



COURTESY PHOTO / U.S. FISH &amp; WILDLIFE SERVICE

A refuge ranger demonstrates the Scat Trail to visiting students at "Ding" Darling.

## TRAILS

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### Best for beach-lovers: Lighthouse Park Trail

Where: Take Periwinkle Way to the island's easternmost point, where there's paid and resident sticker parking.

Length/Difficulty: Short and easy

Accessibility: By foot, bike and wheelchair

Facilities: Beach access, historic structures, fishing pier, picnic area, restrooms

What you can see: This is a hotspot for birding, particularly during migration fall-outs. The sand and boardwalk path takes you from bayside, where you can fish off the pier and enjoy a view of the causeway, to gulfside at Point Ybel, one of the island's most dramatic beaches. When the wind is right, snap photos of kite-surfers flying past the lighthouse.

Info: City of Sanibel, 472-6397 or [www.mysanibel.com](http://www.mysanibel.com)

### Best for families: Indigo Trail

Where: "Ding" Darling Refuge, MM 2 on Sanibel-Captiva Road. Park for free at the Visitor & Education Center. Admission is \$1 per hiker or cyclist older than age 15.

Length/Difficulty: 2 miles one way, moderate

Accessibility: By foot, bike (walk bikes on boardwalks) and wheelchair

Facilities: Benches, interpretive boardwalk, two-story overlook, pavilion, restrooms

What you can see: The trail begins at the parking lot and runs adjacent to the Visitor & Education Center. The first section you can hike for free through mangrove forest and other identified botanicals. After the fee booth, the path passes freshwater habitat, home to river otters, shorebirds and alligators. Wildlife Education Boardwalk intersects with the path 3/10 mile from the trailhead. Here, gators, bird nests and

other wildlife sightings are common. Its Scat Trail teaches about animals' diets via sculpture exhibits of their scat. Wildlife tracks are etched into the short boardwalk, which leads to the overlook. The natural (sand and grass) trail continues to the refuge's Cross Dike and its covered education pavilion and restrooms. It ends at Wildlife Drive, which you can opt to take for your return to the Visitor & Education Center.

Info: 472-1100, [fws.gov/dingdarling](http://fws.gov/dingdarling)

### Best for dry season: Pond Apple Trail

Where: Trailhead starts behind the Sanibel-Captiva Chamber of Commerce on Causeway Boulevard, where you can park for free.

Length/Difficulty: 1.6 mile loop that connects with SCCF's Shipley Trail (see below). Moderate to difficult (rutty, often muddy)

Accessibility: By foot and bike

Facilities: Signage, picnic bench and tiki, boardwalk

What you can see: The unpaved trail crosses Bailey Road to plunge you into dense hardwood forest and wetlands. In summer, the path can get muddy and even covered in water at spots. At its highest elevation, the trail circles a retention pond where shorebirds are often plentiful and alligators sometimes visible.

Info: City of Sanibel, 472-6397, [www.mysanibel.com](http://www.mysanibel.com)

### Best for history: Shipley Trail

Where: Park at Roadside Park on Periwinkle Way and walk east to trailhead gate.

Length/Difficulty: Short and easy trail that connects to the city's Pond Apple Trail (see above)

Accessibility: By foot, bike and wheelchair

Facilities: Bailey Family Homestead and pond, native nursery, signage kiosk, boardwalk

What you can see: This friendly, crushed-shell trail takes you through old-growth upland forest that SCCF maintains in its natural state, and behind the historic homestead with



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Left: The iconic Bailey windmill can be seen along the wide, shell-paved Shipley Trail. Top center: The entrance to Periwinkle Preserve Trail lies right off the Periwinkle Way shared-use path. Bottom center: A tiki shelter, signage and wetlands are among the features of Pond Apple Trail. Right: The Wildlife Education Boardwalk spurs off Indigo Trail at "Ding" Darling.

## CUISINE

### Plant-based: Learning and eating vegetarian and vegan on the islands

BY CHELLE KOSTER WALTON

Florida Weekly Correspondent

Bacon made out of coconut. Flatbread sans gluten. Creamless crème brûlée. And a sweet potato stew whose roots reach as far as West Africa. When Chef Jarred Harris teaches vegetarian cooking, he transcends the boundaries of traditional cuisine and geography. "Simply Vegetarian" is one of a number of cooking classes and demonstrations Chef Harris conducts for students of all ages at the Culinary Education Center of Sanibel at The Community House.

As concern over the impact of livestock farming on the planet grows, vegan and vegetarian diets become about much more than personal health and spiritual belief systems. The rising cost of meat adds to the movement away from carnivore diets, fueled by fears and frets in the past about imported meat, hormones and grain feed.

"I can tell the cow was happy by the marbling," Chef Harris told our recent hands-on luncheon class of six. (In season, classes fill with up to 18 or more attendees.) He admits to being a meat-lover — especially grass-fed beef and the chickens he raises in his yard — but has grown his vegetarian repertoire due to family members who are vegetarian and gluten-intolerant. He himself cannot tolerate lactose.

As he introduced our day's menu,

CHELLE KOSTER WALTON / FLORIDA WEEKLY  
Chef Jarred Harris demonstrates technique.

the chef advocated for grass-fed beef, organic products and gardening. "I just try and encourage everyone to just grow things," he said. "People who garden tend to eat better."

### Hands-on and simmering

After assessing our familiarity with the kitchen, he paired us up and assigned us kitchen work stations. We started with dessert, Coconut Ginger Crème Brûlée,

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its iconic windmill. Every Wednesday at 8:30 a.m. through September, SCCF presents its Bailey Homestead: Making the Land Work tour in and around the house (\$5 for non-members).

Info: 472-2329, [www.sccf.org](http://www.sccf.org)

### Best for prehistory: Calusa Shell Mound Trail

Where: "Ding" Darling Refuge, MM 2 on Sanibel-Captiva Road. Take the 4-mile (one-way) Wildlife Drive (admission \$5 per car) to the trailhead parking lot at about mile 3.5.

Length/Difficulty: 1/3-mile easy loop boardwalk trail

Accessibility: By foot, bike and wheelchair

Facilities: Interpretive kiosk, boardwalk, signage

What you can see: Study the artistic exhibit about Calusa Indian history and lifestyles at the trail's entrance. Among its features, it contains a replicated core sampling of a Calusa shell mound like the one you will see along the trail. Buttonwoods and other hardwood trees create habitat for gopher tortoises, marsh rabbits, rac-

coons and other upland creatures.

Info: 472-1100, [fws.gov/dingdarling](http://fws.gov/dingdarling)

### Best for birds and butterflies: Periwinkle Preserve Trail

Where: Spur trail off the shared-use path on Periwinkle Way, 1/10 mile west of Casa Ybel Road. No trailhead parking is available, so bike or hike in, or park at nearby stores and walk.

Length/Difficulty: .6-mile loop, easy to moderate (some ruts and uneven terrain)

Accessibility: By foot and bike

Facilities: Markers, covered entrance structure, paved and covered bench pavilion

What you can see: This little oasis off Periwinkle Way takes you into migratory bird and butterfly habitat consisting of native shrubbery, cabbage palms, sea grapes, gumbo limbo and other hardwood hammock vegetation. The natural trail (sand, dirt and grass) explores easy-to-reach backwoods where queen butterflies, scarlet tanagers and indigo buntings visit seasonally.

Info: 472-2329, [www.sccf.org](http://www.sccf.org) ■