

GENERAL NEWCOMER INFORMATION

POPULATION

The official census for 2000 was 9,016 on Pine Island (plus 4,000 during winter months). According to the Lee County Planning Division, the community breakdown is as follows: St. James City – 4,064, Bokeelia - 1,997, Pineland - 444, Pine Island Center - 1,721, Matlacha – 735, and Matlacha Isles and Shores - 304.

CLIMATE

These official readings come from Page Field in Ft. Myers, about 20 miles inland. Pine Island's climate is moderated by the surrounding waters, so we are several degrees cooler in summer with the afternoon seabreeze off the Gulf, and several degrees warmer in winter than Ft. Myers, because of the warming effects of the water. In Ft. Myers, the annual mean is 74 degrees, the summer mean is 81.9 with the winter mean at 69.5 degrees. Our average rainfall is 53.4 inches, two-thirds of which falls in the form of summer, late afternoon showers. Our dry season is winter.

GEOGRAPHY

Pine Island is the largest and least known of a group of islands along Southwest Florida's Gulf Coast near Ft. Myers. This island is 17 miles long and is two miles wide at its broadest point. We are almost completely ringed in mangrove estuaries, many of which are protected wildlife preserves including all of Little Pine Island, much of Pine Island Sound and Matlacha Pass. The island's north to south sandy ridge is the home of native pines, birds (including the bald eagle), and tropical groves. The highest elevations follow the ridge along highway 767.

LOCAL GOVERNMENT

None of the island's communities is incorporated. We are governed by Lee County. The Courthouse is in downtown Ft. Myers, with a new government branch in Cape Coral.

EDUCATION

Pine Island Elementary School is one of the highest academically rated schools in Southwest Florida. Lee County now has School Choice. Through school choice, Pine Island students attend three different middle schools and three high schools - they often don't get their first (or even second) choice. Vocational School High Tech North.

In Ft. Myers, Edison Community College, University of South Florida and Florida Gulf Coast University are our area Colleges.

HOSPITALS

Cape Coral Hospital and Clinic are located on Del Prado Blvd. In Ft. Myers are Lee Memorial, Southwest Florida Regional Medical Center, and Gulf Coast Hospital.

GOLF

In Bokeelia, Alden Pines Country Club, par 71 with 18 holes, 5,699 yards from the pro tees. Open to the public.

CAMPGROUNDS, RV RESORTS

At the southern end of Pine Island, Ft. Myers/Pine Island KOA and Cherry Estates RV Park. In Bokeelia, Pink Citrus Trailer Park, and Tropic Isle RV Park.

SWIMMING

An olympic size public pool is located at Phillips Park at Pine Island Center. There is a nominal charge.

TENNIS

Lighted public courts are at Phillips Park, Pine Island Center.

AIRPORT

The 93 million dollar Southwest Florida International Airport opened in South Ft. Myers in 1983. It is accessible by taking either U.S. 41 or 1-75 east to the end of Daniels Road. Major airlines and commuter airlines continue to expand their service to the new airport as Southwest Florida becomes an ever increasing popular destination. There are several private airstrips on Pine Island, but none is open to the general public.

LIBRARY

Pine Island's library building is located on Russell Road, just north of Phillips Park at Pine Island Center. It is part of the Lee County system. A nominal fee is charged to non-residents, but it is available to all.

FIRE PROTECTION

We are served by the Matlacha-Pine Island Fire Control District. The headquarters, completed in 1984 is at Phillips Park, Pine Island Center. Stations are located at St. James City and Bokeelia.

WATER SERVICE

Nearly all of the island is provided water from the Greater Pine Island Water Association. Our wellfields and plant are on Stringfellow Rd., 1-1/2 miles South of Pine Island Center. The Reverse Osmosis (RO) plant is one of the most modern and up-to-date facilities anywhere. Funds for expansion are raised by a one-time connection fee of \$2,586.00 when a property owner wishes to join the system. Membership is voluntary; many islanders are just as happy on deep wells.

AMBULANCE SERVICE

Lee County provides emergency Advance Life Support Services. One ambulance is always stationed at the fire department headquarters at Pine Island Center.

POLICE PROTECTION

As part of unincorporated Lee County, we are served by the County's Sheriff's Department. Usually there are two cars on patrol on the island. St. James City and Matlacha also have Neighborhood Security Patrols which are in direct radio contact with the Sheriff's Department through the night.

SEWERS

Only Matlacha has a public system. Private systems are in use in the island condominiums and manufactured home communities. The rest of Pine Island uses septic tanks which tend to work rather well when installed properly on the island's sandy soil and coral rock base.

THE PINE ISLAND ORDINANCE

One reason that Pine Island has not become a paved-over resort island is because of this ordinance. Unlike other places along the Gulf Coast, building densities are a fraction of those on the other islands, with a maximum of five units per acre in the built-up areas of the island, one unit per acre in the island's rural areas. High rises were planned for Pine Island until height limitations stopped them. The maximum allowance is 38 feet.

THE FLORIDA HOMESTEAD EXEMPTION

Florida homeowners can save hundreds of dollars on their property taxes under the Florida Homestead Exemption. Put simply, it allows a \$50,000 exemption off of the assessed value of your Florida home. It is available only to bona fide residents. For your first time application, you must appear in person at the property appraiser's office, Lee County Courthouse, between January 1st and March 1st. Among the things that you will need to apply are your deed or tax bill, a Florida driver's license and voter's registration card. For all of the details, call the property appraiser's office at 339-6100.

CHURCHES OF PINE ISLAND

First Baptist Church of Pine Island, Avenue D, PIC; First Baptist Church of St. James City, 8th Avenue, SJC; Our Lady of the Miraculous Medal Church, Hwy. 767 and Harry St., Bokeelia; St. John's Episcopal Church, Hwy. 767, at Flamingo Bay; Pine Island United Methodist Church, PIC; Fishers of Men Lutheran Church, PIC; Church of God of Prophecy, Hwy. 767, Bokeelia; Free Spirit Revival Center Pine Island Center.

CLUBS AND ORGANIZATIONS OF PINE ISLAND

American Legion #136, Hwy. 767, St. James City; Pine Island Loyal Order of Moose #1954, Hwy. 767, St. James City; Veterans of Foreign Wars #4253, Hwy. 767 and Courtney Road, Greater Pine Island Chamber of Commerce, Hwy. 78, Matlacha; Pine Island Civic Association, West end of Hwy. 78, Pine Island Center; St. James Civic Association, 4th Avenue, St. James City; Flamingo Bay Civic Association, Hwy. 767 and Curlew Drive; Matlacha Civic Association, Matlacha Park; Kiwanis Club of St. James City, Bert's Bar, Hwy. 78, Matlacha; Little League, Scouting, Pine Island Art Association, Pine Islands Lions, Pine Island Boat Club, Pine Island Garden Club, and many more.