

# The Sarasota Post



## TWO HOURS AT BAYFRONT PARK IN SARASOTA

*Written by Jodi Schwarzenbach on 17 May 2017.*

If you only had two hours to show a favorite friend around Sarasota, where would you take them? You want to infuse the time with a little slice of the arts, a nibble of some good eats, a sip of a cold drink, and some pure eye candy in the form of Sarasota's beautiful sites.

You want more than a restaurant, where an after-dinner walk and talk is possible. You want to fit as much in to your two hours as possible. For me, a visit to Bayfront Park, where locals, tourists, boaters, artists and, in general, a very eclectic mix of people can commune and enjoy a beautiful sunset, art in the park, great food, and much more.

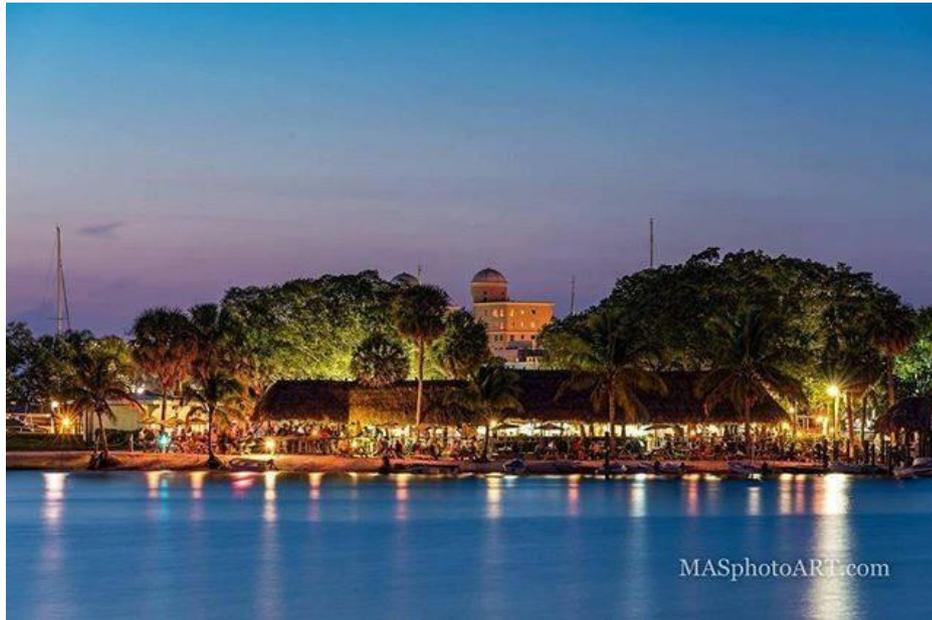


Let's start with dinner and drinks. Of course, for a special occasion or for when you have time to leisurely dine, Marina Jack's is a great option, especially for out-of-towners. From the main dining room where you can enjoy an elegant meal to the outside patio bar, and the piano bar, there are a variety of restaurant options. But, for my two-hour date with my visiting bestie, I would start with O'Leary's Tiki Bar and Grill. Inexpensive and unpretentious, the ambiance is immediately inviting. The unexpected bonus to O'Leary's is that it sits on a little peninsula, jutting out into Sarasota Bay just enough to give it an intimate flair, as you sit outside in the covered patio area or at the tiki bar. An island bar menu featuring baskets of burgers, fries, fish sandwiches and the like, feed the soul without too much impact to the wallet. Add in a full bar and a guy playing acoustic guitar and you have set the mood for you and yours to enjoy not only the food, but the spectacular sunset you will view, while listening to a Jimmy Buffet song in the background. Can you say, "Cheeseburger in Paradise"?



After dinner, a walk in the park is in order. Nearby is a beautiful children's park and playground complete with hundred-year-old oaks meandering throughout the entire area. Bayfront Park often features different "art in the park" series, and the current exhibit is a sight to behold. "Embracing Our Differences" is a traveling show depicting diversity as one of our greatest assets. Billboard-size displays created by local, national, and international students and writers capture the essence of inclusivity in vibrant colorful displays and meaningful captions.

Children's Fountain is a popular destination at Bayfront Park where you will often see the stroller brigade with moms and older siblings, who are along to enjoy the fountains. Plenty of shade and seating makes this a great place to have a picnic and let the kids play. And perhaps the most beautiful aspects of Bayfront Park are the hundreds of yachts bobbing gently with the sway of the current. If you're into seeing the toys of the definitely rich and possibly famous, this is the place to boat-gawk. And, what a wonderful backdrop to your walk around the park with a friend.



Well, time is about up! In less than two hours you can dine, wine, and feel the Florida sunshine. Be sure to end it all with a selfie under the kissing couple, formally known as “Unconditional Surrender” sculpture. In pure Sarasota style, you might find someone strumming their guitar or selling their homemade crafts amongst the tourists and informed locals. That’s what I love about spending time at this beautiful spot along Sarasota Bay. It is a great reminder that the beauty of the area is for everyone, so even if you can’t afford to step inside the restaurants, a healthy picnic and blanket placed under the old oak trees at Bayfront Park looking out at the water will leave you feeling like a millionaire.

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