

Exploring the Shore

Rich in aquatic scenery and beachfront discoveries, Southwest Florida's barrier island beaches offer a unique learning experience to budding marine explorers of all ages. In order to make one's shoreline explorations all the more memorable, we present some necessary accessories for the trip. So before you dig up your next sand dollar, spot a stingray, or stuff a periwinkle in your pocket, read on. Your best find might be right here in these pages.—by Julie Clay

In the Know >

Before you head out, it's best to know exactly what you'll be looking at. We suggest making your first stop a bookstore, and one can almost guarantee that a local store will have all the educational materials you'll need. **Macintosh Book Shop** did not let us down. *Dr. Beach's Survival Guide*, by Stephen P. Leatherman, includes chapters on sharks, rip currents, and avoiding hazards like sunburn, jellyfish, red tide, and dangerous waves. *Kingdom of the Seashell: The Colorful Story of Shell Collecting and Living Mollusks*, by R. Tucker Abbott, also makes a great coffee table piece. Kids will enjoy *Fish Sleep But Don't Shut Their Eyes*, a book of facts about ocean creatures, and *The Great Shark Adventure*, by Mary Maden. And for reading in the bright sun, Macintosh Book Shop also offers sunglass reading glasses in many colors and patterns. *Macintosh Book Shop*, 2365 Periwinkle Way, Sanibel, 239-472-1447



Collector's Cache >

Without the most basic of accessories, a fun day of beachside exploring can quickly go downhill. Fortunately, **Sanibel Surf Shop** has things covered, starting with something so simple that will save one's back: wire mesh shell collectors.

These sturdy boxes are open on one end for scooping, have mesh on the other three sides for draining, and offer an angled, metal handle with a rubber-tipped end. The collectors are available in sizes for both children and adults. The children's shell collectors have colored wooden handles and a scoop that's half the size of the adult ones. For those interested in the complete seashell experience, the seashell collection kit is a great find. Each kit offers a blue net bag with a tie on top and a shell identification chart. Slightly larger bags are also designed to hold masks, fins, and snorkels and are available in a variety of colors. U.S. Divers offers snorkel-and-mask sets in yellow, green, and blue. Sanibel Surf Shop also has fins, masks, and snorkels sold separately. Make the memory last with the Go Pro Hero, a reloadable, waterproof 35mm wrist camera. It promises water-

proof protection up to fifteen feet, has preloaded Kodak 400-speed film, and a unique, pivot-action camera strap. *Sanibel Surf Shop*, Jerry's Shopping Center, 1700 Periwinkle Way, Sanibel, 239-472-8185





Gearing Up >

Nestled within the J.N. “Ding” Darling National Wildlife Refuge, **Tarpon Bay Explorers** offers guided nature tours, rentals, and more, while its gift shop carries a wealth of great accessories for exploring the shore, starting with a lightweight, pocket-size set of Powerview binoculars by Bushnell. Complete with case, they magnify objects to eight times their size. Polarized sunglasses by Terrific Pacific are a must, as are waterproof, bright yellow cases that offer protection for your valuables. These include the Dryboy camera case by Witz of California (which comes with a shoulder strap) as well as a waterproof credit card/license holder. This lightweight case can be worn either around your neck or hooked onto your belt. Tarpon Bay Explorers also can outfit you in comfortable cotton clothing, complete with a baseball cap proclaiming “I’m on island time,” a tank top by Gravity, and a matching cloth bag by Miami-based Murval. *Tarpon Bay Explorers, 900 Tarpon Bay Road, Sanibel, 239-472-9621, www.tarponbayexplorers.com*



Habitat Facts >

The **Sanibel-Captiva Conservation Foundation (SCCF)** also provides an educational center for those interested in island wildlife habitat and how best to protect it. Books on a range of marine nature subjects—from mangroves and shells to sea turtles, manatees, and dolphins—can be found here for both children and adults. Among the offerings, kids will enjoy *Sam the Sea Cow*, by Francine Jacobs, and a take-along guide titled *Seashells, Crabs and Sea Stars*, by Christiane Kump Tibbitts, which shows how to make your own seashells. For adults, the SCCF has *The Living Dock*, by Jack Rudloe, and *Seagrasses: Monitoring Ecology, Physiology and Management*, edited by Dr. Stephen Bortone, a marine biologist for the SCCF. Other essentials available include kids’ magnifying glasses. These Optic Wonder glasses work both as a monocular device and as binoculars and include a signal mirror, compass, and stereoscopic viewer. *Sanibel-Captiva Conservation Foundation Nature Center, 3333 Sanibel-Captiva Road, Sanibel, 239-472-2329, www.sccf.org*

