



ROMANCE COMES NATURALLY IN CHARLOTTE HARBOR & THE GULF ISLANDS

Sunset Kayaking, Secluded Beaches, Candlelight Dining add up to a Perfect Lovers' Getaway

CHARLOTTE HARBOR & THE GULF ISLANDS, Fla. – Nature-lovers and other romantics who want to escape the crowds will fall in love with this secluded coastal hideaway halfway between Sarasota and Fort Myers on the Southwest Florida Gulf coast. Charlotte Harbor & the Gulf Islands offers the perfect balance of charming coastal communities and undeveloped vistas where 84 percent of the shoreline is protected preserve and nature reigns supreme.

Whether you enjoy active or passive pursuits, here are a sampling of five ways to celebrate romance in Charlotte Harbor & the Gulf Islands:

Sail away together

Named to *SAIL* magazine's "10 Greatest Places to Sail in the U.S.," the area offers regattas, sailing charters and schools. <http://bit.ly/charlotteharbortravelssail>. Spend the day sailing on Charlotte Harbor and discover a new romantic pastime together. Yachting Vacations offers sailing classes, including how to handle a 35' yacht. Dolphins and seabirds often come along for the ride. www.yachtingvacations.com.

Discover your own beach

At Don Pedro Island State Park, discover a plethora of shells along a mile-long stretch of almost-deserted sandy beach on this beautiful barrier island. Meander among a series of hiking trails and look for endangered species such as, gopher tortoises, bald eagles, and American oystercatchers as well as native plants. Stage a romantic picnic for two in the covered pavilion. Accessible only by boat; contact www.grandetours.com, or go by private watercraft. For more information on Don Pedro Island, visit www.floridastateparks.org/donpedroisland.

Kindle romance via kayak

Some of Florida's most scenic waterways are located in this eco-centered paradise, with opportunities to spot an amazing variety of birds and often, manatee or dolphin. O-Sea-D Aquatic Adventures www.oseadkayaking.com offers guided kayak trips through mangrove tunnels, ending with a visit to the Peace River Wildlife Center, a rehabilitation sanctuary. The Center receives a donation of 20 percent of the price. Grande Tours www.grandetours.com and It's Time Kayak & Canoe www.itstimekayakandcanoe.com also offer kayaking excursions ideal for a romantic day. Couples looking to add a splash to an intimate wedding or a vow renewal can now paddle off to beachy bliss with a new "Kayak Weddings" package offered by Phoenix Rising Kayak Tours. www.prkayak.com

Find art that gladdens the heart

Wander historic Punta Gorda's brick-laid streets lined with majestic palms. One-of-a-kind boutiques and classic "key west" style Florida homes add to the charm in this town dotted with art galleries. The Visual Arts Center www.visualartcenter.org features an extensive gallery and gift shop. The Sea Grape Artists Gallery www.seagrapegallery.com, a 25 member co-operative, offers original award-winning artwork in every medium, including fiber art, basketry, glass, jewelry, and more. Artisans' Atelier in Herald Court Center is a new gallery where artists create, display and sell their works in cubicles arranged for folks to visit and find something special. In

Englewood, the galleries are clustered around Dearborn Street and romantic Olde Englewood Village.

Dine by candlelight

For waterfront dining, Portofino's on the Peace River in Port Charlotte offers scrumptious seafood and Italian fare. Enjoy views from the deck or two inside dining rooms. For casual dining, head to Englewood and try either Gulf View Grill www.thegulfviewgrill.com, which has the added benefit of romantic waterfront sunsets, or Farlow's on the Water, www.farlowsonthewater.com where Caribbean and Southern cuisine delightfully coexist on the menu. Chef Jeanie Roland of Punta Gorda's The Perfect Caper, has been nominated multiple times for a prestigious James Beard Foundation "Best Chef in the South" award, and earned two Golden Spoon awards from *Florida Trend* magazine. Palate-pleasing dishes fusing European flavor with Asian accents are on the menu. www.theperfectcaper.com The Captain's Table at Fishermen's village also ensures a romantic experience, with its waterfront views of Charlotte Harbor, low lighting and delicious steak and seafood options. www.thecaptainstable.com Stroll through the Fishermen's Village boutiques, find a one-of-a-kind keepsake, and take a sunset cruise. www.fishville.com

Romantic Accommodations and Packages

From luxurious retreats to beachfront resorts, villas and familiar chain hotels, the area offers accommodations for every taste and budget. The website, www.CharlotteHarborTravel.com contains a complete listing of accommodations, activities, and restaurants. Below is just one example of special romance packages available:

On a barrier island hideaway accessible only by ferry is **Palm Island Resort**, where time stands still and crowds give way to solitude. Facilities can accommodate destination weddings for up to 120 or a tented event for up to 450. This island location and lush tropical flora and fauna offer a number of options for the ceremony. Choose from a casual beach wedding or a more traditional ceremony amid island palms and lush greenery, poolside under a pavilion or within the decorated clubhouse. Pristine beaches await, offering spectacular shelling and peaceful relaxation. Couples Romance Weekend Package includes:

- Deluxe Villa Accommodations
- Golf Cart Rental During Your Stay
- Chilled Lobster & Seafood Picnic on the Beach with a Bottle of Wine
- Dinner at Leverock's Restaurant
- Beautiful Flower Arrangement in villa upon arrival
- Car Ferry To/From Palm Island and the Mainland
- Water Taxi To/From Palm Island and Leverock's Restaurant
- Complimentary Local and Long Distance Telephone

Please visit www.palmisland.com or call 800-824-5412 for Couples Romance package pricing.

Weddings

With over 20 years experience **Extraordinary Eventz** can plan a wedding, destination wedding, rehearsal, shower, anniversary or any other kind of romance-inspired event. A variety of wedding packages are available inclusive of: professional wedding consultation and coordination, personalized wedding ceremony, filing of the marriage license, photography, music, flowers, venue search and selection, reception menu, wedding cake, favors and more. For your memorable event visit www.ExtraordinaryEventz.com or call (239) 282-9526.

About Charlotte Harbor & the Gulf Islands

Located halfway between Tampa and Naples on the Southwest Florida Gulf coast, Charlotte Harbor & the Gulf Islands is a charming collection of nine coastal communities surrounding the state's second largest harbor. Florida's premier year-round eco-tourism destination, Charlotte

Harbor & the Gulf Islands offers a pristine unspoiled beauty that has served as the backdrop for seven major feature films as well as countless memorable vacations. A haven for outdoor enthusiasts, Charlotte Harbor & the Gulf Islands has been named to *SAIL* magazine's "10 Greatest Places to Sail in the United States," ranked by *Golf Digest* as "Third Best Place to Live and Play Golf in America," and rated by *MONEY* magazine as one of the "Best Places to Live in the South." The city of Punta Gorda was named in one of "Top Ten Places to Retire Healthy" by U.S. News & World Report. Englewood was named as #2 of the Top Ten emerging travel destinations in the U.S. by TripAdvisor.com.

For information about area events, activities and attractions, contact the Charlotte Harbor Visitor & Convention Bureau, 18500 Murdock Circle, Suite B104, Port Charlotte, FL 33948; 941-743-1900, or call toll free at 1-800-652-6090 for a free Visitor's Guide; or visit the Web site at www.CharlotteHarborTravel.com.

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