

# Relocation Guide

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## History Of Sarasota/Bradenton and The Beaches

Native Americans were the first inhabitants of the area that is now Sarasota, Bradenton, and the beaches, including the violent Timucuan tribe. Prehistoric mounds and shell middens can be found along the coastline and throughout the keys. Spanish explorer Hernando de Soto is the reported first European to discover the region; seeking treasure, de Soto landed at Shaw's Point in 1539. Local legend says Sarasota was named after de Soto's daughter Sara.

Josiah Gates became Manatee County's first permanent white settler in 1842. The city of Bradenton was named for sugar planter Dr. Joseph Braden, whose fortlike home served as a refuge for early settlers during Indian attacks. Today's Bradenton was formed in 1943, when the Florida legislature merged the cities of Manatee (incorporated in 1888) and Bradentown (incorporated in 1903). The Manatee River area flourished with sugar plantations, and even the Civil War could not curtail its agricultural benefits; the region began to boom when the railroad arrived in the late 1880s.

In 1885, the Florida Mortgage and Investment Company launched a campaign in Scotland promoting the area to immigrants. Scottish families boarded steamers for Sarasota, only to turn away when they saw the primitive settlement, which lacked homes, stores, or streets. Yet a few stayed, including John Hamilton Gillespie, a Scottish aristocrat, lawyer, and member of the Scottish Queen's Bodyguard. Gillespie built the De Soto Hotel and the first American golf course in Sarasota, and was elected the city's first mayor in 1902. Sarasota became incorporated in 1901.

In the early 20<sup>th</sup> century the region began attracting some of the country's wealthiest citizens, including Bertha Palmer, widow of Chicago developer Potter Palmer; Mrs. Palmer's lush former estates have been restored into today's Historic Spanish Point and Myakka River State Park.

Owen Burns came to Sarasota for its fishing, and stayed

for the rest of his life. Burns dredged the harbor and created new bay fronts with reclaimed soil. His developments, including Burns Court, Burns Square, and the Times Building, helped attract tourism and commercial prosperity.

John Ringling, of Ringling



## Downtown Tampa, Florida

Brothers and Barnum & Bailey Circus fame, settled in the area in the 1920s. He and his wife Mable built their Venetian-style mansion on Sarasota Bay, and established the John & Mable Ringling Museum of Art to house their collection of 17<sup>th</sup>-century Italian and Flemish masters. Ringling used circus elephants to help build the first bridge from the mainland to St. Armands Key, which he then developed as a commercial

and residential center. In 1927, the Circus moved its winter quarters to Sarasota, and the city became known as a "circus town." Currently, Sarasota is called the "Circus Capitol of the World" and many circuses are housed there. Sarasota County is the only public school system in the U.S. that sponsors an after-school youth circus program.

The region experienced the same 1920s boom, Great Depression-era crash, and 1950s second boom as much of Florida. Although the region has suffered from the 2008 real estate crash, the two counties currently precede the rest of Florida and the nation in growth of firms, employees, and payroll.

## Economic Overview

Real estate development and tourism/recreation dominate the Sarasota and Manatee County economies. Other major employment sectors include health care and retirement services. Manufacturing, technology, and financial services are building strength in the local economy. The area is becoming increasingly recognized for its innovative efforts toward environmental management and sustainability.

In 2007, *Inc. Magazine* ranked Sarasota-Bradenton-Venice 8<sup>th</sup> on a list of 393 “boomtowns” in the U.S., and

3<sup>rd</sup> in the nation among mid-size cities. *Forbes Magazine* placed Sarasota-Bradenton 11<sup>th</sup> in the top 100 cities for employment, ranking the area 3<sup>rd</sup> best in the state of Florida. Sarasota ranks 3<sup>rd</sup> in the country for job growth and unemployment rate.

Tropicana Products, one of the largest global producers of orange juice, is founded in Bradenton; Tropicana has been owned by PepsiCo, Inc. since 1998. Champs Sports and the Beall’s department stores are based in Bradenton. Other major employers in Sarasota/

Bradenton include Publix Markets, PGT Industries, Wal-Mart, and Nielsen Media Research. Aso Corporation, Financial Insurance Management, JCI Jones Chemicals, Nelson Publishing, and World Precision Instruments are among businesses with corporate headquarters in Sarasota County.



*According to Relocate-America.com, Sarasota and Bradenton belong among the Top 100 places to live in the US.*

## Sarasota/Bradenton Area Climate

Consistent with the rest of south Florida, the area enjoys a warm tropical climate with an annual average temperature of 72°F. The summer highs average in the low 90s, and the winter lows in the low 70s. The rainy season occurs between June and September; August is the wettest month of the year. Annual average

precipitation is 57 inches. Thunderstorms are common in the summer and provide evening relief from high summer temperatures. Florida receives the highest density of lightning strikes in the U.S.

Fall and spring are usually dry seasons and snowfall is extremely rare with measur-

able snow under one-half of an inch occurring only a few times in the past 100 years.

June and October are the months of the highest risk from hurricanes. Florida has never gone more than two years without a tropical storm. The heaviest rainfall associated with a hurricane over a 24-hour period is 12 inches.

## The Beaches

City boundaries of Bradenton and Sarasota include the following Keys which form a barrier between the cities and the Gulf of Mexico: Anna Maria Island, Longboat Key, Lido Key, Siesta Key, St. Armands Key, Otter Key, Coon Key, and Bird Key. Longboat Key is the largest island separating Sarasota Bay from the Gulf, and is evenly divided

between Manatee and Sarasota Counties.

The miles of beautiful beaches along the Gulf of Mexico and into Tampa Bay are shaded by Australian pines. Anna Maria Bayfront Park, located on the end of Anna Maria Island, overlooks Tampa Bay to the north.

The 12-mile-long Longboat Key is home to nearly 8,000 permanent residents and is especially popular among retirees.

Lido Beach is known for the pure white of its natural sand, which has won contests for being the best in the world.

*Sarasota County School District is one of 15% of U.S. Districts to receive the “What Parents Want” award.*

## Transportation

Sarasota-Bradenton International Airport (SRQ), which serves over a million passengers annually, is located in Sarasota and just south of Bradenton—the airfield lies in Manatee County, while the terminal rests in Sarasota County. Most air traffic occurs during the winter and spring months, supporting



*SRQ's user-friendly terminal offers security, comfort, and convenience to travelers and commuters.*

tourism and “snowbird” travel to the region. Information about the airport is available at [www.srq-airport.com](http://www.srq-airport.com). Some travelers choose to fly into Tampa International Airport (TIA), which lies about 40 miles north of Bradenton.

Port Manatee, the 4<sup>th</sup> largest Florida deepwater seaport,

provides shipping access to North and South American markets and distributors. Port Manatee has 6 deepwater berths and more than 1 million square feet of office and warehouse space.

Automobile traffic reaches Bradenton and Sarasota primarily via the Interstate 75 and Interstate 275, or Highway 41 (the Tamiami Trail) which connects with Highway 301 to the north. East-west access is provided via State Highways 64, 70, and 72. Bradenton is connected to St. Petersburg in the north by the Sunshine Skyway Bridge, a 5.5-mile cross-bay bridge.

Amtrak serves Sarasota via bus, with a station located on the I-75 at Clark Road. Public bus transportation is provided to Sarasota by the Sarasota County Area Transit System, (941) 861-5000; and to Manatee County by the Manatee County Area Transit Authority (M-CAT), (941) 749-7116. Bus service includes Free Beach Express shuttle service on Sundays and holidays.

## Statistics

Florida	: 54,135 square miles
Manatee County:	741 square miles
Sarasota County:	571 square miles
State Water Area:	4,425 square miles
State Coastline:	1,197 square miles
State Capital:	Tallahassee
Nickname:	Sunshine State
State Song:	Suwanee River by Stephen Foster
State Flower:	Orange Blossom
State Tree:	Sabal Palm
State Fish:	Largemouth Bass (Freshwater), Sailfish (Saltwater)
State Bird:	Mockingbird
State Mammal:	Manatee
State Animal:	Panther
State Motto:	In God We Trust
State Shell:	Pleuroploca
State Gem:	Moonstone



## Libraries

Sarasota County Library System has 8 locations, 4 inside the Sarasota city limits.



Library resources include books, public computing and internet access, books-by-mail, ebooks, audiobooks, assistive technology, genealogy research, computer classes, and special collections. Library cards are free to county residents; non-residents may purchase library cards for various terms.

Fruitville Library: (941) 861-2500  
 Gulf Gate Library: (941) 861-1230  
 North Sarasota Library: (941) 861-1360  
 Selby Library: (941) 861-1100

The Manatee County Library System has 3 locations in Bradenton and 6 locations county-

wide, offering similar services and resources to the Sarasota system, and interlibrary loans from the Florida state library.

Central Branch: (941) 748-5555  
 Braden River Branch: (941) 727-6079  
 South Manatee Branch: (941) 755-3892

# Schools, Universities, & Colleges

## *K-12 Education*

Sarasota County School District had an enrollment of 41,501 in 2009, and the district is the largest employer in Sarasota County. The county has received honors as an All-American County by the National Civic League for outstanding collaboration between the community and its schools, and the district is designated as an “A” district

schools, a variety of alternative education programs, and an award-winning technical institute. Manatee Technical Institute’s students have won more medals than any other school or college in the country for 6 consecutive years at the annual SkillsUSA competition in Kansas City, MO.

Parents are encouraged to become involved with their



by the Florida State DOE.

In 2009, Sarasota County District SAT scores were higher than state averages by 26 points (math), 23 points (reading), and 21 points (writing), and also exceeded national averages in all three categories.

To learn more, visit [www.sarasotacountychools.net](http://www.sarasotacountychools.net), or call the district call center, (941) 927-9000.

With 34 elementary, 10 middle, and 7 high schools, Manatee County School District serves more than 42,000 students and employs more than 5,300 full-time staff. The district includes 8 charter

children’s individual schools by helping from home or work, chaperoning a field trip, or serving on the School Advisory Council (SAC). For more information about Manatee Schools, go to [www.manatee.k12.fl.us](http://www.manatee.k12.fl.us), visit the district offices at 215 Manatee Ave. W., Bradenton, FL, 34205, or call (941) 708-8870.

In addition to the public school systems, the Sarasota/Bradenton area also contains more than 30 private and parochial schools. More information can be found at [www.findsarasota.com](http://www.findsarasota.com).

## *Higher Education*

State College of Florida, formerly Manatee Community

College, is the region’s first and largest public college, serving about 12,000 students per term. Its mission is to dynamically meet the educational and workforce training needs of citizens and businesses in the Manatee County region. SCF offers a wide range of highly-respected Associate’s Degrees that prepare students for university transfer and professional careers. The college recently expanded its mission to include capacity to award Bachelor’s degrees, beginning with Bachelor of Nursing in January 2010. For more information, visit [www.scf.edu](http://www.scf.edu), or call (941) 752-5504.

The University of South Florida’s Sarasota-Manatee campus is located on U.S. 41 (Tamiami Trail) on the border of Sarasota and Manatee Counties. This upper-division, regional campus provides junior, senior, and graduate course work leading to Bachelor’s and master’s degrees, and also offers undergraduate and graduate certification programs. The university offers 34 academic degree and certificate concentrations.

For more information, visit [www.sarasota.usf.edu](http://www.sarasota.usf.edu), or call (941) 359-4200.

New College of Florida is a national leader in the liberal arts, specializing in student-centered learning where students design their own individualized programs of study and areas of concentration. New College is located at 5800 Bay Shore Road, Sarasota, FL, 34243, (941) 487-5000.

Other institutions of higher learning in the area include Argosy University, Eckerd College, Keiser University, Ringling College of Art & Design, Webster University, and Sarasota County Technical Institute. Bradenton has been home to tennis greats Andre Agassi, Jim Courier, and Monica Seles, and a tennis institute still thrives in the city.



University Of South Florida

# Information Especially For Newcomers

## Auto Insurance, License, & Tags

### Auto Insurance

Florida law requires that all automobile operators have No-Fault insurance. Under No-Fault Law, your insurance company pays for treatment of any personal injuries received as a result of an auto accident, no matter who is at fault. You must show proof of this insurance to obtain automobile tags. For more information on insurance laws, call 1-800-342-2762.



for six years and is renewable by your birth date. If you have a valid license from another state, you need only to take a sight test.

obtaining a small adhesive sticker to be placed on the metal plate. The metal plate is transferable if you purchase another vehicle. Usually the

registration renewal form and emission inspection information is sent to you in the mail at renewal time. To get your license plate, take your vehicle registration, proof of insurance, and automobile title to any of a number of tag offices. Look in your county government listing in the phone

book for convenient locations. Some driver's license branches include:

Manatee County:

3611 First St. E Suite 1010,  
Bradenton

(941) 708-6432,

Sarasota County:

601 S Pompano Ave, Sarasota  
(941) 361-6222

### Auto Tags

Within 30 days of moving to Florida, you must also obtain a Florida license plate if (1) You are employed here (2) Your children attend school in the state (3) You claim a homestead exemption, or (4) You register to vote.

The tag is renewable annually during your birth month by

### Drivers License

If you become a resident of Florida, are employed here, or enroll your children in area schools, you must have a valid Florida driver's license within 30 days. The license is good

*Sarasota is often proclaimed the "arts capital" of Florida*

## Boating & Fishing

A valid out-of-state registration of any pleasure craft is recognized for up to 90 days in Florida. Then, boats must



have a valid Florida registration. The registration is available from auto tag registration offices. All craft, motor or sail, and regardless of size, must be registered annually.

### Fishing Licenses

A license is needed for many types of recreational fishing.

Licenses are available from the county Tax Collector's office or substations ranging from bait shops to discount stores. Contact your local Tax Collector's office for more information:

Sarasota County:

(941) 861-8300

Manatee County :

(941) 741-4801

*Residents of Manatee and*

*Sarasota Counties are served by a progressive network of hospitals and health care providers.*

## Utilities, Phone, & Cable

Each community has its own utility services and rates are determined accordingly. Most utilities require refundable deposits and they too may vary. Florida's utility rates are regulated by the Public Services Commission in Tallahassee, 1-800-342-3552. The major gas, electric, water & cable companies are:



Electric:	Florida Power & Light, Sarasota/Bradenton (941) 917-0708 Peace River Electric, (941) 755-4500
Cable TV:	Sarasota County - Comcast, (941) 371-6700 Manatee County - Time Warner, (941) 748-1822
Natural Gas:	TECO, (941) 342-4000
Trash/ Solid Waste:	City of Sarasota Solid Waste Division, (941) 365-7651 Bradenton Public Works & Utilities, (941) 708-6300
Telephone:	Verizon, 1-(800)-483-3000
Water/Sewer:	City of Sarasota Water/Sewer Division, (941) 955-2325 Bradenton Public Works & Utilities, (941) 708-6300
Internet:	Roadrunner Broadband Internet (888) 547-6602

## Taxes

Florida law mandates a minimum 6% sales tax, but the law also provides for a local option sales tax that lets each county set its own local tax collected on top of the general state rate. Current sales tax in Manatee County is 6.5%, and in Sarasota County the rate is 7%.

The state of Florida offers a Homestead Exemption credit to Florida residents who own and occupy a home as of January 1 of any given year. The exemption is \$25,000 off the assessed value of the home. You must file for the exemption between January 1 and March 1 and must renew the exemption annually (depending on the county). For more information, contact the Tax Collector's Office nearest you:

Sarasota County: (941) 861-8300  
Manatee County: (941) 741-4801



## Voter Information



You must be at least 18 years old and be a permanent resident of the state of Florida to register to vote. Registration must be 30 days prior to an election in order to vote in that election. For more information, contact your area Supervisor of Elections.

Sarasota County Supervisor of Elections: (941) 861-8600, [www.srqelections.com](http://www.srqelections.com)

Manatee County Supervisor of Elections: (941) 741-3823, [www.votemanatee.com](http://www.votemanatee.com)

# Florida Living

## Allergies

People expect to be ever healthy in warm, sunny Florida. Many are dismayed to find that allergies and sinus conditions they never experienced up north, develop in Florida. Vegetation varies and pollination from different types of trees and flowers occurs year-round. This causes problems for asthma and allergy sufferers.



The long growing season for grasses poses problems from mid February until Mid-October. Mold spores tend to be high for the majority of the year in all parts of Florida, with a count of more than 2,000 being common during the same period.

Fortunately, most homes are centrally air conditioned which reduces the humidity in the air and significantly lowers the mold count to below that of the outdoors.

To help keep allergies under control: (1) Dust your house regularly (2) Minimize your exposure to grasses and pollen (3) See an allergist to determine your specific allergies, and (4) Ask your doctor about prescription and over the counter medications for allergies.

Call the Asthma and Allergy Foundation of America, Florida Chapter, for more information at (813) 972-7872.

## Alligators

Alligators are common throughout Florida, but found mostly in major rivers and lakes in central and southern Florida. Alligators are carnivorous and should be considered dangerous at all times.

Alligators vary in size and shape, with the largest recorded alligator in Florida measuring 17 feet and 5 inches. Alligators dig nests for themselves and their young. Adult alligators have no natural enemies except man. Follow these steps if you should encounter an alligator:

Do not approach it. Call the Game and Fresh Water Fish Commission at 1-800-282-8002 if the alligator presents a serious threat.

Do not swim in waterways that could be infested with alligators. You can assume that there are alligators in ponds, lakes and drainage areas.

Never feed an alligator under any circumstances.

Alligators can run fast, even if only for short distances. Look for a safe place to climb up.



## Bites and Bumps

Florida's tropical climate brings with it some uninvited guests. Bugs and other crawly things deserve a look.



## Caterpillars

Three caterpillars-the "Puss", "Saddleback" and "Io"- pose problems for Florida residents. Touching their prickly spines may inflame the skin. When this happens, you should apply an antiseptic cream to the affected area. If nausea, sweating or dizziness occurs, seek medical treatment.

## Insects

Insects can ruin the day, especially bees, hornets and wasps. These insects are found mainly outdoors and can be avoided by following these guidelines.

Avoid wearing brightly colored clothing and perfumes.

Wear shoes or sandals when walking outdoors.

After picnicking or sun bathing, shake out towels and clothing before putting them

on. Wear an insect repellent or repelling skin oil.

Stings affect people in many different ways. Most stings only cause localized pain, itching and swelling and can be relieved with ice or cold compresses. Applying bleach to the stings on arms and legs can also reduce swelling and draw out the pain. Also, a paste made of baking soda or meat tenderizer and water can decrease the swelling and speed healing. If you know that you are allergic to stings, seek medical attention immediately. Severe reaction to stings can cause hives, welts, vomiting, dizziness, tightness in the chest and difficulty in swallowing or breathing. Seek medical attention immediately for severe reactions to stings.

## Scorpions

Florida scorpions are not poisonous. If you are stung by a scorpion, self-treatment is usually sufficient. To provide relief from the itching and pain, apply a mixture of baking soda and water, ice or hydrocortisone cream.



## Snakes

Snakes abound in Florida. Most are harmless and help our ecology. However, there are some poisonous snakes that you want to observe only

# Florida Living

## Snakes Continued

from a distance. It is important that you and your family members recognize them.

Only six species are poisonous and they fall into two distinguishable categories:

Copperhead, cottonmouth and rattlesnakes have facial pits, located between the eyes and the nostril on each side of the head, V-shaped head and elliptical eye.

Coral snakes have bands of red, yellow and black. Coral snakes can easily be mistaken for the harmless king snake and are differentiated by the following poem:

Red touch black-a friend of Jack,  
Red touch yellow-will kill a fellow.

Snakes occupy swamps, flatland and fields throughout Florida. To avoid being bitten, watch where you walk, especially at night. Do not stick your hands, arms, feet or legs in any bush, shrub or vegetation. Always wear shoes when walking in the woods or on river banks. Be especially careful on golf courses.

If bitten by a snake, stay calm. Do not run. Keep the bite below the level of your heart to slow circulation of the venom. Do not tourniquet or suction the bite. Do not drink anything. Get to the hospital immediately!

Contact the Poison Control

Center at (813) 253-4444 or 1-800-282-3171 (Plant City only) for further information.



## Spiders

Two venomous spiders pose a threat in Florida. If you know you have been bitten by a venomous spider, seek medical attention immediately. If unsure, watch for warning signs.

The Black Widow (with a red hour glass marking), leaves two tiny red bites with a white middle and a bluish red border. These symptoms can occur 30 minutes after the bite and may include limb pain, redness, itching and swelling, cramping pain, muscle twitching and vomiting.

The Brown Recluse spider is recognized by the fiddle-like marking on its back. Its bite leaves a small laceration that festers within 6 to 12 hours. Reactions that may develop in 24-73 hours include fever, rash, vomiting, diarrhea, chills and shock. To care for spider bites, immobilize the affected area and apply cool compresses. Keep the victim still and get them to the hospital as soon as possible.

## Other bugs

We have other frequent visitors, but they cause little harm:

Lovebugs are seasonal insects that usually arrive two times a year-in April/May and again in September. Lovebugs do not hurt people, but they can damage the finish of your car due to a chemical in their system. Be sure to wash them off immediately to prevent paint damage.

Roaches, Palmetto bugs, are another annoyance. The main concern is that they spread germs. To keep a roach problem to a minimum, consider having an exterminator spray your home monthly. Also, keep counter tops free of food and crumbs. Keep exterior doors closed. You can also lay roach traps between exterminator visits.



## Boating

Boating can introduce you to a world of natural beauty and great sport in Florida. Remember, though, a boat is a

sophisticated vehicle that requires expert handling and attention to safety.

Boating is a licensed recreational sport and there are rules of the water to follow. Know Florida boating laws and proper boating procedures.

For further information on boating safety and available boating courses, contact the Marine Patrol, United States Power Squadron, the U.S. Coast Guard Auxiliary or the Boat Owners Association of the United States, 880 S. Pickett Street, Alexandria, Virginia 22304.

Outfit your boat with enough Coast Guard-approved flotation devices for all your passengers.

Let a friend know your travel and return plans so that any delay will be noted and help can be dispatched from shore.

Avoid alcoholic beverages when driving a boat. According to the U.S. Coast Guard, more than 1,000 people die annually from accidents involving alcohol and boats.

Finally, pay attention to weather bulletins before taking off on the high seas. Be sure that you are heading out for a day of fun in the sun, not showers.

# Florida Living

## Food Poisoning

Picnics are a year-round pleasure in Florida, but heat can cause many foods to spoil quickly. Pack foods in ice, especially seafood and dairy items. Take no chances-never eat anything that looks or smells unusual. Food poisoning symptoms include nausea, stomach cramps, diarrhea, fever and chills. Call your doctor or go to the hospital immediately if you suspect food poisoning.

## Hurricanes

Autumn winds bring hurricanes, not falling leaves to Florida. Tampa Bay's hurricanes are the result of warm temperatures in surrounding water. Hurricane devastation has hit Florida in the 1990's, most recently Hurricane Andrew in 1992 and Hurricane Opal in 1995. They rocked the coast of Florida with powerful winds, torrential rainfall, high tides and flooding. Andrew caused more than \$25 million in damages to southern Florida. Opal's destruction surpassed \$3 billion.

Here are some tips for hurricane preparedness:

Keep your TV or radio tuned to local weather reports for sophisticated tracking and early warning guidelines. Continue to monitor storm news until an "All Clear" is given. Hurricanes are unpredictable and change course quickly and erratically. They lose power over land, but can go back to the water and build up power and come ashore again.



instructions given by local officials, leave early if evacuating and notify neighbors and/or relatives of your evacuation plans.

When the storm arrives:

Be familiar with the evacuation routes. Know the location of the nearest shelter. Shelters do not accept pets, so plan ahead for your animals.

Buy enough non-perishable and bottled water to last at least two weeks at the beginning of hurricane season.

Avoid the use of candles; stock up on batteries and keep flashlights handy.

Know these hurricane designations:

A Hurricane Watch is issued when there is a possible threat that a hurricane may hit and usually within 36 hours. Use the warning period. Be sure to monitor radio and TV announcements, fuel and service vehicles, secure your home with plastic and plywood, check food and water supplies, check prescription medicines and first aid items, and stock up on extra batteries.

A Hurricane Warning means that hurricanes are expected to hit land within 24 hours. Protect yourself: closely monitor TV and radio for instructions and information, follow

- (1) Stay away from windows and doors – even if they are covered.
- (2) Stay in a small room, hallway or closet. Take a battery powered radio with you.
- (3) If in a two story home, go to an interior room of the home.
- (4) Most important, stay calm in a hurricane. This will allow you to think clearly and help your family to stay safe.



## Lightning

Did you know that you moved to the Lightning Capital of the United States? The Tampa Bay area is subject to thunderstorms and rainy weather, especially from June 1 to November 30. Thunderstorms can cause strong winds, large hail, tornados, flash floods and dangerous lightning. Florida ranks first in the nation for thunderstorms, averaging 143 days annually.

Lightning strikes kill 100 to 600 people in the U.S. annually. Each day more than 50,000 lightning bolts hit the earth. Lightning voltage is extremely high, often surpassing one million volts. Air temperature near a lightning strike is 50,000 degrees Fahrenheit-hotter than the surface of the sun. Lightning results from a buildup and discharge of electrical energy between positively and negatively charged air. Thunder is a shock wave of this air. Remember, if you hear thunder, you are close enough to be struck by lightning.

Take the following precautions to prevent a lightning strike:

(1) Find and stay inside a safe shelter.

(2) Get out of boats and get away from the water.

(3) Unplug electrical appliances and do not use the telephone.

(4) Do not take a shower or a bath. Lightning can travel through pipes and plumbing.

(5) If outside, find a low spot away from trees, fences and poles.

(6) If in your car, stay there with the windows rolled up.

## Helping a Lightning Strike Victim

Besides knowing how to keep from being struck by lightning, you need to know to help a lightning strike victim. Victims require immediate care and attention:

# Florida Living

## Lightning Continued

Call 911 for medical assistance.

Do not attempt to move the victim unless there is a threat of being struck again.

If moving the victim is necessary, keep in mind the possibility of spinal, neck and back injuries.

Clear the victim's airway and be sure he can breathe. If the victim is not breathing, being CPR immediately. Don't be discouraged if CPR does not offer immediate results because many lightning victims require lengthy CPR.

If and when a victim regains consciousness, provide emotional support.

Take the victim to a hospital for follow-up care.

## Poisonous Plants

Florida has beautiful plants for your home or garden. However, precautions must be taken to avoid accidental poisoning by plants.

Poison Ivy, Oak and Sumac are common types of poisonous plants. If you come in contact with these plants, a mild rash may appear within two to seven days. Wash the affected area with mild soap and water to prevent spreading and apply calamine lotion to relieve itching.



The Oleander is a beautiful, flowering shrub that also causes rashes. Avoid picking the pastel flowers or using the branches as sticks for barbecuing.

Other exterior plants to watch for are the China Berry, Boxwood, Lantana, False Poinciana and Water Hemlock. Some household plants are dangerous, too. The Diffenbachia is a popular decorator that can cause severe poisoning if ingested.

Check with the Poison Control Center, (813) 253-4444 or 1-800-282-3171 (Plant City only) for information on any plant or shrub that is unfamiliar.

## Sun Safety

Florida is a sunbather's paradise. However, prolonged exposure to the sun can increase skin wrinkling and skin cancer or cause serious dehydration. Southern sun can be deceiving because a bad sunburn can develop on a cloudy day as ultraviolet rays penetrate through the clouds. Taking these simple precautions can keep skin healthy at the beach or golf course:

Limit your first exposure to 15 minutes.

Wear sunglasses to protect

your eyes from ultraviolet sun rays.

Sunscreen (at least 15 SPF) should be worn at all times and reapplied often.



Drink lots of liquids while sunning to replenish natural body fluids.

If you do get burned, the stinging sensation can be relieved with cool compresses, or a 20-30 minute cool bath. Keep an aloe plant at home. The soothing, healing aloe gel can also ease burns from the sun or the stove.

Heat emergencies may include heat exhaustion and heatstroke. Heat exhaustion occurs when the body loses salt and water, reducing the body's overall blood volume.

Heat exhaustion is characterized by fainting, nausea, fatigue and headache. A person with heat exhaustion should be allowed to lie down in a cool place. Give water in small, cool doses to replace body fluids.

Heatstroke can be life threatening. Heatstroke occurs when the cooling system of the body system breaks down. Skin becomes hot, red and dry-there is no sweating. A heatstroke victim may collapse, go into seizures, become

unconscious or die. Victims should be cooled immediately with cold water and taken to the hospital.

## Swimming

Water safety is one of the most important responsibilities of a Florida resident, especially if you have small children. Everyone should know how to swim. Drowning is the third most common death among children and 40 percent of drowning victims are under the age of nine. We encourage everyone living in Florida to educate themselves on the dangers and precautions to take around water. To avoid drowning:

(1) Do not let children out of your sight near water.

(2) Keep doors locked and



pools fenced in when small children are around. (3) Remove all floating

objects from the pool when not in use. Children may see these objects as toys and try to reach them.

(4) Keep an approved flotation device poolside at all times.

(5) Begin children in swimming classes as early as possible.

(6) Do not dive into unknown water, especially if you cannot see the bottom.

With the numerous amount of swimming pools and other bodies of water around

# Florida Living

## Swimming Continued

Florida, precaution and education are the best defenses. To aid a drowning victim:

- (1) Call for help.
- (2) Perform the Heimlich Maneuver to clear the air passage of any water or other foreign objects.
- (3) Begin resuscitation immediately and continue until medical assistance arrives. Do not give up on the CPR, it may take a long time before the victim will be revived.

## Live Aquatic Hazards

Gulf waters are home to some

live hazards. These include a variety of marine life such as jellyfish, stingrays and sharks.

Jellyfish can be found mostly in shallow salt water. They are clear and blob-like, resembling gelatin. Reactions to their sting may include cramps, nausea and vomiting. The affected area should be washed with baking soda or rubbing alcohol. Medical attention is usually not necessary, except in very serious cases.

Stingrays are normally hidden because they burrow under the sand on the gulf or ocean floor. The best way to avoid contact with these creatures is to shuffle your feet along the

sand when in the water. Stingrays inject poison through their tail. If stung, one should immediately soak the area in hot water and seek medical attention.

Although rare, sharks do attack, even in shallow waters. Sharks normally feed on squid and fishes smaller than themselves. Swim with groups of people since humans who are attacked by sharks are usually swimming alone or wearing black or blue bathing suits. Also, don't

swim if you have a bleeding cut (sharks can smell blood) or at night, when sharks normally feed.

Don't confuse sharks with the dolphins found playing in the Gulf of Mexico-dolphin fins make a rounded, circular motion, while shark fins cut a straight path across the water!



People come to sunny Florida from every corner of the world. Florida is a beautifully diverse state, full of friendly people and unique things to do, see, and enjoy. We hope that our informational guide about Florida living has provided you with answers to some of the more common questions and an insight about our wonderful state.

