

A beautiful sunset is waiting for you at Bean Point, at the end of our day in the City of Anna Maria on Monday, January 16, 8:30am to 8:30pm

While we have traveled many times to Anna Maria Island, we've only driven through the City of Anna Maria, missing out on all it has to offer. Bean Point is at the northern most tip of the island and while it is a beautiful beach, because of strong currents where the Gulf and Tampa Bay merge, it is not recommended as a swimming beach. We decided it would likely be a little too chilly in January to swim, making it a perfect time for us to visit and take in the City, which can easily be explored on foot. Bean Point is named for one of the island's first settlers, George Emerson Bean.

For those that want to maximize their beach time, our bus will drop you at Bean Point. Others can hop off at the fishing pier at the eastern end of Pine Street. Pine Street is the hub of the city, lined with shops, galleries, eateries and the Anna Maria Historical Society. We have arranged for docent led tours at the Historical Society, which will make the history more alive for us all. The museum features a restored 1920 cottage and the infamous Anna Maria jail. This tiny building was built in 1927 to temporarily hold trouble makers who were on the island for the week-end to party. The jail is located right next door to the Anna Maria Historical Society Museum and Park.

While strolling along Pine Avenue you may enjoy The Anna Maria Donut Experiment where you can select your icing and toppings or Poppa's Taqueria: where soy products are sold. The Anna Maria community gardens have their very own home grown vegetables that shoppers may sample. Additionally, The Olive Oil Outpost is full of pastas, oils, and cheeses. You will not go away hungry.

There are additional highlights on Pine that include Hometown Dessert, Italian Kitchen, Relish Cafe and Marketplace, plus The Anna Maria Pier which is undoubtedly a beautiful place to see. Take a walk on the pier. You may spot pelicans, fish, and herons. Plus the fishing is great.

Many of Pine Avenue businesses use environmentally-friendly practices (it's called "The Greenest Little Main Street in America").

Our trip will leave The Villages from Hope Lutheran Church at 8:30am and arrive in Anna Maria Island around 11:00 am. While you are strolling along Pine you may want to grab a bag lunch and head over to City Pier Park 103 N Bay Blvd if you want to spend your time outdoors. It has picnic tables, not to mention a beautiful view, fishing, and is only a 3 minute walk from Pine Avenue Bait and Tackle 501 Pine Avenue. The trek from the beach is a bit further as you can see below.

Around 2:00, we will head out on the bus to Bradenton Beach for more fun and an early dinner. Bradenton Beach is one of the three cities on Anna Maria Island.)

Get hooked and go play a round of 18 hole adventure miniature golf. "The Fish Hole," a miniature golf course, has a 3,000 gallon pond stocked with koi of all sizes and colors. There are several misters on the course that will keep you at least 10 degrees cooler than the Florida sun if we have a scorching day. This fun course is located on historical Bridge street (115 Bridge Street), surrounded by food, drinks, and shopping. Admission is \$9.49 per person.

The Bridge Street Bazaar is a beachgoer's shopping paradise, selling T-shirts, swimwear, gifts, jewelry, toys, and more. For you shell searchers, the One Stop Shell Shop is located at 101 Gulf Drive N. You will find additional shells and gifts at The Green Turtle, 701 Gulf Drive. Bradenton Beach has long been a favorite shopping spot for the BBC.

For dinner at Bradenton you will have several options, some of which are listed below.

Beach House Waterfront restaurant: 200 Gulf Drive N, specializing in seafood and seating that keeps your toes in the sand. <https://beachhousedining.com/>

Wicked Cantina, 101 7th St. N specializing in tacos, burgers, and seafood. <https://wickedcantina.com/>

Anna Maria Oyster Bar: 200 Bridge street, located on the beautiful Bridge Street Pier. <https://www.oysterbar.net/>

Island Time Bar and Grill:111 Gulf Drive, traditional burgers and sandwiches. www.islandtimebarandgrill.com

Daiquiri Deck; 107 Bridge Street, offering creative daiquiris, seafood, and live music. www.daiquirideckstarmands.com

We will wrap up dinner around 5:15 pm to catch that exquisite sunset at Bean Point, which we've been assured will set at 5:59pm on January 16th.

Bean Point provides the most breathtaking views of the sunset on a pristine beach. When you arrive on the bus, take the nearest path to the gorgeous turquoise waters where the Gulf of Mexico meets Tampa Bay. If the tide is low, you can see the sand bar just off the coast. A little wading into the warm water will take you there and you can shell. The views are amazing, the water is inviting, and the atmosphere is serene. There are quiet spots to sit and enjoy the view and watch the waters and the wildlife.

There are signs of life relaxing all over the Point. There is always something to delight the bird watcher too, with several different types of birds to entertain you as they guard their beach turf from one another.

The bus will pack up by 6:15pm to arrive at The Villages at 8:30 pm.

