

First-Timer's Cheat Sheet

Beaches, attractions, money rules & packing — one printable page.

TOP 5 BEACHES

Siesta Key — powder-quartz sand, lifeguards, playground; arrive before 10am on weekends.

Lido Key — smaller and calmer, steps from St. Armands Circle for lunch.

Venice Beach — "Shark Tooth Capital" — hunt fossilized teeth along the shell line.

Longboat Key — quiet, residential stretch for a low-key beach day.

Turtle Beach — shaded picnic areas and a local-favorite, low-key vibe.

TOP 5 ATTRACTIONS

The Ringling — art museum + circus museum in one bayfront complex.

Selby Gardens — bayfront botanical gardens — orchids, koi ponds, open lawns.

Mote Marine Aquarium — touch tanks, sharks, and manatees; great rainy-day backup.

St. Armands Circle — open-air shopping and dining loop on Lido Key.

The Bay — free downtown waterfront park with playgrounds and room to run.

5 MONEY-SAVING RULES

1. Build days around the free stuff — beaches, The Bay, shark-tooth hunting.
2. One paid attraction per day, max. Kids and budgets both do better that way.
3. Eat breakfast in: a grocery run for breakfasts and beach lunches saves more than any coupon.
4. Check sarasotasavings.com/coupons before you book anything.
5. Verify hours on official sites before you drive — they shift seasonally.

PACKING CHECKLIST

- ☐ Reef-safe sunscreen
- ☐ Cooler with drinks and snacks
- ☐ Beach chairs and umbrella (rentals add up fast)
- ☐ Sifter scoop for shark teeth (Venice Beach)
- ☐ Snorkel gear and water shoes
- ☐ Light rain layer for summer afternoons
- ☐ Reusable water bottle

Tip: pack chairs and a cooler from home — beach rentals and concessions are the fastest way to blow a beach-day budget.