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Apalachicola NATIONAL FOREST



Recreation Guide

Florida

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Forest Service

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early 1.2 million acres in north and central Florida have been set aside by Congress as national forests. In the early 1900s, they were referred to as the lands that nobody wanted.

The passage of the Weeks Act in 1911 authorized the federal purchase of privately forested or cut over lands to protect streams. As a result, three national forests were created in Florida – the Apalachicola, the Osceola and the Ocala. Today these forests are very popular with visitors.

Modern-day national forests are managed for multiple uses, so people can recreate and enjoy the great outdoors while protection and care is given to the wildlife and natural resources of the forest.

Camping, boating, wildlife viewing, hunting, fishing, scenic driving and trail riding are popular recreation activities on the Florida forests. Recreational trails are available for hiking, biking, horse riding, ATV riding and motorcycle riding.

THE APALACHICOLA NATIONAL FOREST

Florida's largest national forest, the Apalachicola, consists of 567,742 acres just southwest of Tallahassee. Franklin D. Roosevelt proclaimed the Apalachicola a national forest on May 13, 1936. Turpentering and timbering were major industries in the forest at this time. When the U.S. Forest Service acquired the land, most of the trees had been cut.

Today the forest abounds with cypress, oak and magnolias in wet, lowland areas. Stands of slash and longleaf pines cover the sandhills and flatwoods. The Apalachicola's rivers and streams provide a steady freshwater flow to some of the most productive coastal bays and estuaries known for shellfish and commercial seafood.

The Apalachicola National Forest is also home to unique savannahs. Savannahs are subtropical grasslands scattered with an open canopy of longleaf pine trees and a floor of wiregrass. The forest is home to one of the last remaining longleaf pine/wiregrass communities in existence.

Longleaf forests were once part of the southeastern landscape from Texas to Virginia, and were very important to the ecology. Today, the combined acreage of what remains of the longleaf community would only fill an area the size of Virginia. Most of the remaining longleaf can be found in northern Florida and southern Georgia.



FLORIDA'S LONGEST FOOTPATH

The Florida National Scenic Trail (FNST) is more than just a 1,400-mile footpath spanning the length of Florida. It's an escape into nature where you can refresh, recharge and relax.

A 74-mile stretch of the FNST crosses the Apalachicola National Forest. From the haunting cypress trees in the Big Cypress National Preserve to the glittering white sand beaches of Gulf Islands National Seashore, the trail provides glimpses into Florida's vast variety of habitats. From the FNST you can admire longleaf pines reaching to the clear blue sky, their scent rising from the damp needles under your feet. Relax with the chirp of birds and the knock of a red-cockaded woodpecker on a tall tree.

The trail is expanding. Throughout Florida, the Forest Service is actively pursuing the acquisition of land in order to enhance the connectivity of the trail, in collaboration with the Florida Trail Association. More than 1,000 miles of certified trail have been completed, and more than 1,000 acres of land have been added to the trail system under the management of the Forest Service. For more information about the Florida National Scenic Trail, visit www.floridatrail.org or call 1-877-HIKE-FLA.

SHORTER TRAILS ON APALACHICOLA NATIONAL FOREST

Munson Hills Mountain Bike Trail – 20 miles, trailheads on SR 363

Camel Lake Interpretive Trail – 1 mile, trailhead at Camel Lake Recreation Area

Trail of Lakes – 5 miles, trailhead at Camel Lake Recreation Area

Fort Gadsden Interpretive Trail – ½ mile, trailhead at Fort Gadsden Historical Site

Leon Sinks Interpretive Trail – 5 miles, trailhead at Leon Sinks Geological Area

Silver Lake Interpretive Trail – 1 mile, trailhead at Silver Lake Recreation Area

Wright Lake Interpretive Trail – 5 miles, trailhead at Wright Lake Recreation Area

SCENIC BYWAYS FOR AUTOMOBILES

Apalachicola Savannahs Forest Service Scenic Byway – 31 miles in Liberty and Franklin Counties

Big Bend State Scenic Byway – 220 miles in Leon, Wakulla, and Franklin Counties



LEON SINKS GEOLOGICAL AREA

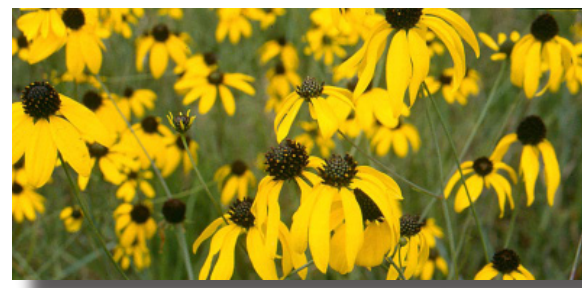
Come to the fascinating world of sinkholes at Leon Sinks Geological Area, located on US 319 in southern Leon County.

Sinkholes, swales, caverns, natural bridges, circular depressions and water table ponds all indicate karst. This term is applied to terrain that groundwater and rain have changed by dissolving underlying limestone bedrock.

The power of raindrops can change the land dramatically. Visit Leon Sinks Geological Area and discover a new sinkhole or watch a soaring red shouldered hawk glide across a blue sky. Listen carefully for the mournful call of the yellow-billed cuckoo. It is commonly believed this bird call predicts the approach of bad weather.

An emerald world of plants and trees greets you at Leon Sinks. The observation platform at Big Dismal Sink offers a breathtaking view of more than 75 different plants cascading down the sink's steep walls. Allow time for a leisurely stroll in this unique, natural showcase that offers so many pleasant sights and sounds.

For your personal safety and the preservation of the sinkhole walls, swimming is not allowed. Help maintain the beauty of Leon Sinks by packing out litter and staying outside of the sinkholes. A volunteer host lives on site. This is a day use area and fees are collected.



CAMEL LAKE RECREATION AREA

This natural retreat on the shores of Camel Lake has recreation opportunities for both day users and camping enthusiasts. It is located approximately 12 miles south of Bristol, off of State Highway 12, on Forest Road 105 in Liberty County.

Campers can choose from one of ten campsites, some with lake views and electricity. The sites are enhanced with fire pits, picnic tables and grills. Both the camping and day use areas have bathhouses with showers, flush toilets and drinking water.

In the heat of summer, visitors will appreciate the white sandy beach with a roped off swimming area, large picnic pavilion, fishing opportunities and primitive boat ramp for non-motorized access to the lake.

Camel Lake is open year round from 8 a.m. to 8 p.m. (6 p.m. in winter). A volunteer host lives on-site. This is a fee area.



SILVER LAKE RECREATION AREA

Come visit the largest recreation area on the Apalachicola National Forest. Silver Lake Recreation Area is located off State Route 20 on Forest Road 358 in Leon County – a quiet retreat not far from the bustle of Tallahassee. A volunteer host lives on site. This day use area is open from 8 a.m. to 8 p.m. (6 p.m. in winter). This is a fee area.

Silver Lake has all the elements of a perfect day trip. Three picnic pavilions provide ample space for picnickers looking to enjoy the tranquility of the great outdoors. Tables and grills are provided for your cooking convenience. The large bathhouse provides swimmers with a hot shower after spending time in Silver Lake or lounging on the sandy beach. Hikers looking for a short walk will appreciate the mile-long interpretive trail, and might catch glimpses of turtles, alligators, bald eagles or songbirds that call Silver Lake home. Looking to reel in largemouth bass, brim or catfish? Then take to the water in a non-motorized boat and cast your reel.

New at Silver Lake is a trailhead for the OHV trails. Included are a parking lot, trail access to both the ATV and motorcycle trails and a safety training site (only available for official safety training classes).



TRAIL AT TROUT POND

The GFS&A Trail has recently been opened for use. This 2.4 mile paved bicycle trail is located on State Route 363 (Springhill Road) in south Leon County. Popular with bike riders, joggers, skaters, and dog walkers, this trail departs from the newly reopened Trout Pond Trailhead. A new flush toilet restroom, water fountain, picnic shelter, picnic tables, and refurbished fishing dock are available for your enjoyment. A volunteer host lives on site. This is a day use area. There is no fee.

WRIGHT LAKE RECREATION AREA

Wright Lake Recreation Area is a quiet, lakefront retreat that offers a host of amenities and activities for campers and day visitors. Wright Lake can be found on Forest Road 101, just off of State Route 65 in northern Franklin County. The clear, spring-fed lake is perfect for fishing and swimming. For visitors wishing to stay a few days, there are 18 campsites with picnic tables, grills, tent pads and fire rings. Restrooms with hot showers, water hook ups and a dump station are located in the campground. Day visitors can enjoy picnicking under shady trees and the 5-mile interpretive trail surrounding the lake.

Wright Lake is open year round from 8 a.m. to 8 p.m. (6 p.m. in winter). A volunteer host lives on site. This is a fee area.

SAFETY

Your safety is your responsibility. Before you come:

- Check the weather. Hurricanes, tornadoes and flooding do happen on occasion.
- Dress for your sport and for the weather, and be prepared for the weather to change. For water activities, wear a life vest. During general gun season, wear blaze orange.
- Participate in your activity with others, if possible. Tell someone where you will be and when you are expected back.
- Bring maps, a first aid kit, water, food, sunscreen and insect repellent.
- Call your local Forest Service office or visit their website to review the rules, regulations, fees and permits for the activities in which you plan to participate.

While you are visiting the forest:

- Lock your car. Leave valuables at home.
- Use fire rings, grills or camping stoves. Open fires are not allowed in drought conditions. Make sure your fire is out before you leave. Fireworks are prohibited.
- Pack it in, pack it out. Please keep your forest litter free.

Camping

Dispersed camping is permitted throughout the forest, except during general gun season. General gun season is usually from mid-November through January. During this season, for your safety, camping is restricted to designated campgrounds.



WILDLIFE VIEWING

The Apalachicola National Forest is home to abundant wildlife from large to small, common to rare. Alligators, black bears and white-tailed deer are some of the larger species. Fox squirrels, armadillos, tortoises and turtles are some of the smaller species. Birds of all kinds may be found – wild turkeys, hawks, bald eagles, herons, kites, warblers and the red-cockaded woodpecker. The many water bodies are home to a diverse group of amphibians and reptiles, including alligators, and a large population of sport fish like bass, bream and catfish.

Do not disturb wild animals. National forests are a refuge for wild animals, including dangerous animals like bears and venomous snakes. Wild animals can be upset by human presence and can unexpectedly become aggressive. Do not give them a reason or an opportunity to attack. Always keep your distance.

Do not feed the animals, especially alligators and bears. Wild animals should never be allowed to obtain human food or garbage. Wild animals that receive these food rewards just once may become aggressive toward humans. To protect people and their property, these animals might have to be destroyed by wildlife managers. You are required to keep human food and garbage away from wildlife by storing attractants in an approved bear resistant container, inside a hard-topped vehicle or hanging from a tree when not in use.

Snakes play a beneficial role in the ecosystem by eating insects and rodents. In Florida, there are 45 snake species but only six are venomous. The six species of venomous snakes are the southern copperhead, cottonmouth, eastern diamondback rattlesnake, timber rattlesnake, dusky pigmy rattlesnake and the eastern coral snake. If you are bitten by a venomous snake, you

TRAILS FOR ATVS AND MOTORCYCLES

The Apalachicola National Forest now has designated OHV trails for ATV and off-road motorcycle enthusiasts. A free map is available, which shows the trailheads, trails, trail numbers and mixed-use roads. Passes are required to ride these trails. Each rider needs to purchase either an annual or a 3-day pass. Annual passes are available at local Forest Services offices (weekdays) and at Silver Lake Recreation Area (Saturday mornings). The 3-day passes are available self service at the OHV trailheads.

All ATV trails have two-way traffic and some sections are shared with full-sized vehicles. These trails are numbered and marked with yellow posts. Many ATV trails are on easy-to-ride old roads, although you can expect to encounter some wet areas.

Motorcycle-only trails are marked with white posts and are for motorcycle use (no ATVs). Many of these trails are on sandy soil and can be very challenging to ride. Access to the trails are from designated OHV trailheads only.

Roads are marked with brown posts. Only licensed vehicles are allowed on numbered roads (no ATVs or off-road motorcycles). Mixed-use roads are roads which have sections which are shared with the ATV or motorcycle trails.

Please drive carefully. Trails were not designed for high speed use. Stay on designated trails. Contact your local Forest Service office or website for a full list of riding regulations. OHV Information: (866) 607-2016

Keep it safe Keep it legal Keep on trails Keep the privilege

Riding on national forest land is a privilege, not a right. By being a responsible rider you are allowing others to ride here in the future and you are minimizing the impacts on the environment. For more information on how you can help the environment by riding responsibly, visit www.treadlightly.org



need to be treated and administered antivenin. Stay calm and seek immediate medical attention at the nearest hospital or medical facility.

Mosquitoes, ticks and other biting insects are common on the forest. Some insects, such as ticks, can transmit diseases. Insect repellent is a must in the summer months. For restful sleep during mosquito season, bring a screened tent.

BE AWARE

Many animals have the ability to inflict serious injury on people, and some, like alligators and bears, have the potential to kill. Slowly back away from an animal that is a potential threat. Do not swim outside of posted swimming areas.

PREPARATIONS

One of the most important preparations before any forest outing is to learn about your destination. You can visit the forest website at <http://fs.usda.gov/apalachicola> or call a district office or visitor center. Forest Service personnel and volunteers can provide current and site specific information. Before you leave make sure someone knows where you are going and when you plan to return. It is often best to travel with a companion in case of emergency situations.

For minor cuts and bruises, bring along a first aid kit. Understand basic first aid and be able to identify the symptoms of heat exhaustion, heat stroke and dehydration. Make sure your physical condition meets the requirements for the activity you are planning. There is a big difference between a one-mile hike and a 10-mile hike. Check the equipment you plan to use before you leave home to make sure it is in good working order. Florida weather changes constantly, so bring clothes that will withstand the elements. Remember, rainstorms can creep up unexpectedly on summer afternoons.

FOOD STORAGE

In order to protect the Florida Black Bear and other wildlife species, and to promote safe camping in bear country, the U.S.

Forest Service implemented a Food Storage Order requiring proper storage and disposal procedures for food, garbage and other attractants. Attractants include anything having an odor that may attract bears: food, beverages, cooking grease, toothpaste, toiletries, soap, game meat, pet food, livestock feed or garbage.

As outlined in the order, these items must be stored in approved bear-resistant containers, hard-topped vehicles or in "food hangs" when not in use. The suspension method should be at least 10 feet above ground and 4 feet from any vertical support.

A bear resistant container is a securable container constructed of solid, non-flammable material capable of withstanding 200 foot-pounds of energy. When secured and under stress the container will not have any cracks, openings or hinges that would allow a bear to gain entry by biting or pulling with its claws. Ice chests, coolers and wooden boxes without metal reinforcements are NOT bear resistant.

The forest provides bear-resistant trash receptacles for garbage and used items that may attract animals. Please use these containers. Do not burn or bury any attractants, rather pack out what you packed in.



AMERICA THE BEAUTIFUL INTERAGENCY PASS

If you are heading out for a relaxing, fun-filled vacation on a national forest, remember your Interagency Pass. The pass is good for discounted or free admission at some Forest Service, Bureau of Land Management, Fish and Wildlife Service, National Park Service and Bureau of Reclamation sites.



FOR MORE INFORMATION

Apalachicola Ranger District
P.O. Box 579, Highway 20
Bristol, FL 32321
Phone: (850) 643-2282
Hours: Mon – Thurs 8:00 – 5:00;
Fri 8:00 – 4:00

Wakulla Ranger District
57 Taff Drive
Crawfordville, FL 32327
Phone: (850) 926-3561
Hours: Mon – Thurs 8:00 – 5:00;
Fri 8:00 – 4:00

Forest Supervisor's Office
325 John Knox Road
Suite F-100
Tallahassee, FL 32303
Phone: (850) 523-8500
Hours: Mon – Thurs 8:00 – 4:00;
Fri 7:30 – 4:00

Osceola National Forest
Phone: (386) 752-2577

Ocala National Forest
Phone: (352) 625-2520

OHV RECORDED INFORMATION
(866) 607-2016

WEBSITE: <http://fs.usda.gov/apalachicola>
TDD Relay Service of Florida: 1-800-955-8770