



## Estero, Florida

**Home of Germain Arena, Miromar Outlet Malls as well as Gulf Coast University.**

**Estero Is Spanish for Estuary** - where a river joins a sea. It's an apt name. *The Estero River* runs through both our community's geography and its history. Today the Estero River is a five-mile recreational waterway that winds westward between Corkscrew Road and Broadway to the estuary at [Koreshan State Park](#) on Estero Bay leading to the Gulf of Mexico. But the river's historical importance to Estero dates back some 600 years. Ponce deLeon discovered it in 1513 when *Mound Key*, a half-mile from the estuary in Estero Bay, was the capital of the Calusa Indian nation. The Calusa then numbered 50,000 and archeologists tell us that they first settled here over 2,000 years ago. Mound Key was also the site of the first Jesuit mission in North America.

### FAST FACT:

[Estero's first homesteader arrived in 1882.](#)

He was followed by others who farmed citrus along the river and then used the waterway to ship harvests north via the gulf. (Florida's first "naval" oranges?)

Estero's most noted pioneers, the Koreshan commune from Chicago, settled beside the Estero River in 1884. But the group's growth was doomed - its leaders practiced celibacy. Their practice made perfect. Their settlement area is today's [Koreshan State Historic Site & Park](#) on the northwest corner of Highway 41 at Corkscrew Road. The park's pristine riverside beauty and restored historic buildings reward visitors with silent, spectacular displays of nature and Estero's history.

Two miles west of [Koreshan State Historic Site & Park](#) on the river you'll find [Koreshan State Park](#) at the estuary on Estero Bay. Yes, we have *two* state parklands in Estero with nearly identical names. Read on and you'll see that the [Estero Community Plan](#) recognizes both the appearance and history of the river region with provisions to perpetuate the character, resources and habitat of this unique area.

Estero was a major citrus producing area for 50 years beginning in 1900 but the industry moved out and our land was given over to grazing. During this period Ft Myers and Naples began to grow - the former to the south and the latter to the north. Being equidistant from both, Estero was the last area between the two to experience growth. Now it's considered the epicenter of growth in southwest Florida with a current population of 30,000 that's growing at the rate of 30 new homes every week.

