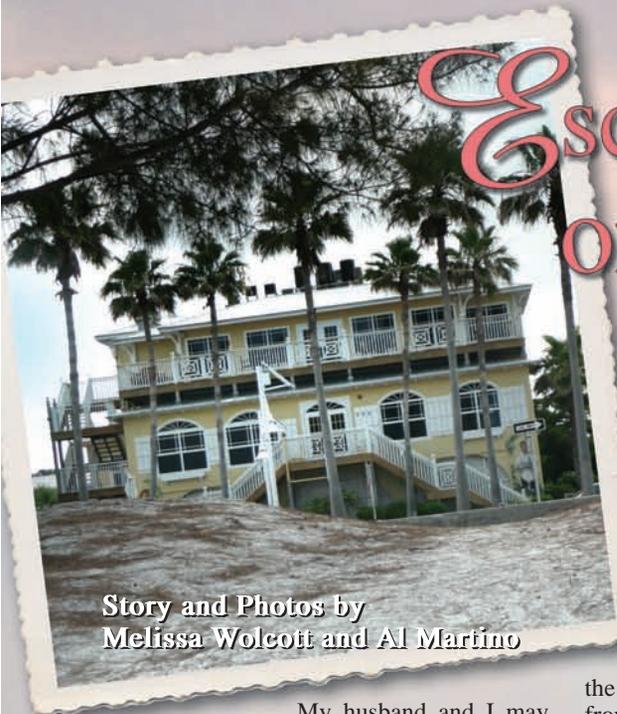


Escape to BridgeWalk on Anna Maria Island



Story and Photos by
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My husband and I may not agree on a lot of things — Neil Diamond vs. Jimi Hendrix (that just dated us, didn't it!) But one thing we do agree on is our decision to move to Florida from our respective Northern cities. Warm weather and great beaches sold us. As we travel around Florida, we are constantly amazed by how varied the beaches and beach towns are and all they have to offer. Somewhere in the state is the perfect beach experience for everyone — be it utter seclusion or around the clock party-



Part of the Honeymoon Package
includes rose petals and candlelight.

time. We heard that Anna Maria Island is the perfect beach area for unwinding and relaxing, so we headed down to the island's BridgeWalk Resort to catch some rays.

It turns out the BridgeWalk is a popular getaway for folks from the close-by cities of Tampa, St. Pete and Orlando, just because of the "homey" feeling of the hotel, and the relaxed reputation of the island.

Anna Maria Island is actually three separate municipalities — Bradenton Beach, Homes Beach and Anna Maria. From the casual observer, it's pretty much a seamless blend between cities, but they each have their own mayor, police force, etc. But they all agree on one thing — keeping the island as is, with a

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lot of character. No building above three stories is allowed, and you will find very few chain establishments.

Built some nine years ago by a charming mother and daughter team, BridgeWalk Resort is located on the southern end of the island, and close to the shopping and attractions found on Longboat Key and Sarasota. The resort is the largest hotel in the area with 28 rooms, from studio suites to 2 bedroom townhouses. They have connecting rooms which makes it great for families or friends traveling together. Their guest suites are very spacious, and, of special note — absolutely spotless. Our 2 bedroom townhouse looked like we were the first people to ever use it. The furnishings and fixtures are high quality and pristine.

If you go to the resort with your significant other, treat yourself to the "Honeymoon Package" — a chilled bottle of champagne and chocolate covered strawberries await you when you enter your suite, and the kingsize bed and jacuzzi are covered in rose petals surrounded by candlelight. It will set your mood up for your entire getaway!

Just a two-lane road separates the hotel from the beach, and BridgeWalk's Sun House Restaurant offers a panoramic view of the beach. The resort staff is as warm and friendly as can be, and we made sure we had dinner at sundown for the Sun House's evening "celebration" of green flash shooters and the singing of "You Are My Sunshine" when a bang on a gong announces the official dip of the sun. The Sun House is a local favorite, and serves up some very attractive and delicious dishes. Their Steak Oscar with Dill Mashed Potatoes is a real crowd pleaser.

The resort's complimentary breakfast is very satisfying as well, with a wide array of breakfast choices. Their make-your-own waffles are especially tasty, and folks kept going back for more (including us).

BridgeWalk plays host to the Anna Maria Artist Guild, which is very
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Living suite in a BridgeWalk Townhouse.



Sun House's Steak Oscar with Dill Mashed Potatoes.

strong in the area. Artists come and do some working displays at the resort, as well as feature their paintings. A scheduled dinner with the artists leads to animated discussions about art, and the events are growing in popularity.

Right across the street from the hotel is the really cute Fish Hole Miniature Golf, and some funky and artsy boutiques line the street.

What else is there to do on the island? Again, relaxation, unwinding is the key. Watersports are plentiful, there's great fishing at the historic pier, and some fine golf courses are nearby as well.

The BridgeWalk's slogan is "You'll Love It Here!" and it's true... you will.

The BridgeWalk is located at 100 Bridge Street, Bradenton Beach, Anna Maria Island, FL 34217. For more information about BridgeWalk, call 866-779-2545, or visit www.silverresorts.com

For more photos of BridgeWalk, visit AccentOnTampaBay.com - Travel & Event Photo Gallery - Florida Travel.

