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 Greater Pine Island Chamber of Commerce
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 3640 Pine Island Rd., Matlacha, FL 33993

RANDALL RESEARCH CENTER AND THE CALUSA HERITAGE TRAIL

Courtesy of the Randall research Center, Pineland, FL

Located at the Pineland archaeological site, the Randall Research Center (RRC) is a place dedicated to learning about southwest Florida's archaeology, history, and ecology. Situated in the scenic community of Pineland on the western shore of historic Pine Island, the RRC encompasses over 60 acres at the heart of the Pineland archaeological site, a massive mound complex extending more than 200 acres from the mangrove shoreline. Visitors to the Calusa Heritage Trail can tour this internationally significant site and learn about the Calusa and their natural and cultural environment.

Domain of the Calusa

When Europeans first arrived on Florida's shores in the 1500's the Calusa were the most powerful people in all of South Florida. For many centuries these Native Americans accumulated huge shell mounds, engineered canals, and sustained thousand of people from the fish and shellfish found in the rich estuaries west and south of Fort Myers. Lacking local stone or metal, they developed tools and ornaments from shell and bone. Their painted and sculpted wooden artwork is among the most renowned in North America. Their shell mound sites dotting the Southwest Florida Gulf Coast preserve a rich legacy of this remarkable culture.

The Archaeology of Pineland

The Pineland site was a Calusa Indian town for over 1,500 years. Enormous shell mounds still overlook the waters of Pine Island Sound. The remains of many centuries of Indian village life blanket the pastures and citrus groves. Remnants of an ancient canal that reached across Pine Island sweep through the complex. Sand burial mounds stand in the woods. Historic structures representing Florida's early pioneer history also still exist at Pineland. Native plants and animals characteristic of coastal hammocks, pinelands, wetlands, and shell mounds are in abundance. The site is listed in the National Register of Historic Places, and as a designated County Historical Resource.

Calusa Heritage Trail

Visitors to the Randell Research Center can tour the Calusa Heritage Trail, 7/10 of a mile interpretive walkway that leads visitors through the mounds, canals, and other features of the Pineland archaeological site. Colorful, museum-quality interpretive signs along the trail provide visitors with detailed information regarding the Calusa Indians who inhabited the Pineland site, their culture and environment, and the history of Southwest Florida after the Calusa left. The trail also features observation platforms atop the site's tallest shell mound, in addition to trail-side benches and a boardwalk and bridge over low-lying areas. Parking is available inside the main gate to the Randell Research Center at 13810 Waterfront Drive. Public restrooms and picnic facilities are also provided. The Calusa Heritage Trail is open daily for self-guided visits from sunup to sundown. Restrooms, book and gift shop, and classroom are open Monday-Saturday from 10:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. Guided tours are offered to the public during peak season (January - April) on Wednesdays, Fridays, and Saturdays at 10 a.m. and 1 p.m. Groups may also schedule guided tours at other times by calling the RRC at 239-283-2157. Requested donations for visitors to the Calusa Heritage Trail are \$7.00 for adults, \$5.00 for seniors, and \$4.00 for children. Members of the Friends of the RRC are admitted free. Income from donations and memberships makes it possible for the RRC maintain this important archaeological site.



What to Wear and Bring

Because the Calusa Heritage Trail is out of doors, visitors should dress accordingly. Summer conditions include heat, humidity, and frequent afternoon thunderstorms, and winter morning temperatures occasionally drop into the 40s or 30s, combined with the effects of wind chill. In addition, much of the site is open to sun exposure, and mosquitos and gnats can be bothersome during the summer wet season. The following recommendations are intended as suggestions only:

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