

Retreats: Island condo bought on the fly

By **JOHN EWOLDT**, Star Tribune

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Pointe Santo condo, Sanibel Island, Florida

In 1997 Randy Zats, his wife, Ellen Hertz, and extended family vacationed on Sanibel Island, Fla. On their last day, the family went to a condominium open house. "Our bags were already packed but we made an offer and flew back to Minneapolis not knowing if it was accepted," he said.

The gulf-view unit is part of Pointe Santo, a condominium complex with 140 units. Zats, who has since bought out his family members' shares, owns a two-bedroom, two-bath unit. He and his wife, who live in St. Louis Park, spend two weeks there in November and June and rent it out the remaining time.

Zats said he's on island time when he's there. "The longer you stay, the lazier you become," he said.

Getting there: Fly to Fort Myers on Northwest or Sun Country and then drive 45 minutes to Sanibel Island.

Favorite part: Collecting seashells -- sand dollars, hermit crabs, starfish, mermaid's purses.

Least favorite part: The hurricane season every September. (The condo now has hurricane-proof windows.)

Traditions: Watching the sun set and then going to McT's Shrimp House and Tavern for freshly caught gulf shrimp.

Area must-see: Ding Darling National Wildlife Refuge, the drive to Captiva Village, the music at Ellington's Jazz Bar, the Bailey-Matthews Shell Museum.

Winter fun: A boat cruise to Cabbage Key, where Jimmy Buffett wrote "Cheeseburgers in Paradise."

Rental experience: Rates from \$1,150 to \$2,450 a week, plus tax. Contact www.sanibelaccom.com for rentals.