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Once fans of Florida holidays have done all the obvious things like visiting Cape Kennedy, the Everglades and Orlandoâ€™s theme parks, it may be time for them to relax a little and enjoy many of the recreational sports and pastimes which are so popular all along the coast.

While staying in the Tampa Bay area, we drove a few miles south and crossed one of the 3 interconnecting bridges to Anna Maria Island to see what the locals and visitors got up to when they werenâ€™t being really sensible and either lazing on the pure white sandy beach or cooling off in the azure waters of the Gulf.

Not surprisingly, boating constitutes a mainstay activity with everything from kayaking to deep sea fishing on the menu. Those with their own kayaks and canoes enjoy slipping into Palma Sola Bay where they can head off to the watery mangrove tunnels of Robinson Preserve. Those without their own craft can easily rent them and paddle through the mangroves or offshore and spot manatees and dolphins enjoying the sea grass and calm waters.

Similarly, those who are keen on seafishing and do not have their own boat can find plenty of old salts who know the coastline like the back of their hand and are only too keen to share their years of experience with newcomers. We particularly like the way all these skippers call themselves â€œ Captain â€œ even though most of them have never been in command of anything bigger than their own fishing boat. Those who donâ€™t want to venture offshore by taking part in a fishing charter can still go after Redfish, Snapper, Mackerel, Black Drum, Snook, Trout and Amberjack by casting lines off the numerous bridges and piers which dot Anna Mariaâ€™s 7 mile long shoreline.

For a really wacky new experience, visitors can now try their hand at horse surfing â€“ riding or standing bareback on horses while they enjoy a leisurely walk or swim in the surf. It seems there is no end to the ingenuity involved in developing novel ways for visitors to while away their time by the Gulf.

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