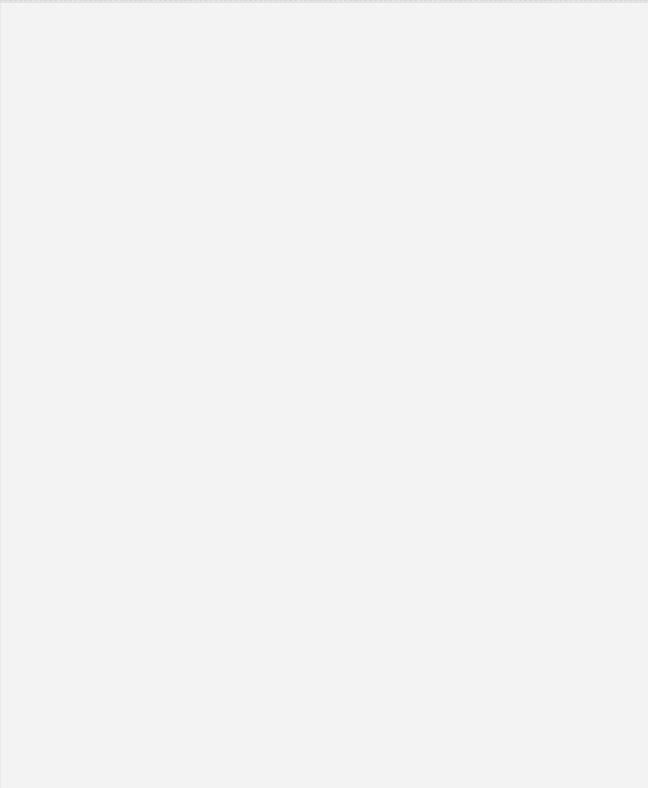




Sampling Seafood on Sanibel-Captiva Islands, Florida

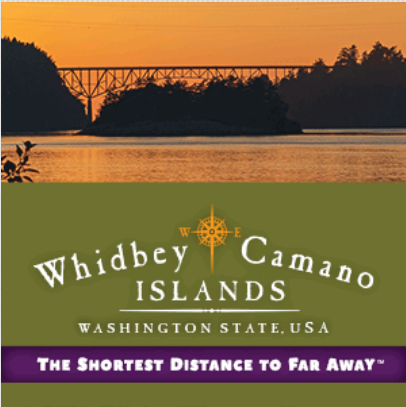


What a wonderful problem to have – while visiting tropical islands off of Florida’s coast, asking each other, “Which delicious seafood should we order today?” That was the case for writer Sandy Bornstein and her husband, Ira, (aka The Traveling Bornsteins) on a trip to the Sanibel-Captiva Islands. Here, Sandy guides us in what to expect, order, and see while we’re there.



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Where to Have Great Seafood
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Islands, FL. (Images by The Traveling Bornsteins. Graphic by
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Sampling the Seafood Scene on the Sanibel-Captiva Islands

Whenever The Traveling Bornsteins explore a coastal destination, we take advantage of our location by sampling the local seafood. During our spring visit to [South Seas Island Resort](#), we were able to select delicious appetizers and entrees on both Sanibel and Captiva Islands. **South Seas Island Resort** is a 330-acre tropical property located on the northern tip of Captiva Island. This tiny barrier island is only five miles long and about half a mile wide. It’s easily reached from Fort Meyers by crossing a three-mile causeway and then driving through Sanibel Island.



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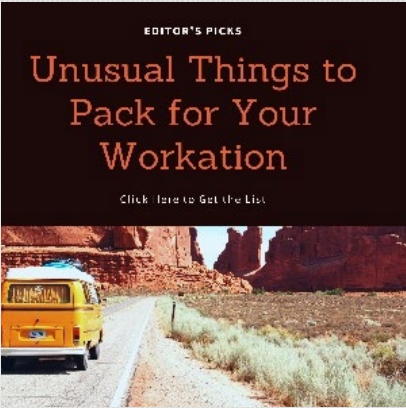
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Even though the resort has several dining options, we only ate a few meals onsite. We spent the remainder of our time dining at local restaurants. Some of these places were within walking distance of our accommodations, while others required us to drive. Our focus was on visiting places that served an abundance of fish entrees along with nutrient-dense foods. The emerald-colored Gulf of Mexico waters near Sanibel and Captiva Islands are recognized as the best site for grouper fishing in the State of Florida. After learning this fact, we added grouper to our checklist. Due to the lingering COVID restrictions and seasonal clientele, reservations were a must. However, on a couple of occasions we simply arrived early to avoid the crowds.



Sunset from the South Seas Island Resort on Captiva Island.



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Sanibel and Captiva Islands: The First Taste of Local Seafood

Surprisingly, none of the resort's restaurants were open for breakfast during our visit. If we wanted an early morning meal, we had to find an alternative place to eat. Instead of driving our car or taking the resort's trolley, we walked for about two and a half miles on the winding, narrow South Seas Plantation Road to a small area lined with souvenir shops and boutique restaurants. Partially shaded by the dense foliage, we were able to glance at a plethora of resort properties on both sides of the road.

Our first introduction to local fish was at [RC Otter's Island Eats](#), a restaurant voted best family restaurant by *Gulfshore Life Magazine*. I tried the **Ultimate Seafood Omelet** filled with gulf shrimp and white fish while Ira indulged in the **Crabby Times**, two crab cakes on top of scrambled eggs. The chef did not skimp on the fish ingredients. We also shared a **Granola n' Berries** entrée. Included in this was a generous selection of fresh raspberries, strawberries, and blueberries. After enjoying this protein-based breakfast, we trekked back to the resort.



Seafood omelet at RC Otters.

Dinner at Doc Ford's Rum Bar & Grille on Captiva Island

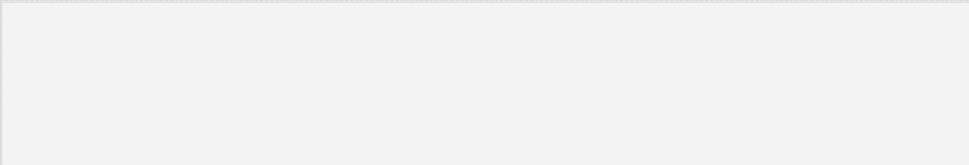
After reading online reviews for **Docs Ford's Rum Bar & Grille's** four locations, I made a reservation for the chain's Captiva Island location. It was a good fit for us since the menu emphasized local seafood flavored with Caribbean seasonings. To begin our meal, we started with a **Seared Tuna** appetizer. The slices of rare tuna were positioned on top of a bed of rice noodles tossed with crispy Asian vegetables, fresh herbs, and a Thai peanut vinaigrette. Additional flavors came from a sweet soy drizzle and wasabi coulis. Ira and I both ordered a new menu item — the **Macadamia Nut Crusted Grouper** with rice, arugula, peppers, and yellow squash topped with a toasted rum coconut sauce. Neither one of us was disappointed with our choices.



Seared Tuna Appetizer at Doc Ford's.

Island Time for Fish Tacos at Sunset Beach

After a few hours of swimming in the Gulf of Mexico and relaxing under an oversized beach umbrella, we addressed our mid-day hunger pains by ordering Fish Tacos from the **Latitudes Food Shack at Sunset Beach**. Our **Grilled Mahi Tacos** with sides of rice and black beans were delivered in a disposable container to our lounge chairs along with plastic cups filled with cold water. Our tranquil moments at the beach were occasionally interrupted by children frolicking in the coastal waves and by a family of dolphins gracefully leaping out of the water like synchronized swimmers.



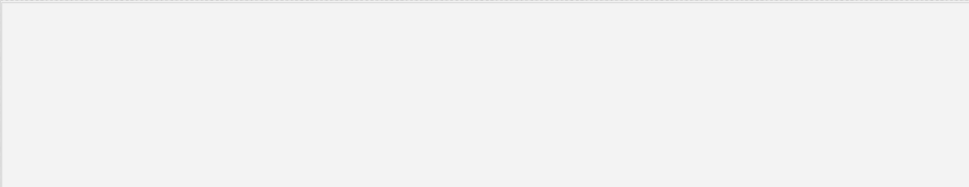


Fish Tacos from the Latitudes Fish Shack on Captiva.

Outdoor Dining at The Green Flash’s Prime Waterfront Location

We took a risk by not making a reservation and simply showing up early at this popular Captiva Island restaurant. Luckily, the **Green Flash’s** hostess was able to seat us outside so we could take advantage of the waterfront view.

Once again, we shared a tuna appetizer. This **Ahi Tuna** creation was encrusted in black and white sesame seeds and served along with a crunchy seaweed salad, pickled ginger and wasabi. While many seafood items on the menu were enticing, Ira and I both selected the daily special. The **Yellow Tail**, red snapper prepared with a citrus glaze was placed on top of a bed of sautéed spinach. A smattering of pecans and almonds along with two gulf shrimp were placed on top of the snapper. We splurged by ordering a delicious European version of Potatoes au Gratin.





Snapper at the Green Flash.

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Breakfast and Lunch on Sanibel Island

Before entering the 6,300-acre [J. N. Ding Darling National Wildlife Refuge](#) and visiting the [Bailey-Matthews National Shell Museum](#), we had breakfast at the [Over Easy Café](#). To our surprise, the parking lot was filled with cars and a line of people was forming outside the entryway. Fortunately, the wait was minimal. We were able to enjoy a **Farmer's Skillet** with two eggs, grilled breakfast potatoes, mushrooms, onions, tomatoes, and bell peppers.

After visiting the two main attractions on the north side of Sanibel Island, we headed back to Captiva Island. Right before the small bridge that connects the two islands, we stopped at the **Sunset Grill** for lunch. Ira chose a fresh **Mesquite Grilled Gulf Grouper Sandwich** served on a brioche roll seasoned with a remoulade dressing. I had a **Mixed Feld Green Salad** topped with a side of Grilled Gulf Shrimp. My salad had a wonderful mix of fresh ingredients including Artisan mixed field greens mixed with carrots, tomatoes, red onions, pepitas, sliced granny smith apples, strawberries, figs, sweet and spicy pecans, and goat cheese crumbles with a lemon thyme dressing.



The scene at the Wildlife Refuge.

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Harbourside Bar & Grill at South Seas Resort on Captiva Island, Florida

After a full day of touring Sanibel Island, we chose the most convenient location for dinner, the restaurant adjacent to our guest room. Our late dinner reservation allowed us to take another romantic walk on the spectacular beach before sundown. With a small bag in hand, we added to our growing collection of seashells.

Our outdoor table was adjacent to the marina filled with impressive yachts. For the third night in a row, we started with a tuna appetizer. This **Yellow Fin Ahi Tuna** had the standard ingredients – wasabi, pickled ginger and soy sauce. Crunchy rice noodles and slices of watermelon (red daikon) radishes added additional interest to this classic dish. Ira and I both selected the **Grilled Mahi** entrée. However, we personalized our dishes differently. Ira's was prepared with a Mango-Pineapple Sauce with Chimichurri Fingerling Potatoes and Broccolini while my entrée had a Mandarin Ginger Glaze with Grilled Asparagus and Sautéed Broccolini.



Grilled Mahi Mahi with Mango and Pineapple at the Harbourside Bar & Grill.

Encore Visit to Doc Ford’s Rum Bar & Grille

On the way to the airport, we stopped at **Doc Ford’s** for our final round of island seafood. We both settled into a familiar routine. Ira ordered a house specialty, a Grouper Sandwich, while I selected a Salad with a generous portion of Mahi. The fresh baby greens were tossed with grape tomatoes, balls of mozzarella, mandarin oranges, sundried cherries, spiced pecans, and homemade crispy onions topped with their homemade balsamic

vinaigrette dressing.

Our four-day visit at the South Seas Island Resort offered a wonderful opportunity to sample an array of local cuisine both on the resort as well as in private restaurants.

To learn more about visiting the Sanibel-Captiva Islands, visit their tourism website, [here](#).

To read about more of Sandy and Ira’s adventures on the islands, read [this article](#).

— Story by Sandy Bornstein. Photos by The Traveling Bornsteins

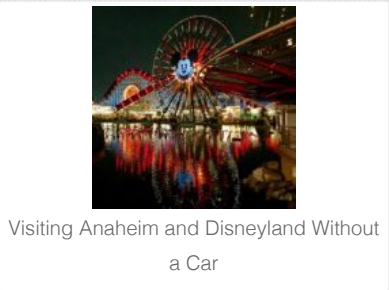
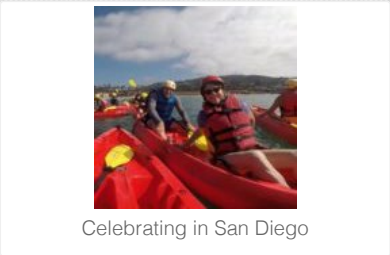
Note: As a recipient of a North American Travel Journalist Association gold medal in the culinary online category, Sandy Bornstein received a complimentary stay at the South Seas Island Resort. However, as is our policy, laid out in our [Disclosures](#) page, we never let that influence our opinions of a destination or the ability to inform our readers.

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Author: Sandy Bornstein

Sandy has visited more than 40 countries and lived as an international teacher in Bangalore, India. Sandy’s award-winning book, May This Be the Best Year of Your Life, is a resource for people contemplating an expat lifestyle and living outside their comfort zone. Sandy writes about food, family, intergenerational, and active midlife adventures highlighting land and water experiences, historical sites, and Jewish culture and history. You can follow Sandy on Facebook and Instagram.

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