

Sanibel Island Vacation: Perfection

You're planning the vacation of your dreams. You've found the perfect spot: a little barrier island off the southwest coast of Florida, where you can explore the white sand beaches, gather seashells and see an incredible array of wildlife in their natural habitat.

Your Sanibel Island vacation promises all of this, and so much more. Of course, you want everything to be perfect. The following tips will help you prepare for the things you need, and create the vacation you've always wanted:

What to Pack

Unlike many of the world's premier vacation spots, you don't need to pack three changes of clothes for each day, or bring along a ton of gear. Sanibel is a relaxing place, so make your personal comfort your first priority.

Binoculars: Bringing along a good pair of binoculars should be a prerequisite for anyone wishing to take a Sanibel Island vacation. It's the best way to get up close and personal with the shockingly abundant natural wildlife. Keep binoculars handy while exploring the country or relaxing on the beach, and you'll never miss out on the animals or birds that will most certainly cross your path. Sanibel's sister island, Captiva, is also blessed with exquisite natural wildlife.

Comfy Cotton: The climate on Sanibel Island is very much tropical, so be sure to dress accordingly. Leave the polyester at home, and pack cotton shorts, pants, tops and dresses. Cotton will help you to keep your cool on your Sanibel Island vacation.

Sunblock: The combination of sun and sand almost guarantees sunburn for exposed skin. Even on cloudy days, or under a sunshade, you must cover up with a good SPF sunscreen or sunblock. Long-sleeved shirts are also suggested for additional protection from the sun, particularly if you plan on taking a boat excursion. If you plan on visiting in autumn, you'll also want to pack a windbreaker or light sweater to cover up while at sea.

Accessories: Nothing fancy is required on Sanibel Island. Sandals are the footwear of choice for locals and visitors alike, and there are many shops that sell sandals and flip-flops. Be sure to pack a cap or visor to keep your head cool and help shield your eyes. Speaking of eyes, you must bring polarized sunglasses. This can make or break your entire Sanibel Island vacation. There is so much to see, that you don't want to risk missing anything because you're too busy squinting against the sun. Water activities, sightseeing, shelling and fishing are all much more fun when you can comfortably see. Again, you can always pick up a pair of sunglasses at a local shop if you forget yours at home.

What to Wear

If you need a relaxing vacation, Sanibel Island will be perfect for you. The atmosphere is casual, and the dress code relaxed. Men can wear jackets for elegant dinners, but there are no restaurants on the island that require a jacket. A nice shirt paired with pants or shorts is all that's needed. Of course, when you're on your dream vacation you don't want to be so casual that you appear sloppy. Leave the oversized tank tops in your hotel room, and don't go to the grocery store or stroll down Periwinkle Way in your bathing suit. The idea is to look casual, not comical.

Shelling

A favorite vacation activity of adults and kids is searching for seashells along the gorgeous Sanibel Island coastline. If you plan on doing a little shelling on Sanibel, remember that beautiful shells don't always wash up to shore. To find some real tropical treasures, go out in low tide in knee-deep water. Walk slowly, and carry a bag for your treasures. The most important rule of shelling is that you must never take a living creature from the ocean. Live shells, sand dollars, sea urchins and starfish must be left in their natural habitat. On Sanibel Island, removing living sea creatures is illegal and carries a hefty fine. Make sure that the shells you pick up are empty, before you put them in your treasure chest.

It takes relatively little planning, light packing and virtually no effort to plan the perfect Sanibel Island vacation. Just being there is enough to call it the vacation of your dreams.