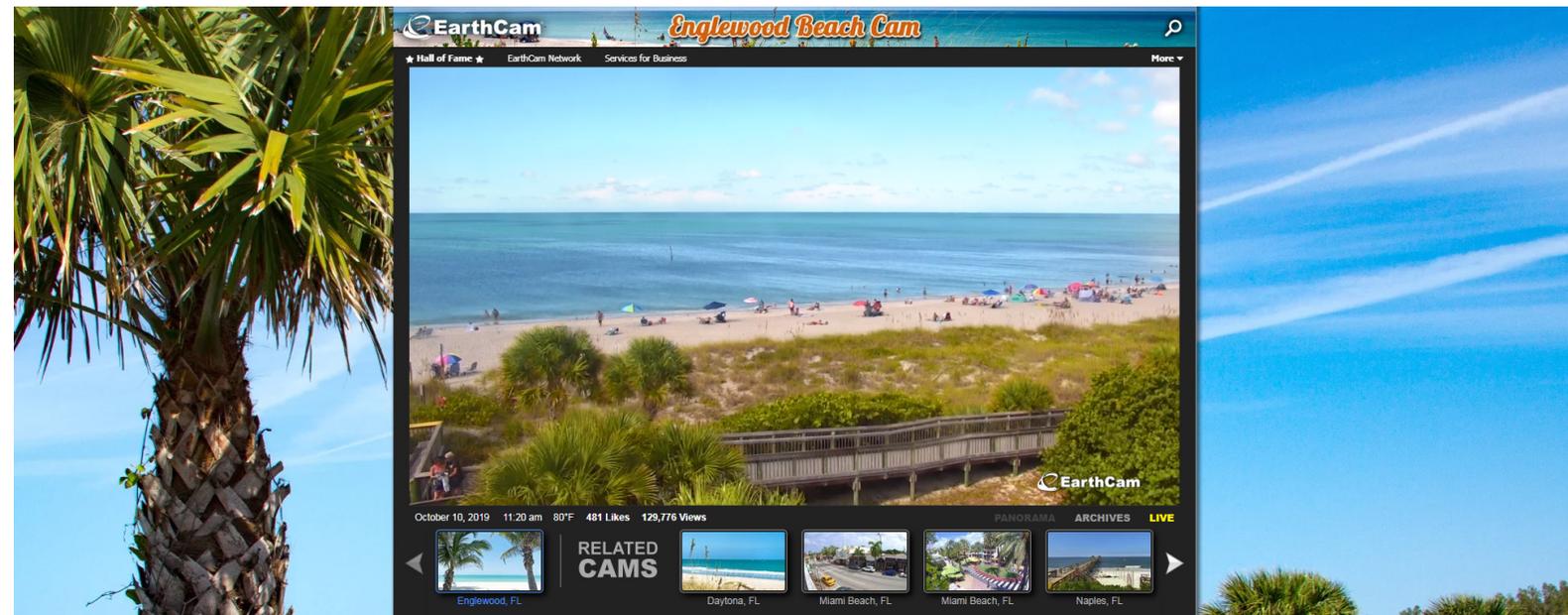


## Live eye at Englewood Beach

By Steve Reilly Staff Writer • September 12, 2019



ENGLEWOOD — Thinking about going to Englewood Beach?

Now, you can check out the public beach conditions before you leave your home. Visit [www.pureflorida.com/beachcam](http://www.pureflorida.com/beachcam) for a live-eye glimpse of the beach.

“With the support of this beach camera, people will have 24-hour live streaming, high-definition access to Englewood Beach, offering a doorway into current beach conditions — such as weather, wind speeds, tide levels and more — allowing for beach goers to effortlessly plan their perfect day at the beach,” said Wendie Vestfall, Punta Gorda/Englewood Beach Visitor & Convention Bureau tourism director, in a press release Thursday.

Siesta Key is the only one of Sarasota County’s public beaches with a live cam.

The installation of the live camera at Englewood Beach is part of a statewide Visit Florida “red tide recovery” effort to support Southwest Florida and other communities affected by the persistent and intense toxic red blooms in 2018, said Jennifer Huber, Charlotte County tourism public relations manager.

The camera is perched on top of the beach pavilion. You can zoom in and move the view back and forth.

The Englewood Beach live eye is integrated into the [EarthCam](#) network. The county tourism bureau can operate the live cam remotely, and it even has its own automatic lens wiper for rainy days, Huber said. The bureau will be responsible for its maintenance.

Visit Florida paid \$5,645 for the camera itself. Another \$3,000 was paid for the boring of the cable conduit to install internet bandwidth and another \$150 for EarthCam technical installation.

All of the bills aren’t in yet, Huber said, since the physical installation of the camera was only completed a few weeks ago. The tourism bureau will pay \$400 monthly through Comcast to EarthCam for support, hosting, streaming, software and bandwidth.

“None of this is paid through local taxpayer money,” she said. All the expenses for the live cam will be paid out of the additional 5% sales tax the county charges tourists and visitors for hotels and other short-term rentals.

“I always said it was a good idea,” said Mark Timchula, better known as the Beach Guy for his umbrellas and chair rentals at Englewood Beach.

Six or seven years ago, Timchula said, he broached the idea of having a live-eye at the public beach. He provides his own “live eye” at Englewood Beach. For more than a year, especially when red tide plagued Manasota Key and other barrier islands, Timchula posted on his Facebook page daily condition reports from Englewood Beach.

Ed Hill, executive director of the Englewood Area Chamber of Commerce likes the idea of a beach cam. “It can be a marketing tool,” he said. The chamber’s web page is visited by 60,000 to 70,000 people annually. The chamber will provide a link to the live cam on its home page.