

## You are My Sunshine!

FLORIDA SPOTS WE LOVE  
bsp staff



area convention & visitors bureau

### What gets you through the winter?

Flannel PJ's, comfort food, tea and Chi?

Or if you're lucky, the thought of some mid-winter sunshine can "make you happy when skies are gray."

Yes, Florida is what gets so many New Englanders through.

bsp has compiled some of our favorite Florida spots (beyond the family Orlando trip) for that warm getaway with your children, a weekend away with your significant other or even just your girlfriends.

All of our highlighted destinations are on Florida's Gulf Coast. No theme parks this trip (they have their time and place for sure), but for now, just sugary-white beaches, warm water and a Caribbean feel.

### Bradenton Beach

located on Anna Maria Island beautiful, quiet, artsy, friendly

Just a 30-minute ride from the Sarasota Airport, and you'll find yourself in "Manatee Country," home of the gentle Floridian sea cow and six of the prettiest sugar-white beaches around. You'll find no high rises here, which is indicative of the slow-paced vibe of the Anna Maria area. In fact, it's so laid back that everything seems to close at 10 p.m. (no spring breakers here). Just spectacular beaches, good food and plenty of rest. Ah, island time!

Where we stayed:

**BridgeWalk**, a family-friendly resort located on Historic Bridge St., (the beach is across the street). Stroll down Bridge St. and browse the boutiques and funky shops. BridgeWalk offers studios, suites and one or two-bedroom apartments with complimentary continental breakfast (some with views of the Gulf of Mexico and the pool). [silverresorts.com](#). For your convenience, there is free parking at all beaches and a free island-wide trolley service.



villageofthearts.com

Where we ate: **The Sun House Restaurant and Bar (BridgeWalk)**: A fun spot to watch the sunset from every seat in and out of the house. One patron rings the gong precisely as the sun goes down every night, and diners sing "You are my Sunshine." The food is very good, a fusion of Floridian and Caribbean. [thesunhouserestaurant.com](#).

**Beach Bistro (Holmes Beach)**: A special treat if you want a romantic night out without the kids (but children are welcome). The staff is detail-oriented, right down to caring for each rose petal on your table's long-stemmed rose. Impressive service, atmosphere and food. [beachbistro.com](#).

**Ginny & Jane E's at the Old IGA (Anna Maria)**: A truly unique place to eat breakfast or lunch as everything is for sale, even the chair you sit on! Think local artwork, jewelry, crafts, antiques and furnishings... [annamariacafe.com](#).

**The Sandbar Restaurant (Anna Maria)**: Eat inside, outside on the deck or even right in the sand while you watch the sunset and listen to local live music. [sandbar-restaurant.com](#).

**Mattison's Riverside (Bradenton Mainland)**: Enjoy a fabulous lunch or dinner on the newly renovated deck overlooking the river in this gorgeous restaurant. Features live nightly music. Incredible! [mattisons.com](#).

**Gulf Drive Cafe (right on Bradenton Beach)**: This beachy, casual cafe is hopping for breakfast, lunch and dinner. Sit on an open-air porch overlooking the Gulf as a school of dolphins swim by. [gulfdrivetiki.com](#).

**Ristorante Ortygia (Bradenton Mainland)**: Set in a charming house surrounded by bungalows, this eclectic restaurant is filled with original artwork and fun mismatched furniture. The décor complements the unique fusion food (a mix of Sicilian and French). Warm and friendly staff! [ortygiarestaurant.com](#).

What we did:

**Acqua Full-Service Chic Salon and Spa**: Start your vacation with your best foot forward in downtown Holmes Beach with a Caribbean-style pedicure. You can even order a salad to enjoy while having your treatment. [acquaaveda.com](#).

**South Florida Museum**: Visit the largest natural and cultural history museum on Florida's Gulf Coast featuring a state-of-the-art planetarium, The Parker Manatee Aquarium (which houses the oldest manatee in captivity, 62-year-old, Snooty), a hands-on activity center and evolving exhibits. Great for families! [southfloridamuseum.org](#).

**Village of the Arts**: The Gulf Coast's largest arts district boasts over 35 galleries where artists live and work in their bungalow-style homes. Feel a warm sense of community as well as a little taste of the bohemian lifestyle here as you take a fabulous art tour filled with interesting personalities and art as well as an array of book shops, cafés and spas. [villageofthearts.com](#).

What also looks fun:



horse surfing beachhorses.com

For exciting updates, free late-breaking stuff for parents and families, and tons of practical and fun information, join us on Facebook!

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Happy kids. Happy parents. Good food.

Now that's a happy meal.



### A CHRISTMAS JOURNEY

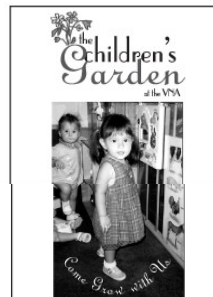


December 11, 12, 18 and 19  
12-30, 1-30, 2-30 p.m.

Revisit Chris Van Allsburg's classic, *The Polar Express*, comes to life in this fun holiday event for children. Enjoy a special storyline, join the Coastline crew for a fun, singing trip around the Empire State. Meet and spend some personal time with Santa Claus. Warm up with hot cocoa and cookies and sit the Christmas songs. Tickets at [www.vna.org](#) or call 508-751-6985. \$8 per person plus museum admission. \$2. Each ticket member.

### SCHOOL VACATION WEEK

December 28 - 31. Put your child to rest and come visit the Coastline crew for a fun, singing trip around the Empire State. Meet and spend some personal time with Santa Claus. Warm up with hot cocoa and cookies and sit the Christmas songs. Tickets at [www.vna.org](#) or call 508-751-6985. \$8 per person plus museum admission. \$2. Each ticket member.



Limited Openings

### CHILD CARE FOR INFANTS THROUGH PRESCHOOL

- Certified, trained staff provide quality, loving care for children in a bright, safe, comfortable facility located in the VNA Care Network building
- Active "hands-on" learning
- Developmental philosophy
- Open year-round, Monday-Friday from 7:30 a.m. to 6 p.m.

Flexible Scheduling to Accommodate your needs.

To arrange a tour, call Pat Hare at 508-751-6985 120 Thomas St., Worcester Near downtown, I-290 and St. Vincent Hospital Providing Excellent care for ALL children since 1989 Licensed by the Department of Early Education and Care



**Horse Surfing:** Take a bareback horseback riding tour in Palma Sola Bay in Bradenton where the horse actually swims in the water! Children as young as 3 years old with no prior riding experience can even try. [beachhorses.com](http://beachhorses.com).

**Biking:** Everyone in the family can tour the island on rented bikes. Beach Bums also offers all kinds of baby equipment that you can rent to use during your stay. [beachbumsami.com](http://beachbumsami.com).

#### St. Pete Beach,

St. Petersburg, Florida

Located just 30 minutes from Tampa, the island of St. Pete Beach has true island ambiance. It's a great place to "park it and relax" or rent a car and beach hop up and down the coast.

**Where we stayed:** TradeWinds Island Resort, a family-friendly resort right on a beautiful, white-sand beach. Families will love the accommodations with five heated pools, 11 restaurants, cushioned beach cabanas, paddleboats to use around the hotel's meandering waterway, a Kids' KONK Club and so much more! Everything is just footsteps away from your room. [tradewindsresort.com](http://tradewindsresort.com).

**Where we ate:** At the TradeWinds' restaurants and in our suite. Excellent variety and quality!

**What we did:** Took a memorable excursion on Captain Memo's Pirate Cruise, a blast for adults without kids as well as for families filled with music, games, drinks, sunsets and more! [captainmemo.com](http://captainmemo.com).

Plus we rented a giant water tricycle at the resort and rode the resort's giant inflatable slide, the Hippo (it's a blast!). Kids can ride all day (with a pass) while adults lounge within eye's view.

**What we'd like to do:** Take a short trolley ride to Downtown St. Petersburg and explore the museums including the world-renowned Salvador Dali museum, the Florida International Museum – a Smithsonian Institution, the Museum of Fine Arts, the Museum of History and the Florida Holocaust Museum, all within walking distance of each other. Also if you really want to take in one theme park, you could take an excursion to Tampa's Busch Gardens.