

## **How about venturing off to Venice, Fla.**

**from 8:15 – 8:00 on Monday, April 18 (the day after Easter)**

where, unfortunately, handsome Venetian gondoliers won't be charming you girls ~~

Then again, you gentleman won't need brute strength to beat them off your women either.

Instead, let's drift on down to Venice Beach, famous not only for its 14-miles of world-class beaches and stunning natural beauty, but also for being a fascinating town with a rich history and culture.

After many calls, we have been unable to learn anything yet about rentals of beach gear. If we later obtain info, we'll let you know.

At the beach is the Pilot House where you can pick up light fare from 10:00-3:00 if you choose not to bring your lunch from home. Relax for a few hours watching the waves wash ashore and dreaming about the beautiful State you adopted.

Then, for those of you who have had enough sun and surf after a few hours, you can reboard the bus at 2:00 for your choice of two activities:

- 1) Shop 'til you drop
- 2) Visit the Venice Audubon Society Rookery

For the first—most decadent—activity, we'll drop you off at Venice Avenue (Main Street) to be tempted by dozens of intriguing shops offering an eclectic mix of quaint boutiques, thrift stores, and galleries, strolling down the main avenue of Venice Island makes for a well-spent afternoon. To refresh yourself, consider popping into Ciao Gelato for a deliciously chilling treat. If you're on the hunt for unique treasures, make your way one street over, in Burgundy Square, and check out St. Mark's Divine Consign, as well as other fun thrift stores.

Get a preview of the 8 pages of those shops at:

<https://www.visitvenicefl.org/places/category/shopping/>

While walking along, note dozens of FantaSea figurines proudly prettifying the street.

Or instead, for those of you wanting to expand your memories instead of your shopping bags, you might prefer a lovely afternoon in nature, just 17 minutes away at the Venice Area Audubon Society Rookery. Its island's deep lake is small enough so that from the shaded pavilion benches you hardly need binoculars for a clear view of the birds. Tangled invasive plants have been replaced by Florida-friendly vegetation so you can easily walk around the edge of the lake and watch bird activity on all sides of the island.

During nesting months--including April--daytime activity may involve Great Blue Herons, Great Egrets, Anhingas, Snowy Egrets, Cattle Egrets, Glossy Ibises, Green Herons, Tricolored Herons and Black-crowned Night-Herons all busily building or enhancing nests, courting, incubating eggs, and raising chicks.

You can visit this website to see a list of birds seen at or near the Rookery:

[https://static1.squarespace.com/static/59f89aaaedaed8eda13f3141/t/59fb4a0727ef2d9f3f9a09d8/1509640711297/Venice\\_Rookery\\_Bird\\_Checklist.pdf](https://static1.squarespace.com/static/59f89aaaedaed8eda13f3141/t/59fb4a0727ef2d9f3f9a09d8/1509640711297/Venice_Rookery_Bird_Checklist.pdf)

In April, the Audubon Society occasionally staffs the Rookery with volunteers who bring extra binoculars, a spotting scope, and bird field guides for anyone to use.

The Venice Rookery is an all-volunteer project. However, we encourage you to drop a bit in their donation box. All contributions support their work, including bringing hundreds of second-grade school children to the Rookery each year.

At 3:45, we will pick up all remaining beach bums and rookery visitors and take you to historic West Venice Avenue and the parallel Miami Avenue West (shown on the above map) where you'll join everyone else for an early dinner at a restaurant of your choice. See this website:

<https://www.visitvenicefl.org/places/category/dining-and-beverages/>

While many of the restaurants and pubs are of Italian cuisine, you'll find a few Irish pubs and French cafes as well as several burger & beer pubs. And if Italian wines and British brews are not quite enough to satisfy your homeward dreams, you could consider the Seed and Bean Market

<https://seedandbeanmarket.com/food-drink-to-go/>

where, after having lunch or dinner there, you could partake of their CBD, "a naturally occurring compound found in the resin of the hemp and cannabis plants.

I will admit I know nothing on this subject. However, "studies suggest CBD is a safe and natural option to enhance wellness, and it is used by people around the world to help reduce pain, help decrease inflammation, and help improve overall quality of life." Reportedly, Americans spend \$250 billion a year on CBD products. Me, I prefer to spend my billions on pocketbooks and sunglasses!

Nonetheless, if you choose to partake, you just might want to withhold any samplings 'til you get home, so we do not have to lift you off the bus upon returning to The Villages.

We will reboard the buses at 5:30 to leave for home with a restroom stop along the 2-hr. drive.