 25-mile drive from bustling Tampa.

We took the 20-minute ferry ride to the island, crossing the sound, and following a mangrove-bordered canal to the island marina. Most people jump off the ferry and beat a quick path to the beach. We decided to explore the interior of the island first, heading to the 2½-mile nature trail, and the maze of inland paths, with Krulder as our guide. The island, he said, was once home to the Calusa, Timucuan, and To-



PAMELA WRIGHT FOR THE BOSTON GLOBE

On Caladesi Island, a path to its pristine beach, once rated the best in the country.

bagabo tribes. An ancient burial mound and early implements made from shells have been discovered here, dating some 4,000 years.

During the late 1800s, homesteader Henry Scharrer and his daughter Myrtle lived on the island, and remnants of their home and farms remain. Myrtle, at 87, wrote about her life on Caladesi in the book "Yesteryear I Lived in Paradise," and members of the Scharrer family still visit the island from time to time. Though several developers have tried to get their hands on Caladesi, public sentiment and some hard-working locals have fought to preserve it.

As we walked along the sandy path, lined with sabal palms and bushy saw palmettos, we spotted raccoon tracks and scat, and caught a glimpse of a gopher tortoise as it scampered across the trail and into the brush. Gopher tortoises are plentiful on the island, so are snakes. "We have a lot of Eastern diamondback rattlers," Krulder said. "But, don't worry, they're pretty shy."

We passed prickly pear cac-

bagabo plants, goldenrod, and American beautyberry, once used to color women's cheeks, and stopped by a tidal pond filled with snowy egrets and roseate spoonbills. The island provides important habitat for migrating songbirds, too. "In spring, thousands of songbirds stop on the island," Krulder said. "In the fall, the tidal creeks are loaded with wading birds." Loggerhead and green sea turtles use the beach for nesting.

We veered right on the trail, skirting a picturesque mangrove creek, and crossed the bridge over Cat's Eye Pond. Ahead we caught our first glimpse of the award-winning beach: a wide swath of white sand and thick shell beds, lined with dunes and native plants — and not a building or concession stand in sight. The beach stretches undisturbed for 3 miles; birds, including oystercatchers, black skimmers, and terns outnumber people by far. We resisted plopping down in the soft, sun-warmed sand, and instead followed Krulder back to the nature trail, and into a forest of towering slash pines, some 200 years old. "There was

no cutting on Caladesi," Krulder explained, "this is one of the few remaining virgin stands of slash pine in this area." Later, we entered a hardwood forest, home to bald eagles, osprey, and great blue herons.

And then, we ran out of time. Visitors are only allowed to stay on the island for up to four hours, and are assigned an allotted time for the return ferry. It turned out to be a blessing in disguise, as we now had time to check out the lovely town of Dunedin, filled with locally-owned shops, restaurants, scenic parks, and a waterfront boardwalk. We grabbed a table on the deck at Olde Bay Cafe, overlooking the Dunedin Marina, and ordered fresh-caught fish tacos as we watched boats come and go. We walked a portion of the Pinellas Trail, and checked out a handful of interesting shops, including the Stirling Art Studios & Gallery, showcasing the work of a dozen or so local artists.

The next day, we returned to the island. This time, we rented kayaks at the island marina to explore the 3-mile-long water trail. Leaving the marina, we

## If you go . . .

**Caladesi Island State Park**  
1 Causeway Boulevard  
Dunedin, Fla.  
727-469-5918  
[www.floridastateparks.org/caladesiisland](http://www.floridastateparks.org/caladesiisland)  
Open 8 a.m. to sunset. There is a marina with kayak rentals, snack bar, rest rooms, showers, picnic areas with grills, and an interpretive nature trail. Entrance fee to Honeymoon Island State Park, where you catch the island ferry, is \$8 per vehicle.  
**Caladesi Island Ferry**  
Departs from Honeymoon Island State Park  
End of State Road 586  
727-734-1501  
[www.caladesiferry.org](http://www.caladesiferry.org)  
Adults \$14, children 6-12 \$7.  
**Where to stay**  
**Sandpearl Resort**  
500 Mandalay Ave.  
Clearwater Beach  
800-724-1778  
[www.sandpearl.com](http://www.sandpearl.com)  
One of the poshest places to stay on the Gulf Coast and a short drive to the Caladesi Island ferry, this oceanfront resort boasts an art-filled lobby, full-service spa, and top-notch service, \$199-\$359.  
**Meranova Guest Inn**  
458 Virginia Lane, Dunedin  
727-733-9248  
[www.meranovaguestinn.com](http://www.meranovaguestinn.com)  
This former 1907 boardinghouse, surrounded by gardens and within walking distance of Dunedin Main Street shops and restaurants, has been refurbished into 11 spacious suites, \$195-\$215.

## Where to eat

**Olde Bay Cafe**  
51 Main St., Dunedin  
727-733-2542  
[www.oldebaycafe.com](http://www.oldebaycafe.com)  
Flapping fresh fish, decent prices (\$5-\$13), and a waterfront view make this fish shack and raw bar a local favorite.  
**The Living Room on Main**  
487 Main St., Dunedin  
727-736-5202  
[www.thelivingroomonmain.com](http://www.thelivingroomonmain.com)  
More uptown than flip-flop Florida, this Euro-style tapas bar and restaurant has an extensive array of small plates, like the marbled potatoes au gratin with Gorgonzola and smoked gouda (\$7), and sesame shrimp tempura (\$8).

## Where to drink

**Dunedin Brewery**  
937 Douglas Ave., Dunedin  
727-736-0606  
[www.dunedinbrewery.com](http://www.dunedinbrewery.com)  
Florida's oldest microbrewery has a convivial atmosphere, decent pub grub (tacos, wraps, and burgers, \$7.50-\$9), and live entertainment most nights of the week.

**What to do**  
**Ranger Walks and Talks**  
Breakfast with a ranger is offered one Sunday each month during the winter, including a free continental breakfast and interpretive talk. Free guided trail walks and beach walks are offered on weekends during the winter. See park website (above) for schedule and times.

paddled inland into narrow, dark, and shallow tunnels. These manmade creeks and ponds were dug in the 1960s to help control mosquito breeding. We can tell you, it didn't work. We swatted buzzing, biting bugs and kept alert for snakes on the banks, as we slowly made our way, sometimes pulling and pushing the kayaks through the skinny mangrove waterways. It was an eerie trip inland, before break-

ing out into open water near the east and south end of the island. We returned the kayaks a couple of hours later, and ended the day right where we wanted to be: checking out why the beach on Caladesi was ranked the best in America. We wouldn't argue.

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