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Sarasota County

A FLORIDA COUNTY GUIDE · GULF COAST

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REGION

Gulf Coast

COMMUNITIES TO START WITH

**Sarasota, Venice,
North Port, Siesta Key**

PRINTED

October 6, 2026

Arts, healthcare, beaches, established retirement communities and rapid growth in the south county create an especially broad lifestyle range.

Sarasota County stretches from the City of Sarasota and barrier islands through Venice to fast-growing North Port. That north-south span creates distinct housing, healthcare and transportation patterns: arts and employment cluster around Sarasota, Venice offers a smaller established city, and south-county growth continues to reshape everyday routes.

Healthcare, tourism, arts, professional services, construction and education are important, while many residents also choose the county for retirement or remote work. The lifestyle can look effortless on vacation, but a relocation decision must account for seasonal traffic, I-75 or U.S. 41 access, hurricane evacuation, insurance and the distance to routine medical care.

Scout the county in sections instead of attempting it in one beach day. Compare one mainland neighborhood and one coastal option in the north, repeat the exercise around Venice or North Port, and drive the grocery, healthcare and work routes during a normal weekday.

Lifestyle: Culture · Beaches · Retirement

Sarasota County by the numbers

Population Census estimate	459,547	At the last full count 2020 Census	434,006
Median age	57.4	Aged 65 and over	37.5%
Under 18	14.0%	Median household income	\$83,416
Median home value what owners estimate	\$411,800	Homeownership	76.7%
People per household	2.13	Average commute	24.5 minutes

U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey, published January 2026, read September 19, 2026. Survey figures are estimates; median home value is what owners estimate their home is worth, not a sale price.

Communities to compare

Sarasota

The City of Sarasota combines a walkable cultural core, bayfront, established neighborhoods, major healthcare and access to nearby barrier islands. Compare downtown and west-of-trail premiums with east-of-I-75 growth and verify whether an address is in the city or unincorporated county.

North Port

North Port is the county's large south-county growth center, with extensive residential areas, newer construction and access toward Charlotte County. Examine utilities, road and drainage conditions, distance to hospitals and the drive north before choosing on price alone.

Venice

Venice provides a smaller downtown, Gulf access, established retirement communities and expanding development east of I-75. Compare island and mainland addresses, then measure healthcare, evacuation and airport access from the exact neighborhood.

Siesta Key

Siesta Key offers celebrated beaches and a distinct island lifestyle, along with bridge dependence, visitor traffic, flood and wind exposure and higher ownership complexity. Test both bridge routes and price insurance, maintenance and evacuation planning before comparing listings.

Checks before Sarasota County becomes the answer

- ☐ **Choose north county or south county.** Map work, healthcare, airport and family connections before comparing Sarasota, Venice and North Port as if they shared one daily routine.
- ☐ **Separate mainland from island costs.** Include flood, wind, maintenance, association, bridge access and evacuation considerations when comparing barrier-island property with the mainland.
- ☐ **Test seasonal and ordinary traffic.** Drive U.S. 41, I-75 and the relevant island bridge during a weekday and a busy visitor period if those routes will be routine.
- ☐ **Map healthcare before retirement.** Sarasota Memorial and regional providers are major strengths, but specialty and emergency access varies across the long county. Test the route from a sample address.
- ☐ **Inspect roof, drainage and storm repairs.** Review permit history, wind mitigation, flood information, roof age and any post-storm work with qualified professionals before relying on appearance.
- ☐ **Verify utilities in growth areas.** In North Port and other expanding areas, confirm water, sewer, well, septic, road access and planned construction for the actual parcel.

Questions to answer for Sarasota County

North and south county solve different needs

Sarasota's cultural core, Venice's established smaller-city pattern, North Port's expanding residential market and the barrier islands offer different price, access and service tradeoffs.

Healthcare is both an asset and a location test

The county has a substantial healthcare economy and respected providers, yet a south-county or island address may create longer specialty and emergency routes. Put the actual care network on the map.

Arts, tourism and services shape work

Cultural institutions, hospitality, professional services, construction and healthcare support the economy. Seasonal demand and job location can change commuting and housing priorities.

I-75 and U.S. 41 create parallel counties

I-75 moves longer trips while U.S. 41 connects established centers and coastal access. East-west travel to beaches and bridges can be more important than north-south mileage.

Storm planning is part of coastal life

Evacuation level, flood information, wind coverage, roof condition and road access must be checked for the address. Island beauty and mainland convenience carry different readiness demands.

Places that reveal the county

The Ringling

John Ringling's bayfront estate, now the official state art museum of Florida, holding a great deal of Rubens and the first circus museum in the country.

Marie Selby Botanical Gardens

Fifteen acres on Sarasota Bay, the only botanical garden in the world devoted to epiphytes, the plants that grow on other plants.

Siesta Beach

A wide beach on Siesta Key whose sand is 99 percent quartz, which is why it stays cool underfoot in August.

The Legacy Trail

An 18.5-mile paved rail trail from downtown Sarasota to the Venice train depot, on the old Seaboard Air Line corridor.

Venice Museum & Archives

The city of Venice's museum and archive, in the 1927 Triangle Inn, a Mission Revival rooming house moved and restored.

Caspersen Beach

The southernmost and quietest of the Venice beaches, and the one people walk with a sifter looking for fossil shark teeth.

Warm Mineral Springs Park

A warm sinkhole spring at North Port, 230 feet deep, where divers found human remains 12,000 years old.

Myakka River State Park

Thirty-seven thousand acres of prairie, hammock and wetland east of Sarasota, with a walkway through the tree canopy and a great many alligators.

Mote Science Education Aquarium (Mote SEA)

Mote Marine Laboratory's new aquarium at Nathan Benderson Park, opened in October 2025, with the research labs in view through the glass.

Historic Spanish Point

Thirty-three acres at Osprey holding 5,000 years of Florida in one place, including the only museum exhibit built inside a shell midden.

Sarasota Art Museum

A contemporary art museum with no permanent collection, in the 1926 Sarasota High School building with a Paul Rudolph addition.

Oscar Scherer State Park

Fourteen hundred acres at Osprey protecting Florida scrub-jays, with the only freshwater swimming lake in Sarasota County.

Nathan Benderson Park

Six hundred acres around a 400-acre lake shaped into a 2,000-meter rowing course, which hosted the world championships in 2017.

Crowley Museum & Nature Center

A pioneer homestead and nature preserve on the Myakka River east of Sarasota, open on weekends and run largely by volunteers.

Venice Theatre

One of the larger community theaters in the country, in the old Kentucky Military Institute building, rebuilding after Hurricane Ian tore it open.

Sarasota Jungle Gardens

Ten acres of tropical planting open since 1939, one of Florida's oldest surviving attractions, with flamingos loose on the lawn.

Ca' d'Zan

The Ringlings' 56-room Venetian Gothic house on Sarasota Bay, finished in 1926 in two years of building.

Big Cat Habitat and Gulf Coast Sanctuary

Twenty acres east of Sarasota holding about 300 rescued animals, most of them arriving from places that could no longer keep them.

St. Armands Circle

A traffic circle of shops and restaurants on St. Armands Key, laid out by John Ringling in the 1920s and studded with statues he brought from Italy.

Sarasota Opera House

A 1926 Mediterranean Revival theater in downtown Sarasota where Elvis played in 1956, rebuilt as an opera house in 2008.

Beaches in Sarasota County

Always verify current parking, fees, water quality, lifeguard coverage and posted rules before leaving.

Longboat Key Beach

South Lido Park Beach

Crescent Beach

Nokomis Beach

Venice Beach

Caspersen Beach

Lido Beach

Siesta Beach

Turtle Beach

North Jetty Beach

Brohard Beach

Manasota Beach

Where to check

Sarasota County Government · Official county departments, resident services, planning and public information.

[scgov.net](https://www.scgov.net)

Sarasota County Economic Development · County business, workforce and economic-development information.

[scgov.net](https://www.scgov.net)

Sarasota Emergency Management · County emergency planning, alerts and preparedness resources.

[scgov.net](https://www.scgov.net)

Sarasota Hurricane Preparedness · Evacuation levels, storm preparation and current county guidance.

[scgov.net](https://www.scgov.net)