



Double the Fun

with
**Off the Hook
Adventures!**

Off The Hook Adventures, have been offering Marco Islanders and visitors exceptional eco excursions on their beautiful 27ft sailing catamaran for over 9 years. This summer they are pleased to announce that they have added another sailing catamaran to their fleet, enabling them to offer double the fun for couples, families and now even groups of up to twelve people.

The sailing catamarans are both very comfortable and perfect for relaxing. A shaded canopy beneath the boom covers the entire back deck, which has cushioned seating with back support stretching along each side, and offers a welcome respite from the hot Florida sun. But if catching some rays is what you have in mind there are two large trampolines up front with plenty of sunbathing space for everyone.

Off The Hook Adventures' boats also feature a large cooler with an assortment of sodas, bottled water and light snacks including chips, crackers and cookies for your enjoyment.

When I was lucky enough to join a recent trip with Off the Hook Adventures, the captain used his outboard motor to take us from Caxambas Park and Marina to a nearby small mangrove island which is home to nesting brown pelicans (which until 2009 were on the endangered species list), great blue herons, and snowy egrets. When we were close to the island he told me that erosion is causing this amazing bird sanctuary to get smaller every year and he is working with local islanders and experts to see if it can be preserved and protected. However, in spring and early summer it is still possible to get some great photographs of adult and baby brown pelicans there.

*Photos courtesy of
Off the Hook Adventures*



As we continued the eco tour, we made our way across the pass to a sandbar off Kice Island where the shelling is second to none. We were accompanied by a curious dolphin who constantly appeared and reappeared around the boat and swam alongside us, watching our every move. When our companion eventually tired of the chase and swam off to join a pod of dolphin fishing in the bay, the captain anchored the catamaran on the sandbar and pulled it close in so that, with the aid of some small steps, I was able to gently ease myself off the boat and into the ankle deep-waters.

Left to explore the beach while the captain secured the boat, I gazed out across the sparkling waters of the Gulf of Mexico and felt as if I was the only person in the world. It was absolutely gorgeous and despite my decision not to take a bag for shells (I didn't want to get sand on my camera) I just couldn't resist collecting a few perfect sand dollars and some of the quite rare shells which dotted the powder soft sand.

When he caught up with me, the captain was a mine of information about the shells I had collected and the flocks of seabirds which fringed the shoreline. He also told me that sometimes, especially in the spring, the water here is as crystal clear as it is in the Keys, so he keeps snorkeling equipment on board in case some of his more adventurous passengers wish to use it.

Summer and early fall is such a great time to take this trip because the warm waters are perfect for manatee, and loggerhead sea turtles come in closer to shore during their nesting season. Off The Hook Adventures' passengers will often see dolphins, manatees, and turtles during their guided tour.

And now it was time for the part I had really been looking forward to... setting sail! The captain expertly raised the sails, cut the engine and with no fuss at all we were slicing through the shining waters with barely a sound. The feeling of exhilaration with the wind rushing through my hair was matched only by the excitement of seeing a spotted eagle ray jump from the water as we skirted the shore of a deserted island just south of Marco. I ask you... what more could you want?

For more information about Off The Hook Adventures you can visit their website at www.offthehookadventures.com or call 239-571-4665



Caxambas Rookery

Corey Yuskaitis, an Off The Hook Adventures Licensed Coast Guard Master Captain, has been keeping a close eye on the condition of the pelican colony in Caxambas Pass (at the south end of Marco Island) since he was a teenager.

He has a degree in mechanical engineering, from the University of South Florida, and is extremely concerned about the erosion of this small mangrove island that is a sanctuary to previously endangered birds like the brown pelican.

He has contacted Rookery Bay, who manages the land, about his concerns and is working on starting a non profit organization to help fund the restoration of this environmentally important little island.

If you're interested in hearing more and/or helping with this project please give Capt. Corey a call at 239-571-4665.

