

BACK BY POPULAR DEMAND

CALADESI ISLAND

MONDAY SEPTEMBER 18, 8:15 AM - 8:00 PM

Please join us for an exciting beach excursion to this pristine, undeveloped barrier island, **Caladesi**. Yes, we were just there in February, but nearly everyone wanted more time on the island. Many of our members are passionate about returning to this magnificent Island and we try very hard to do what our members want.

In his 2023 rating, Dr. Stephen Leatherman (Dr. Beach), placed Caladesi as the fourth best beach in the country. That alone mandates a return trip! Caladesi Island Beach is composed of crystalline quartz sand, so soft and cushy at the water's edge, that it completely summons one to take a dip in the sparkling clear waters.

Caladesi Island offers a glimpse into the Florida of old, back when both islands, Honeymoon and Caladesi, were one stretch of land called Hog Island. During the hurricane of 1921 Hog Island was split in half and created Hurricane Pass. Before Europeans arrived in America, Native Americans of the Tocobaga Tribe inhabited the land.

The Island has a gorgeous beach. It is only accessible by ferry and lies 25 miles from Tampa in the quaint coastal town of Dunedin, Florida. The beautiful Caladesi State Park offers many endless illustrious beaches and warm gulf breezes that have helped earn this stunning island its ranking. Whether you are kayaking through the three-mile mangrove or relaxing on the glorious crystal white sand, recreational opportunities abound at this timeless island in the Gulf.

There is a full-service concession stand (hot food, cold food plus beer and wine, to name only a few items) but, the concession closes when they run out of food (since they only stock one day's worth of provisions). We will let them know we are coming, and how many are coming, but maybe we should think about bringing our lunch or at least some snacksjust in case.

Beach equipment rental is available on Caladesi at the concession stand— 2 chairs/1 umbrella is \$31.75; 1 chair is \$16.51 and a single umbrella is \$26.67. <https://cafehoneyymoon.com/rentals/> As we did on Sand Key, we are going to pre-pay the rentals to save time on the island.

For our BBC explorers, Caladesi is magnificently isolated with so much to see. For nearly four miles the beach dune community proliferates with sea oats, sunflowers and morning glory. This beach is on the Great Florida Birding Trail. You are likely to see American oystercatchers, black skimmers, and piping plovers. Loggerheads and sea turtles also use the beach for nesting. On the shore of Jekyll Island on our multi-day trip in May, our trip planner was extremely fortunate to experience a sea turtle burying her eggs. It was such a great scene that she stumbled upon while taking her morning stroll and we are sharing the video she took with you.

Specifically on the eastern shore, red, black, and white mangroves, along with buttonwoods comprise the *mangrove forest*. These important trees provide shoreline protection and nursery habitat for many fish and invertebrates. There are kayaks available to rent at the Caladesi Café. Their rental rates are 2 hours – \$35 per person + tax or 4 hours for \$45 per person + tax. The kayak trails begin by winding through a mangrove forest. The entrance is shaded by branches overhead, which almost seem to form tunnels. The one mile clear water trail then loops back to the entrance. If kayakers wish to take a three mile loop trail, it leads to the Scharrer Homestead Ruins. In the 1880's homesteader Henry Scharrer and his daughter Myrtle lived on this island. Upon turning 87 years old, Myrtle Scharrer Betz wrote the book titled, *Yesteryear I lived in Paradise*, telling her story of life on a barrier island.

We are republishing some interesting facts about the Scharrer family for those of you who missed the history in our February invitation. Today, you will find it at the end of the invitation.

We will be departing The Villages at 8:15 am in order for us to arrive on Honeymoon Island at approximately 10:45 am. A quick alight from the bus to the ferry and we are off to Caladesi Island for a beautiful day of sun and fun. We will catch the ferry to Caladesi Island at 11:00 am and return to HMI at 4 pm. It is a 20 minute one way trip. We have negotiated a discounted ferry fee for our members. Round trip is \$16, payable with your reservation so we can reserve and pre-pay a ferry spot for you. For safety purposes, beach wagons and carts ARE NOT ALLOWED on the ferry, nor is alcohol allowed.

If you *insist*, we will drop you off at Honeymoon Island Beach, which is an awfully nice beach, too. You'll find concessions (one of our members claim they serve the very best, ever, vegan burgers), restrooms and changing facilities there as well.

When we return to HMI we will board the bus and head to The Shops at Wiregrass in Wesley Chapel for dinner. You will have a couple of hours to spend shopping, eating, browsing, or "people watching," as many of us like to do. We'll re-board the bus by 7:00 pm and will be back in The Villages by 8 pm.

The Shops at Wiregrass, is a premier, open-air, lifestyle and retail center. It is a main-street style, pet and pedestrian friendly shopping mall. The Shops at Wiregrass features Macy's, Dillard's (one of my favorites), JC Penney and 100 specialty shops and restaurants. We know we all will be getting somewhat hungry. Fortunately, The Shops at Wiregrass, offers a range of dining options for every craving. A few restaurants are listed below for easy access to their menus.

Restaurants:

GRILLSMITH: A casual restaurant featuring classic American comfort dishes with wines, whiskeys, and cocktails. [Grillsmith: Craft By Fire](#)

900 DEGREES WOODFIRED PIZZA: Pizza the way it is made in Italy. Thin crust, hand tossed dough made from the finest imported flour. [900 Degrees Woodfired Pizza](#)

CHARLEY'S: Philly steaks; a sandwich made from thinly sliced pieces of beefsteak and melted cheese in a hoagie bun. [Home | Charleys Cheesesteaks](#)

CRAZY SUSHI: Fresh sushi served in delicious and crazy ways. [crazysushiwesleychapel.com](#)

IRISH 31: Pub house and eatery. [Wiregrass - Irish 31](#)

MOE'S SOUTHWEST GRILL: Mexican [Moe's Menu \(moes.com\)](#)

NOBLE CRUST: Deep South Italian [Wesley Chapel Menu - Noble Crust -](#)

PANERA BREAD: [Menu | Panera Bread](#)

PINCHERS CRAB SHACK: Fresh crab and shellfish served-up fast. [MENU - Pinchers \(pinchersusa.com\)](#)

RED ROBIN: Burgers & more. <https://redrobin.com>

A HISTORY LESSON - How it all began

Henry Scharrer, a native of Switzerland, ventured to America by sailing to the island in the early 1890's. He stayed for forty-four years. Henry married Catherine McNally in 1894 and had a daughter, they named Myrtle, after the wax myrtle trees that surrounded their remote home.

Henry had settled on Hog Island, (which was the name of Caladesi and Honeymoon Island) and declared that he had found his dream home. He obtained citizenship, improved the land, carved a channel, and planted crops.

Myrtle was a tomboy and, in addition to her many domestic tasks, she assisted her father with fishing, the livestock and crops. Most of Myrtle's life, she attended school on the island. Myrtle married Herman Betz in 1915 and moved away. Myrtle soon realized how much she missed the island. She returned and witnessed the Hurricane of 1921. That hurricane carved Hog Island into Caladesi Island (on the south) and Honeymoon Island (on the north), where the sand is as soft as powder and the water glows turquoise when the sun shines.

Early Pinellas histories emerged from the writings of those who were present for the dramatic change of the peninsula. Myrtle's writings focus was on the environmental aspects of coastal living in the days before tourism. She was diligent in efforts to track and band birds on the island between 1918-1935. Prior to her passing in January 1992, Betz became an advocate for preserving Caladesi and undeveloped areas of Honeymoon Island. Myrtle's never-ending desire for defending her birthplace and its history preserved a landscape worthy of honor.

Scharrer- Betz, Myrtle, 2007 enlarged edition: "Yesteryear I Lived in Paradise: The Story of Caladesi Island."

Although the remains of the home is not easily accessible on foot, the link below will take you to a few fascinating facts about Myrtle Betz's home. <https://caladesimemories.com/about-yesteryear-i-lived-in-paradise/>