



## DRIVING ITINERARIES

# TAKE A ROAD TRIP!

It's a land of plantations and patriots, pine forests and politicians; remote, naturally beautiful, unspoiled and enchanting. This is Florida before Disney, spring break crowds and Cape Canaveral; authentic and southern in all its ways. In Florida, the farther north you go, the more southern you become.

There are more antebellum plantations in North Florida than any other southeastern destination, the largest collection of natural springs on the planet, amazing sunsets, wonderfully quiet recreational rivers and lots of opportunities to spot wildlife. Some very remote, uncrowded scenic roads winding through the region seem almost unreal in the fourth largest state in the US.

The vast plantations and the gentry of northern Florida share this land with cattle ranchers called "Crackers" because they cracked their whips above their cattle, who lived considerably less comfortable hardscrabble lives, making a living from the land. Today, you can experience

both lifestyles. The homestead of Marjorie Rawlings, author of *The Yearling*, is typical "Cracker" architecture, as are the Dudley Farm Historic State Park and Forest Capital State Park Museum in Perry.

The Timucuan Indians settled here more than 12,000 years ago, followed by the Spanish explorers who roamed the area starting in the 1500s. Later, part of the underground railroad actually ran south through Florida. We invite you to explore the rich heritage of this region.

Natural North Florida is covered with delightful small historic towns, agricultural history from sugar cane, cotton and tobacco, a diverse array of award winning Florida State Parks and, in the football season, a rivalry between the Seminoles of Florida State University and the Gators of the University of Florida.

Wonder why you've never considered visiting the "real" Florida before? You'd have to travel far and wide to find anywhere like it.



▶ When it comes to outdoor adventure, Original Florida has it all. Whether you're an "extreme" adventurer or you prefer "soft" adventures, you'll feel right at home.

Original Florida's extensive natural playgrounds vary from the huge Gulf of Mexico to a 14-mile long underground aquifer and hundreds of natural springs. They're as different as the Suwannee River is from Payne's Prairie, from sailing and snorkeling, to canoeing, kayaking and bicycling. It's no wonder that the original "Tarzan" movies were filmed in this region!

If you're a serious nature lover, you will find Original Florida amongst the most awesome places on the planet. Wildlife and bird watching opportunities are around every corner. If you don't get a glimpse of an alligator, great blue heron, pelican, turtle, American egret, deer, or osprey on any given day, it's probably because you haven't gotten out of bed yet. The rivers and springs are clean and beautiful, and offer abundant opportunity to play in the warm sunshine almost any day of the year.

During the four day adventure we've designed for you here, you'll be visiting Hickory

Mound for some of the best bird watching in the area, taking a Gulf of Mexico Cruise, visiting Keaton Beach for some nostalgia, exploring Fanning Springs State Park, the historic town of White Springs, taking a trip with Santa Fe River Outfitters, and visiting Poe Springs, Lilly Springs and Ichetucknee State Park.

Whew, you say. That's a full trip. Indeed, and

there's more, but we wanted to keep in mind that this is a vacation. Don't worry. The luxury accommodations included in this package will give you ample time to relax and pamper yourselves between adventures. Bring your equipment or rent equipment that's available here.

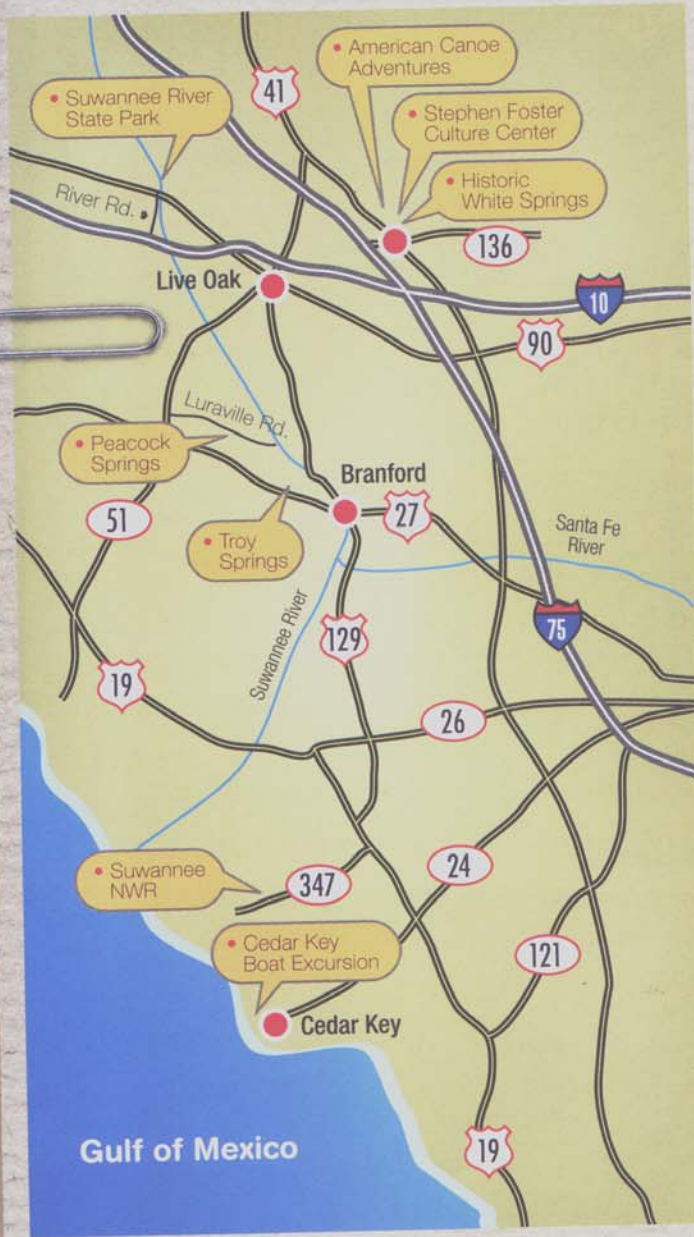
And be sure to bring along your binoculars and your camera. If you can't find any Kodak adventure moments, you're not paying attention.

#### DAILY ITINERARY/INCLUSIONS

- Hickory Mound Impoundment near Perry Florida – A great bird watching venue
- Gulf of Mexico Cruise in Suwannee, FL – Enjoy the Gulf in a flat bottom boat
- Keaton Beach – The long pier that takes you 700 feet out into the Gulf of Mexico
- Fanning Springs State Park – Enjoy the springs in a town built by the army
- White Springs – Florida's first tourist destination
- Santa Fe River (Outfitters near High Springs, FL northwest of Gainesville) – Naturally beautiful river to canoe

- Poe Springs State Park near High Springs, Florida northwest of Gainesville – Aqua springs located along the Santa Fe River
- Lilly Springs – Private springs along Santa Fe River accessible by canoe
- Ichetucknee State Park – Home of America's favorite tubing river
- High Springs – Quaint little town was recently recognized as "Florida's Friendliest Small Town"

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**DAILY ITINERARY/INCLUSIONS**

- Suggested lodgings include Sophia Jane Adams House in White Springs, Smoakhouse Ranch in Branford, or Cedar Key B&B.
- Historic White Springs – Explore Florida's first tourism destination
- Suwannee River State Park – Spectacular view at the confluence of the Suwannee and Whithlacochee Rivers
- Stephen Foster Folk Culture Center State Park – Learn the story of the famous minstrel who made the Suwannee River famous
- Peacock Springs State Park – You can stroll the trail as it twists and turns following the underground spring
- Troy Springs State Park – Try to see the remains of the steamboat Madison still sitting at the bottom of the spring

- Suwannee River Wilderness Trail – Walk some of this greenspace that runs along the Suwannee for 207 miles
- American Canoe Adventures River Trip (White Springs) – Customize your own half-day trip on the Suwannee River
- Boat Excursion off Cedar Key – Get out into the Gulf of Mexico
- Lower Suwannee National Wildlife Refuge – Preserve near the Gulf of Mexico that is a particular haven for birds and other wildlife

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It's interesting that songwriter Stephen Foster never saw the Suwannee River when he immortalized the river in the song "Old Folks at Home." As good writers do, he likely hadn't met Susanna, seen Camptown Races or been to Kentucky either to write "My Old Kentucky Home." He picked out the Suwannee River mainly because it had a good rhyming pattern!

Even so, he was able to capture the essence of the southern experience right down to its nuances forever imprinting the Suwannee in the mind of the world. Undoubtedly, the song gave many Americans their first impression of this important Florida waterway – if they knew it was in Florida. Many more would likely have placed the river in Georgia, or even Tennessee.

But northern Florida is a southern destination all its own, and the Suwannee River's journey begins just north of the Florida border in the Okefenokee Swamp in Georgia. From there it meanders for more than 200 miles through Original Florida, twisting and turning before it reaches the Gulf of Mexico. Along its banks more than 60 springs discharge up to as much as 65 million gallons of clear water a day.

Exploring for King George, III, in 1765, naturalist William Bartram called the area "blessed land where the gods have amassed into one heap all the flowering plants, birds, fish and other wildlife of two continents in order to turn the rushing streams, the silent lake shores and the awe-abiding woodlands of this mysterious land into a true garden of Eden."

Even though the Suwannee looks black, up close it's actually the color of brown tea, the color coming from the tannic acid from the cypress trees.

We believe the Suwannee river is so amazing, that we developed a travel package for you to enjoy the whole experience from top to bottom. Three overnights along the 207-mile length, allow you to make your journey a vacation and enjoy this very special piece of Americana.

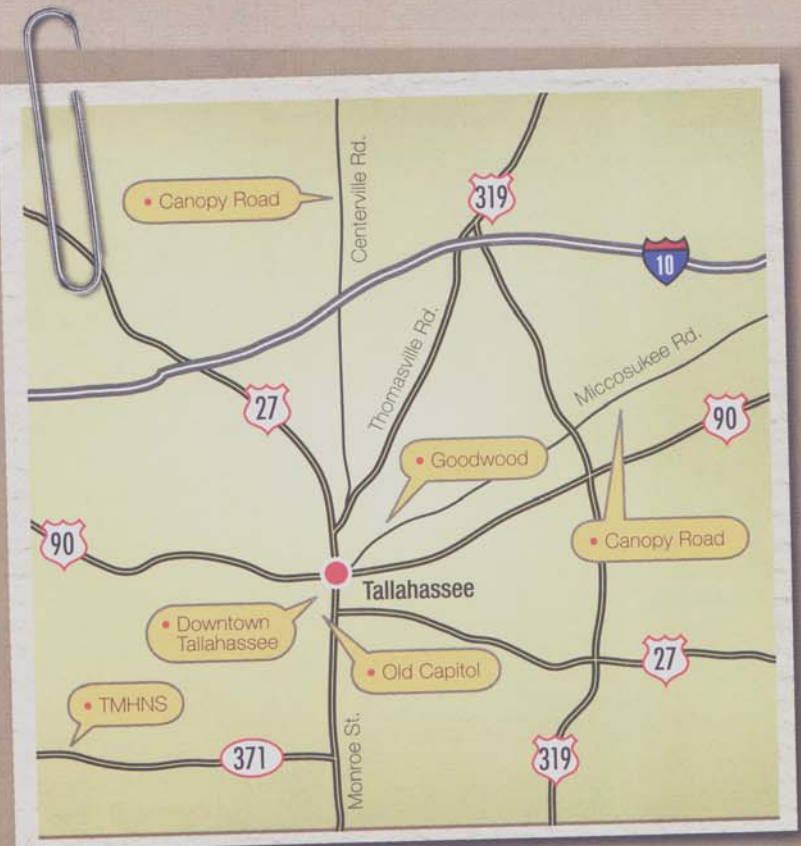
▶ To say that Florida started right here in the counties of Original Florida would not be a stretch at all. Skeletal remains of sloths, woolly mammoths and saber tooth tigers that can be seen at the Florida Museum of History trace the history of this part of the state back about 65 million years. When DeSoto explored the Itchetucknee River in the late 1530s, the Timucuan Indians had already been here for 12,000 years.

Plantation owners began resettling from the original 13 American colonies into Spanish Florida right around the American Revolution. As they pushed south through northern Florida, frontiersmen, crackers and ranchers began pushing westward into the pine forests, establishing the unique backcountry lifestyle of Original Florida still lived today in the small towns. Florida's tourism industry started in 1835 in White Springs.

The fascinating history of the very diverse collection of residents who have lived in Original Florida over the years is told through the interpretation of the old plantations and the restored Old Capitol building, in the songs of Stephen Foster, and the writings of Marjorie Kinnan Rawlings. The heritage you will experience resides at interesting places like the Company Store at the Tallahassee Museum of History and Natural Science and the quaint town of Micanopy.

When you sit in the seats of the 1902 Florida Legislature, see the actual typewriter where the words of a Pulitzer prize winning novel were written, tour Florida's elaborate antebellum plantations, and walk in the footsteps of Union and Confederate soldiers, you will begin to appreciate Original Florida's vast and varied history.

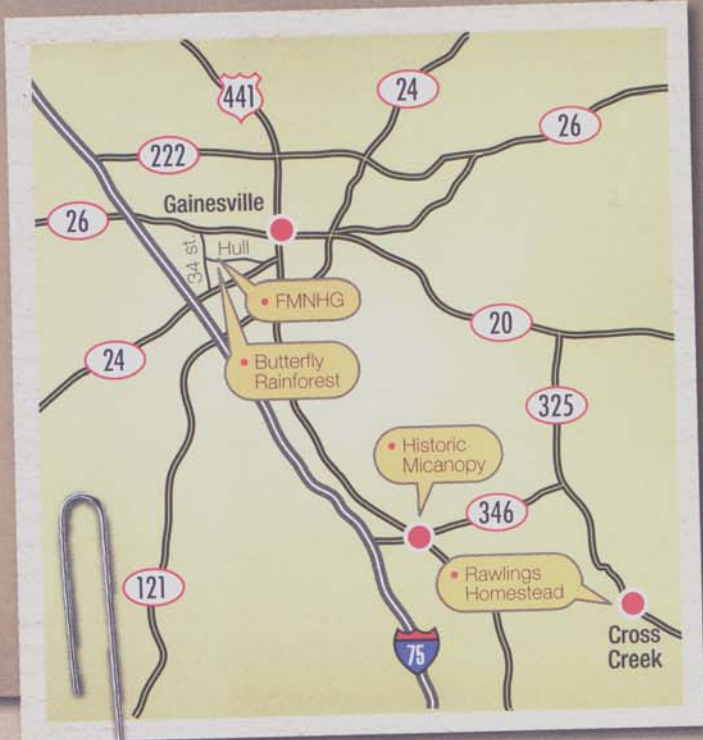
To learn it all would require a month. We've put the highlights into a six-day driving vacation. You can always return another time to explore something more in-depth that catches your interest.

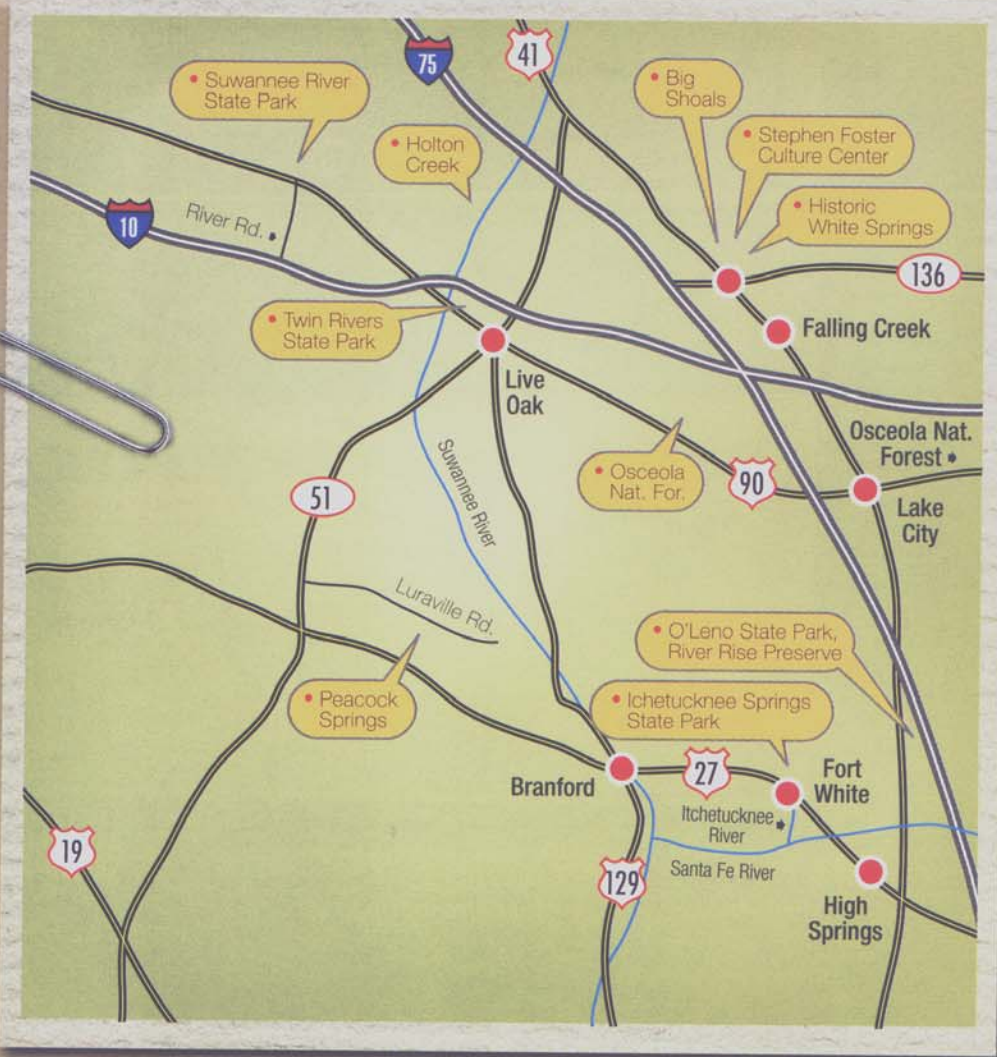


**DAILY ITINERARY/INCLUSIONS**

- **Historic Walking Tour of Tallahassee** – Explore the whole district around the Capitol without moving the car
- **Old Capitol Museum/Florida Center for Political History and Governance** – Tour Florida's old capitol that dates from 1902 and participate in the legislative process
- **Leon County Canopy Roads** – Meander under the Spanish moss and low hanging trees
  - **Goodwood Museum and Gardens** – Considered by some to be the most elaborate plantation in Florida
- **Tallahassee Museum of History and Natural Science (TMHNS)** – Home of Bellevue Plantation owned by a descendant of George Washington who married into Napoleon's family
- **Florida Museum of Natural History (FMNHG)** – Learn the story of the unique natural environments of northern, southern and coastal Florida
  - **Butterfly Rainforest** – Enjoy hundreds of butterflies up close and personal
- **Marjorie Kinnan Rawlings Homestead Historic Site** – Explore the authentic Florida Cracker home of this famous author
- **Historic Micanopy** – Enjoy this quintessential southern town

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**DAILY ITINERARY/INCLUSIONS**

- Historic White Springs – Enjoy Florida's first tourism destination
- Stephen Foster Folk Culture State Park – Learn the story of the man who made the Suwannee River famous
- Big Shoals Public Lands – 3,700 acre natural area named for the rocky part of the river that passes through it
- Falling Creek – So uncommon in Florida, the shoals here could be called waterfalls
- Osceola National Forest – Explore this massive land preserve while adding to your bird list
- Lake Historic Driving Tour/Lake City – Tour the wealthiest and most sought after historic neighborhood in Lake City
- Suwannee River State Park – Spectacular views where the Suwannee meets the Withlacoochee
- Holton Creek Conservation Area – Follow the trail through old growth bottomland forest
- Jennings Bluff – Savor this trail along the slow moving Alapaha River
- Twin Rivers State Forest – Explore two of the 14 non-contiguous areas of the forest
- Peacock Springs State Park – Follow a trail that twists and turns following the underground limestone springs
- Ichetucknee Springs State Park – Springs here pour 233 million gallons of water each day into the river
- River Rise Preserve State Park – A natural bridge on top of the river when it flows underground only to reappear six miles later
- O'Leno State Park – Surrounding the remains of the frontier town of Leno

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▶ Even though the 2,000 mile Great Florida Birding Trail goes near here and the Suwannee River Wilderness Trail has birding opportunities, birders in the Suwannee River Valley felt that bird watching in their area was so good, they decided to create an experience of their own to display the best of the best to birdwatchers from across the country.

Instead of creating a Trail, they created four HUBS, to congregate the best locations for birding into groups that can be visited in one day. Each of the HUBS is focused on a historic area, so between bird watching stops you can explore and enjoy the culture and heritage of the area as well.

We've suggest you try accommodations in White Springs so that when you venture out to engage in bird watching and other activities, you will be returning to the same lodging each evening. Since the HUBS are so close geographically, our approach

will save you the time and hassle of packing each morning.

Beginning at the White Springs HUB, you'll be venturing out first to the Big Shoals Public Lands with more than 3,700 acres and 33 miles of trails. The river entrance is closest to the best birding trail. Also in this HUB, Falling Creek is outfitted with a boardwalk through a lowland forest for up close viewing.

At the Ellaville HUB, just outside of Live Oak, you'll be visiting Suwannee River State Park, Twin Rivers State Park, Peacock Springs Park, Jennings Bluff and the Holton Creek Conservation Area.

Further east at the Lake City HUB, your stops will include Alligator Lake and the Osceola National Forest. Further south at the Fort White HUB, the Ichetucknee Springs and O'Leno State Park and River Rise Preserve State Park await.

With all of this bird watching in store, enjoy your trip, Original Florida's heritage and the good southern hospitality you'll encounter.

▶ Welcome to a place where elegant mansions share priority with Saturday markets. Wealthy plantation aristocrats hobnob with feisty, hardscrabble crackers. It is a region truly southern in all its ways, where time appears to have stopped in an earlier decade.

You're going to love traveling through Original Florida, eating southern food you know has pounds of cholesterol, enjoying desserts like chocolate fudge cake and utterly decadent southern pecan pie, listening to the locals share gossip about recent scandals and just generally enjoying one-upping friends with their latest stories. It's a down-home, southern hospitality friendly, kind of place. But, don't be fooled. These folks are as sophisticated and worldly as any, they just like being themselves. Stay tuned as you travel through the area, there's a whole lot of livin' that goes on in these communities.

We've put together a trip that highlights the southern region of the Original Florida.

Beginning in Gainesville, you'll be looping through the coastal fishing villages of Cedar Key and Steinhatchee (that's Steen-hatch'ee) around to Chiefland and Trenton and back to Gainesville. You'll discover each of the towns has its own distinct personality and history. And as you explore, you'll find it's the lifestyle that binds small southern town.

#### DAILY ITINERARY/INCLUSIONS

- **Downtown Gainesville** – Discover the nightlife and high-brow restaurants here, including theater shows at the historic Hippodrome theater ("The Hipp" to locals).
- **Known for its "Talking Walls"**, the Haile homestead contains over 12,000 wall writings - let the walls speak to you of joys and sorrows of more than a century ago. Saturday from 10AM to 2PM and on Sunday from 12PM to 4 PM
- **Cedar Key** – This sleepy fishing village, just 45 miles west of Gainesville is home to several art galleries and a variety of seafood joints – from fancy to no nonsense good.
- **Dakotah Winery in Chiefland** – Sample the native muscadine grapes and take home a bottle painted by local artisans
- **Fanning Springs** – Stroll through this state park on the banks of the Suwannee River and take in the beautiful blue waters.
- **Trenton** – head north and east to this quaint downtown. Check out the murals painted on the walls, and the paintings inside the local art gallery on Main Street, or make some of your own art with supplies from the Suwannee Quilt Shop (and café with great desserts).
- **Newberry** – The Little Red School House just south of SR 26 in town gives you a flavor of life in the last century. If you held off eating, try Newberry Backyard BBQ for some real southern cooking.
- **Dudley Farm** – Listed on the National Register of Historic Places, this working farm demonstrates the evolution of Florida farming from the 1850s to the mid-1940s-through three generations of the Dudley family.

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