

Goodland, FL is doing great! (Collier County, FL)

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Thank goodness for Goodland -- fishing village near Marco Island!

Whether coming by boat, luxury car, motorcycle or golf cart, there's no doubt that people were coming out to play in Goodland this weekend. Tourist season is heating up in Marco Island's fishing village, which features a skyline untouched by condominiums and high rises.

Katherine Salomone and Marie Frederick of Long Island, NY, said they visit Goodland annually and brought a friend, Laurie Buccos, to visit for the first time.

Salomone shared a common sentiment of what draws people to Goodland: "People from all walks of life come together and have a good time here, bikers, professionals, fishermen ..."

Over the weekend, Collier County Commissioner Donna Fiala was seen hobnobbing with the bikers, boat captains, vacationers and residents.

Stan Gober, 82, described the relative diversity saying people "forget about their troubles and intertwine with people that are rich and people that have nothing, all interacting with each other face up."

Gober, owner of Stan's Idle Hour Restaurant on Goodland Drive says the establishment, which opened in early October, is the "heart of Goodland."

It might be difficult to argue, especially on this Sunday afternoon, as hundreds flock to the outdoor waterfront bar watching live entertainers who beg for crowd participation and often get it.

While Stan's may be the main attraction on Sunday afternoons, many other Goodland businesses reopened this weekend with people ready to get back out in Goodland as autumn begins.

Gober says another part of the draw to the village is its relative lack of change over the years. Stan's has been in business 38 years and hosting shows for about 23 years.

"I've been part of the change, but it hasn't gone metropolitan. It's changed, but we've been keeping it down," he says.

Stan's is a bit unique with its overt patriotism that is often secluded to ball games and political events.

A six minute version of the Star Spangled Banner is the opener to every show. The unique entertainment that follows includes music by the Southern Cross Band, the Buzzards Lope song and dance led by Stan and the colorfully dressed, bright lipped and busty Buzzard Queen, Mary Martin.

The Island Woman store neighbors Stan's Idle Hour Restaurant. Island Woman models meander through the crowds showing off their eclectic variety of clothing, including silly sunglasses and sophisticated dresses.

Just down the street, or coastline by boat, is the Little Bar, a 30 year old establishment with century-old décor. The Little Bar reopened Thursday after being closed for two months.

Those who know Little Bar's owner, Ray Bozicnik, describe him in ways similar to the way they describe his century-old bar, which was shipped from Chicago – both are intricate and unique.

The wrought iron fence behind the waterfront bar once surrounded a 1900 mausoleum. It's one of many antique highlights, particularly as Halloween approaches. Bozicnik said the fence once surrounded a cemetery and embalming facility.

“The fence came from Eerie Pennsylvania of course,” he says drawing out the pronunciation of the city name.

As golf carts and boats also wandered away from Stan's to nearby bars and restaurants, a woman at the bar asks Stan's bartender, Cathy Bedard, if you can get a DUI on a golf cart.

Bedard, now residing in Naples, said she was a longtime Goodland restaurant. She laughs and then answers the question.

“Yes you can. You can get a DUI on a lawn mower. You can get one in a wheel chair and I know someone who did,” she says smiling.

“How about walking or crawling?” the patron asks.

“I don't know. I think that's a CUI,” Bedard says, still laughing as she whips up a Buzzard's Rum Punch.

Before long she comes back to the patron who is laughing along.

“Everyone on Goodland drives a golf cart. Even Stan has one,” Bedard says pointing to the owner's ride parked in the grass along side the open-air restaurant.

“There isn't a golf course on Goodland and they can't even get their golf carts off the island,” she says, now laughing even harder.

A sign on Goodland Drive on the outskirts of the village toward San Marco Road reads: No golf carts beyond this point. The idea of allowing golf carts on side streets has hit the chambers of Marco Island's City Hall, but it doesn't seem Goodland's village lifestyle is rubbing off on their city neighbors, not yet anyway.

That won't stop city Islanders from visiting and witnessing the camaraderie among Goodland's business owners.

Stan's is hosting a Halloween costume contest for the first time ever this year, offering a \$50 prize for the best costume and \$25 for the worst. It begins at 6 p.m., Oct. 31.

The Little Bar is hosting their legendary costume party and many say they are eager to see what Bozicnik will

be wearing this Halloween. While it couldn't be confirmed, it's possible Bozicnik could throw his hat in the ring of Stan's contest and quickly make it back to his own party at the Little Bar.

Old Marco Lodge owner Michelle Balante said Halloween usually goes to the Little Bar adding that she can't wait to go up there to see what Ray (Bozicnik) is going to wear.

Most descriptions of Bozicnik's previous Halloween costumes over the years included latex, lots of latex and a couple of dresses, according to Little Bar employee Daniela Calciano. He also is famous for his pumpkin carving techniques, particularly the use of a chain saw. The pumpkin carving contest is 6 to 9 p.m., Oct. 26, at the Little Bar.

The Old Marco Lodge, which reopened Friday, is a place where visitors can not only experience old Florida, but experience really, old Florida. While Stan's is Goodland's oldest business, the Marco Lodge includes the oldest building in the village.

The original Old Marco Lodge, built in 1869, was moved from what is now the City of Marco Island to Goodland in 1965. The original building has been expanded over the years.

"We have a great view of the water and the (Goodland) bridge. We don't have to be in a hurry to get you out the door. There is plenty of space and there is plenty of time to soak in the view," Balante said.

Capt. Lisa Oliver arrived at Stan's by boat with her dog and said she was happy to learn that the Old Marco Lodge once again welcomed dogs in their outside seating, so pet lovers could do some restaurant and bar hopping too. She said it was a question sometimes asked by her boat tour customers.

Balante said that Goodland's business owners are much more cooperative than they are competitive, adding that they often share produce or other items when needed and usually work together to host collaborative events.

Just around the bend from the Old Marco Lodge is Marker 8, which opened early in June, serving Goodland residents and visitors throughout the summer.

According to Marker 8 server Christina Ketchum, 17, the owner's daughter, it's the bubbles that bring people to Marker 8.

On the dock behind the restaurant, sitting near the red Marker 8 sign is a bubble machine.

The nine table restaurant offers an intimate setting and the owner, Jim Ketchum, describes it as "simple."

"We joke that we just got cable a couple years ago," Ketchum said.

Although cable did arrive throughout Goodland at least by the 1980s, mail still doesn't arrive in the mailbox. More accurately, there are no mailboxes on Goodland.

Ketchum said it's not a problem. Goodland residents pick up their mail at the small Goodland post office. For those situations where senders say "no P.O. boxes allowed," they will deliver to your door when needed, he says.

Goodland business hours and events:

n Stan_s Idle Hour Restaurant, 221 Goodland Drive West

Open Saturday and Sunday until Oct. 31; then open every day except Monday through June.

Oct. 31 _ Halloween Costume Contest begins at 6 p.m.

Nov. 9 _ October Fest (Yes, it is in November)

n Little Bar, 205 Harbor Place

Open daily 11:30 a.m. to 2 a.m.

Oct. 27 _ Pumpkin carving contest 6 to 9 p.m.

Oct. 31 _ Halloween Costume Party begins 8 p.m.

Nov. 1 _ Day of the Dead, El Dia de los Muertos, a Mexican-Indian three-day holiday celebrating the dead for a younger crowd.

Nov. 2 _ Day of the Dead continuation of Halloween for an older crowd celebrating an opening of the portals to the deceased.

n Marker 8, 123 Bayshore Way, site of the former Crabby Lady restaurant

Open daily 7 a.m. to 9 p.m.; closed Monday.

n Old Marco Lodge, 401 Papaya Street

Open daily 11:30 a.m. to midnight; closed Monday and Tuesday.

Live entertainment daily beginning in November.

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