



ERIN
HARREL

of Cape Coral has a Ph.D. in education and is the mother of three children.

Fishing, hiking and exploring

Affordable fun comes naturally in Southwest Florida

Greg and I thoroughly enjoy traveling and seeing national and international wonders of the world. However, I have found southern Florida is host to many wonderful natural habitats we often take for granted.

Over the years, we have encountered many fascinating and fun areas for outdoor recreation. Recently, a dear friend, Mary Jo Merando, called and asked if we were interested in going fishing. The kids were overjoyed at the opportunity to spend quality time with their friends Jo and Jordan.

After packing a lunch, snacks, plenty of water and our fishing gear, we headed to the Sanibel Causeway. We met the Merando clan on the right side of the causeway, just before the second bridge to Sanibel. We quickly unpacked and the kids had their poles in the water in no time. Of course, that was after a heavy slathering of sunscreen.

Mary Jo and I spent a few hours talking and laughing as we watched the kids play (and fish). Dolphins dove in and out of the water just a few hundred feet from the shore and boats big and small cruised through the waterways. It was an amazing afternoon enjoying the beautiful scenery. The best part is it cost virtually nothing (if you don't count the cost of lunch, gas to get there and \$6 toll).



Jude, Riley and Maggie, with Jo and Jordan Merando

We have also found a hidden gem in Koreshan State Historic Site in Estero. While there is a small fee for admission to the park (\$5 per vehicle with 2-8 people, \$4 single-occupant vehicle, \$2 pedestrians and cyclists), the park hosts a day's worth of activities for the whole family.

On a recent visit, we were able to find a parking space near the playground and boat ramp. First, my older two children humored Maggie by playing at the ample playground. We then rode our bikes around the park

to the Koreshan Village. Jude found it interesting that he had studied the village and seen the pictures that adorned the walls in his sixth-grade textbook.

After an hour or so touring the village and imagining what it would have been like to live there, we hit the dirt path that led back to the playground area. We rode along the river's edge for about 30 minutes. It was a beautiful trail covered in trees with rays of sunshine glowing through. ➤

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