

FLORIDA NATIONAL SCENIC TRAIL

2023-2024

Florida National Scenic Trail Thru-Hiker Packet



FLORIDA TRAIL ASSOCIATION

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WWW.FLORIDATRAIL.ORG
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Welcome to the Florida Trail!

Dear Hiker:

The following information is provided to help you plan your hiking adventure.

The Florida Trail is available for you to enjoy because of the work of thousands of Florida Trail Association (FTA) volunteers, our agency partners and other volunteer groups for over sixty years. We welcome you to explore Florida in a way you've never seen before.

It is very important to understand the following about the Florida Trail. The trail is a 1,500 mile continuous footpath, but some sections are still on roads between sections of public and private lands. Through our partnership with land managers and the support of our members and volunteers, we are working to close gaps and protect the trail corridor for generations to come.

Becoming a member of the Florida Trail Association is important because it;

- Connects you to the local chapters of the FTA. You can contact them for the latest information on trail conditions, water levels, etc.
- Many land management units require membership in the association in order to cross their property.
- Includes a subscription to the quarterly FTA publication, the Footprint.
- Enables you to share in supporting the dream of a continuous footpath the length of Florida!

Membership is just \$35 a year. Visit our website at www.floridatrail.org to join.

Thank you for choosing to explore Florida through the Florida Trail. We wish you a safe hike and look forward to supporting your journey.

Royce W. Gibson
Executive Director



Using this guide

This guide was created to be a supplement to your own research. While we aim to update this guide every summer, please note that items may have changed in between updates. Check our website for the most current closures or changes to the trail at www.floridatrail.org/trail-closures-and-notice/.

At the FTA we encourage all those interested in pursuing a thru-hike or section hike to first be comfortable hiking in Florida conditions. Florida weather can vary greatly day by day and the trail is frequently wet or completely submerged.

There are many wonderful resources available through the U.S. Forest Service, Florida Trail Hikers Alliance, Florida Hikes, and our land management partners to help you better understand what to expect. Get connected and gather input from the community of individuals experienced hiking in Florida.

If you have further questions after reviewing this guide, please reach out to our FTA team or one of our regional chapters.



Special considerations for an FT Thru-Hike



Hiking the Florida Trail is a totally different experience compared to other National Scenic Trails in the United States. While Florida may be "flat," the FT showcases incredible botanical diversity and abundant wildlife. Given the relatively mild temperatures, the FT is also the only wintertime thru-hike in the U.S. (However, hikers should prepare for temperatures in the 30s and even below freezing, intensified by the dampness in the air. More on Florida's unique conditions in the FAQs.)

The Florida Trail strikes a balance between solitude and community. If you've hiked the AT, PCT, or CDT, you may see some familiar faces as long-distance hikers add the FT to their bucket list. As the FT increases in popularity, "bubbles" and "tramilies" have become more common. Yet, hiking classes remain small compared to other long-distance trails. In the 2022 and 2023 seasons, about 45 hikers registered their thru-hikes with FTA. "Bubbles" consist of about a dozen hikers, and folks tend to leap-frog each other across the Trail every few days. Still, these numbers are quite small and hikers who are seeking the established thru-hiker culture seen on the AT and PCT may find the FT rather quiet.

Our Gateway Communities are friendly places along the Trail to resupply and get some rest, but bear in mind that many locals still are unaware that the FT runs through their backyard. While most folks are curious, friendly, and helpful, you may not experience towns and community members catering to hikers in the same way they do on other trails. We believe hikers are stewards of the Trail; there will be many opportunities to educate folks about the FT and set a positive example for the hiking community.

The Florida Trail has a great community of folks who want to help hikers. FT Thru Hike is a non-profit group that strives to support Florida Trail thru-hikers and provide services such as water caches, hiker events like Kickoff and Billy Goat Day, and more. Join their Florida Trail Hikers and Florida Trail Angels Facebook pages as a resource for information and support during your journey. These pages can connect you with volunteers or business owners who want to support you during your hike. Please note these pages are not moderated by FTA.

NOBO or SOBO?



NOBO

- While the Florida Trail doesn't get as much traffic as the AT or PCT, most hikers choose a NOBO route, so you will encounter more fellow hikers if you choose this direction.
- Starts off with the toughest section of Trail: Big Cypress swamp.
- Campsites in Big Cypress have limited space so hikers must stagger their start times to avoid damaging this fragile ecosystem.

SOBO

- Offers the most solitude.
- Potential for an earlier start date since temps in the panhandle start to cool down around mid-November.
- Experience Florida's rolling hills and elevation changes earlier on in the Trail
- By the time hikers reach the long levee walks and Big Cypress in the south, they will have their trail legs.
- Big Cypress may be in peak dry season by the time SOBO hikers reach that area. It can be tough to find water in the swamp during a drought.

When considering which route you will take and when you will start your journey, be sure to take a look at hunting dates throughout the state.

Check with the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission for hunting regulations and dates: <https://myfwc.com/hunting/season-dates/>

Thru-Hiker Personal Safety



As a public resource, the Florida Trail is open and accessible to anyone who wishes to experience the wilds of Florida. Trail visitors are a diverse group, hailing from all over the world and arriving with every conceivable background and viewpoint. This is part of what makes a National Scenic Trail special, and hikers have long celebrated the communities and friendships that develop along our trail. We encourage our trail users to look out for one another, and to treat their fellow hikers with kindness and respect.

However, the Florida Trail is also not immune to the conflicts and crime that can occur elsewhere in society. The freedom to enjoy this trail comes with a corresponding responsibility to be informed, aware, and prepared to react in an emergency. Always remember that your personal safety is your responsibility; no agency or organization can mediate the interactions you have with other hikers along the trail. With that perspective in mind, the following guidelines can assist hikers with managing their personal safety when heading out on the trail. They are not all-inclusive but should serve as a guide for a safe and pleasant hiking experience:



Hike with a buddy. Hiking with at least one partner reduces the potential for harassment and provides a personal safety net if you are injured or suffering from illness.



File an itinerary. Always leave information about where you are hiking with family and friends. Include phone numbers for local law enforcement and land managers. These numbers are included on the FTA maps.



Don't broadcast your itinerary. Do not discuss trip plans on social media. Do not discuss your itinerary with suspicious strangers. Do not share your plans with fellow hikers and if hiking alone, claim to be lead of a larger group following behind you.



Be sociable but cautious in conversations with strangers. Pay attention to details such as location, their appearance, and behavior. Avoid anyone acting strangely, provocatively, openly hostile or under the influence of alcohol or drugs.



Avoid all provocation and confrontation. Do not respond to taunts or attempts at intimidation.



Camp away from roads and motor vehicles. Areas accessible to motor vehicles pose more danger of harassment. If there is concern, camp as a group with others.



Eliminate opportunities for theft. Never leave your pack unattended. If possible, check it with a local business. Never leave cash or valuables in your car at trailheads.



Trust your instincts. If confronted by an individual or situation that you just feel is “wrong,” keep moving down the trail until you feel safe once again.



Check the Trail Closures and Notices page on the FTA website to get up-to-date information about trail closures: <https://floridatrail.org/trail-closures-and-notice/>



Have current trail guides and maps. The more current the information, the better informed the hiker. FTA maps contain the most current information on local law enforcement and land manager contacts in each area.



Learn and obey all land manager/owner regulations. Some land managers require permits and/or camping reservations. These are all listed in the thru-hiker packet: <https://floridatrail.org/thru-hike/> Be particularly courteous on private property.



Check with the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission for hunting regulations and dates: <https://myfwc.com/hunting/season-dates/> Wear safety orange during all hunt seasons. A mesh vest and/or blaze orange pack cover work well in Florida.



Thru-Hiker Personal Emergencies

In the event that you have a personal safety emergency while hiking the Florida Trail or one of the trails within the Florida Trail System, please do the following:

Immediately contact the local law enforcement agency, as listed in this guide and on the maps.
In an emergency, call 9-1-1 first!

Once you are safe and the immediate emergency has been addressed, we encourage you to submit an incident report to the FTA. This report will allow us to identify safety risks, suspicious activity, or resource damage along the FT. Reports will go directly to FTA and the USFS FNST Administrator, and their contents (including your name and contact information) may be shared with law enforcement and land managers.

Incident Reports do not trigger an immediate law enforcement response and are not a replacement for calling 9-1-1 or making a report to local law enforcement in the event of an emergency or a crime. FTA has no law enforcement authority to investigate incidents that occur on the Florida Trail.

Social media has become an indispensable part of many hikers' Florida Trail experience, particularly within the thru-hiking community. While these tools are an excellent way to share tips or concerns about situations along the trail, they are no substitute for contacting law enforcement in the event you are experiencing illness or injury, feel unsafe, or are the victim of a crime. Land managers and law enforcement do not regularly monitor social media; call 9-1-1 first! If you are the victim of a crime, it is your responsibility to report the issue to local law enforcement and continue to work with them towards a resolution.

Florida Trail FAQs

How long is the Trail?

The Florida Trail is approximately 1,500 miles long. The mileage varies slightly every year as local maintaining chapters relocate parts of the trail, working to take the trail off of private property and roads and into a protected corridor. Since there are multiple routes a hiker can choose from, a thru-hike is approximately 1,100 miles and averages 2-3 months.

What are these multiple routes I can choose from?

Currently there are several options for the thru-hiker to take.

The FNST circles Lake Okeechobee from Clewiston on the south to Okee-Tantie on the north. The thru-hiker may select which side of the lake they wish to walk. They are not required to completely circle the lake. Both sides offer access to towns and amenities, but the west side remains more natural. In 2023, the construction on the dike finally finished after many years! Hikers can now freely choose either side

Around central Florida there are also two routes. The eastern route runs from the Kissimmee River through Tosohatchee, Oviedo, Longwood, Seminole State Forest and up into the Ocala National Forest. The western route runs from the Kissimmee River through St Cloud, Green Swamp, Withlacoochee State Forest, Cross-Florida Greenway and then into the Ocala National Forest. The eastern route is shorter and closer to urban areas and supplies but many miles are on paved multi-use trails through the Orlando suburbs. The western route currently has more roadwalk at the south end, but it also has more forested trail at the north end. Again, the thru-hiker may elect one or the other of these routes; they are not required to hike both.

The final decision point is out in the western panhandle. At Deer Lake Junction, hikers can elect to hike south to Fort Pickens in Gulf Islands National Seashore or to hike north through Blackwater River State Forest to the Florida/Alabama state line.

What is the preferred hiking season?

The prime hiking season in Florida runs from October through April. Because of unpredictable weather and hunting seasons in the fall, we strongly recommend thru-hikers start no earlier than January and end in the north by May. While all but a few miles of trail is open 365 days a year, most Florida land managers either restrict camping to developed campgrounds or prohibit camping altogether during hunting seasons. The major hunt seasons start in September in the south and run into March in the north. Attempting a thru-hike during the height of general gun (deer) hunting season will either force you to hike 30-50 miles between campgrounds or stay in local motels. Unauthorized camping can subject you to fines and/or being escorted off the property. Hiking during the “off season” avoids hunting but subjects hikers to heavy heat and humidity (95 degrees with 98% humidity is not uncommon), daily afternoon thunderstorms, and seasonal campground closures due to low use. And when campgrounds are closed, that also means the water supply is shut off.

As the trail increases in usage, the need for some hikers to be northbound and some southbound increases. Areas, such as Big Cypress, have limited space and can be easily damaged by too much use in a given time.



Florida Trail FAQs

What is the weather like?

While Florida winters are moderate compared to the rest of the United States, we do get fronts coming through that can cause the temperature to drop below freezing in a matter of hours. These cold fronts also generally bring rain. Fortunately, such weather usually doesn't stay with us for more than a few days, but it does mean you should pack more than shorts and t-shirts for your hike. Be prepared for temperatures ranging from 20 degrees to 80 degrees during this winter hiking season.

Are shelters available?

There are currently nine shelters along the Florida Trail. It is therefore necessary for you to provide your own tent, tarp, bivy, or hammock for your hike. Because of our voracious insects good "no-see-um" netting on your shelter is recommended.

Do I need maps and where can I get them?

FTA sells a series of hiker maps and a Data Book. Because of frequent changes in the trail route most thru-hikers feel the maps are necessary. A full set of thru-trail maps (which includes the DataBook) may be purchased from the FTA office or the FTA online store. Notices to Hikers detailing trail changes that have occurred since the map publication are posted on the FTA website.

U.S. Forest Service hosts an [interactive webmap](https://www.fs.usda.gov/main/fnst/maps-publications) on their website. (<https://www.fs.usda.gov/main/fnst/maps-publications>)

The Guthooks app is a great paid resource for basic navigation and tracking water sources but it is still a good idea to have maps.

What is the mileage between points X & Y on the trail maps?

Our published map set and Data Book contain detailed information on campsites and campgrounds, water sources, trailhead locations, and land manager regulations. Be aware however, that the Florida Trail is evolving at a rapid pace in some areas as the trail is moved from private land and roads into a protected corridor. Maps and books only a few months old may be out of date and private landowners may change their access policies at any time. Stores open this week can be closed next week. Check the FTA website for "Notices to Hikers" under Trail conditions.

Do I need a permit?

A few private, public and military land managers require advanced notification and a permit to cross their land. For the Big Cypress Seminole Indian Reservation you are required to sign a release and mail it or submit it through our online form prior to your hike. For Eglin Air Force Base, see page 12 of this document for detailed information.



Florida Trail FAQs

How many miles of road-remain and do I have to walk them?

In 2023, there remains a little less than 300 miles of roadwalk along the various routes. In order to qualify for the FTA End-to-End certification you must walk the entire trail as it exists at the time of your hike. Most of the roadwalks are blazed, although not as frequently as in the woods. The FTA trail maps and Data Book include the road walks.

Do I need to be an FTA Member to hike the Trail?

The Florida Trail crosses many different land management units. The Florida Trail Association has entered into Memorandums of Understanding (MOU) with many of the land managers/owners. These MOUs state that only members of the association will be allowed access to the unit in question. Membership is \$35 per year and you can join online at www.FloridaTrail.org/Join or by calling the FTA office at 352.378.8823

Are dogs allowed on the trail?

Since many Florida state agencies and private landowners either prohibit dogs or place severe restrictions on them, the Florida Trail Association cannot recommend attempting a thru-hike with your dog. The two swamp areas are particularly dangerous for dogs due to the possibility of alligators. Be sure to check with each land owner before taking your dog along!

Should I worry about wildlife on the trail?

Florida is home to the Florida Panther, the Florida Black Bear, American Alligator, several pit vipers (Copperhead, Water Moccasin/Cottonmouth, Pygmy Rattlesnake, Timber Rattlesnake and Eastern Diamondback Rattlesnake) and the Coral Snake as well as numerous small wild animals. Actually, you will be lucky to catch a glimpse of the larger animals, because both the panther and our black bear are very shy of humans. Alligators are a possibility in any water. Keep your eyes open so as not to startle them and they will not challenge a human. Folks who get bitten by gators are generally swimming near dawn or dusk when the gator can't distinguish that the foot it is biting is attached to something much bigger.

Bears can be found throughout Florida. In the Ocala National Forest, a bear bag or canister is highly recommended, and proper food storage techniques are required. FTA and USFS have provided these free for hikers to check out. Visit the FTA website's notice to hikers for more information on how to utilize this resource.

You probably have more to fear from our mighty mosquitoes, raccoons, squirrels, fire ants and ticks than the larger mammals and reptiles. Lyme disease is in Florida, so a daily tick check is wise. Good camping practice requires you to hang your food to keep the animals away and prevent them from associating humans with food. In three three National Forests, bear bag hanging is a requirement, in other locations it is certainly a good precaution. It is wise to watch where you place your feet and hands to prevent encountering snakes and fire ants.

Florida Trail FAQs

Can I use a horse/pack animal/mountain bike?

Portions of the Florida Trail occur on shared, multi-use trails (usually paved) but the majority of the trail is designated for foot traffic only. That means no horses, no bicycles, no pack stock, and no motorized vehicles.

What do the FTA chapters do?

Volunteers from our member chapters perform trail maintenance, build new trail, represent hiker interests at governmental and community meetings and serve on the FTA Board of Directors which formulates policy. Chapters also sponsor hikes - for members and the general public. Active members within the chapters can provide to hikers valuable information about their sections of trail. Do not be afraid to contact them for localized advice. All chapter websites/Facebook pages/Meetups can be accessed from the floridatrail.org.

What clothing is recommended?

Rain protection is a must and layering is the rule for clothing. Layered synthetic clothing will allow you to regulate your body temperature on those days that start with finding your water bottle frozen solid and end with you baking in semitropical heat. You should carry a safety orange vest, poncho or pack cover to wear during hunting seasons. This is particularly important during the general gun (deer) season, which runs from mid-October to March, depending on which part of the state you are hiking.

What shoes should I wear?

Many Florida Trail hikers use sturdy “aerobic” type shoes. Others wear lightweight hiking boots. You will not find a lot of rocky terrain along the Florida

Trail, but the hard sand on most of the trail requires good ankle and heel support. In the south the limestone/marl base of the trail is very hard and often slippery. Blisters can be a problem for those not accustomed to walking on sand, so include blister treatments in your first aid supplies and check frequently for “hot spots”. Low gaiters can help to keep the sand out of your shoes and socks. Hiking sandals work well for some people, but sand spurs between the toes can be a problem in a few areas. In Big Cypress and Bradwell Bay you’ll want toe protection from submerged logs and shoes that the marl/mud won’t suck off your feet.

Is the water safe to drink?

All water in Florida should be treated unless identified as potable by signs. You must filter, boil or chemically treat all surface water. Be aware that many water sources have agricultural runoff. If hiking during season, water caches are often placed in the areas where runoff is the most prevalent or where water sources are spread out.

Can I build a fire?

Carry a backpacking stove to cook your meals. Don't rely on fires. Not only is it more convenient and easier in wet weather, it minimizes your impact on the land around your camp. Winter being our dry season, it is also the start of our wildfire season. Campfires are not allowed at all along some sections of the Trail and may be temporarily banned in other areas during periods of high fire danger. When you can build a fire, keep it small. Use sticks no larger than your fingers and use only pre-existing fire rings or build a leave-no-trace fire on a deep sandy base. Be particularly cautious of underground roots.



Florida Trail FAQs

How many daily miles can I do?

Florida offers its own set of challenges that can affect daily mileage. In high water years portions of the trail may have to be waded, cutting your mileage in half. In low water years, water sources may be few and far between making for high mileage days between campsites.

Big Cypress National Preserve in the south and Bradwell Bay in the north are especially difficult sections where lower mileage (7-10 miles per day) can be counted on. The dike walks along Lake Okeechobee can be cruised pretty easily at 15-20 miles per day. Also, remember that since our prime hiking season is during the winter, daylight hours are short.

Don't underestimate the terrain in Florida simply because there are no peaks to be bagged. Instead, take the Trail as you find it. One of the fascinating things about the Florida Trail is the number of diverse ecological systems the trail traverses. A six inch change in elevation can mean a total difference in the plants and animals you are likely to encounter.

How do I keep myself safe?

Hiking the Florida Trail is much safer than living in any city, but problems can occur. Most people living along the trail or in nearby towns do not know of the Trail's existence, so relying on locals for information about the trail will generally get you lost. Also, since people in Florida are not used to seeing hikers, hitchhiking is more problematic compared to some other trails. Here are a few suggestions for hiking the Florida Trail:

- Don't hike alone.
- When you pass a trail register, sign in.
- Be careful with your equipment and don't leave yourself open to theft.
- Don't camp near road crossings.
- Leave a trip plan with a friend and keep them apprised of your location on a regular basis.
- A cell phone for emergency use is a wise precaution, but note that in many places along the trail you will have no reception.
- If posting your hike on the internet, build in a delay of several days
- Consider a personal locator beacon for areas with limited signal.

Go to the Florida Trail Hikers Facebook group to ask questions of people who are currently hiking or have hiked sections of trail recently. Check the Notices to Hikers (Trail Conditions) on the FTA website to get up-to-date information. Contact the FTA office well in advance of any long distance hikes to find out about changes in permitting and permissions. Check with the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission for hunting regulations and dates.

In an emergency situation, call 911, a local sheriff's office or FWC (*FWC) for immediate help. The FTA team cannot provide immediate emergency assistance.

RESERVATIONS REQUIRED

THE FOLLOWING RESERVATIONS ARE REQUIRED OR RECOMMENDED FOR CAMPING THROUFOOUT THE FLORIDA TRAIL ON PUBLIC LANDS. MANY LAND MANAGERS REALIZE YOU MAY NOT BE ABLE TO PROVIDE EXACT DATES AND ALLOW FOR UPDATING RESERVATIONS. MAP NUMBERS INDICATE THE FTA MAPS AND FO# IS THE FAROUT (FORMALLY GUTHOOKS) MILEAGE POINTS AS OF 09/2023.



SOUTHERN REGION

SFWMD LEVEES-MAP 40

FO# 66.1 & 82.3

Camping on levees in designated spots only. Reservations required for all South Florida Water Management District free campsites. Reserve online at www.sfwmd.gov/community-residents/recreation/sul in advance. Dates can be adjusted online as well.

KISSIMEE RIVER-MAP 34 & 35

FO# 166.8, 168.5, 170.7, 178.9, 189.6, 193.5 & 198.8

Reservations required for all South Florida Water Management District free campsites. Reserve online at www.sfwmd.gov/community-residents/recreation/sul in advance. Dates can be adjusted online as well.

KISSIMEE PRAIRIE PRESERVE STATE PARK- MAP 34

FO# 206.8, 211.5, 213.5 & 219.2

Reservations and fee required for all campsites including primitive sites. Reserve online at www.reserve.floridastateparks.org in advance or pay at the office.

CENTRAL REGION

KICCO MAP 34

FO#226 , 227.7, 233.8 & 234.5

Reservations required for all South Florida Water Management District free campsites. Reserve online at www.sfwmd.gov/community-residents/recreation/sul in advance. Dates can be adjusted online as well.

TOSOHATCHEE MAP 23

FO#329, 336.5, & 336.6

Reservations must be made in advance by calling the WMA office at (407) 568-5893.

BRONSON STATE FOREST MAP 22

FO#346.1 &349.3

Entrance fee required. Campsites must be reserved in advance by visiting www.ReserveAmerica.com.

LITTLE BIG ECON STATE FOREST- MAP 22

FO#363.8

Entrance fee required. Campsites must be reserved in advance by visiting www.ReserveAmerica.com.

RESERVATIONS REQUIRED

THE FOLLOWING RESERVATIONS ARE REQUIRED OR RECOMMENDED FOR CAMPING THROUGHOUT THE FLORIDA TRAIL ON PUBLIC LANDS. MANY LAND MANAGERS REALIZE YOU MAY NOT BE ABLE TO PROVIDE EXACT DATES AND ALLOW FOR UPDATING RESERVATIONS. MAP NUMBERS INDICATE THE FTA MAPS AND FO# IS THE GUTHOOK MILEAGE POINTS AS OF 09/2023.



CENTRAL REGION

SPRING HAMMOCK CAMP

MAP 22

FO#377.2

Open to Florida Trail hikers only. Visit www.bit.ly/SpringHammock or Call the FTA office at 352-378-8823 and leave your name and day you plan to stay. You will not receive a call back unless there is a problem. No overnight parking, hike in only.

GREEN SWAMP-MAP 29 & 30

FO# 336.6, 342.9, 346.4, 346.8, 348.3, 352.4, 355.9, 361, 363.6

Camping is permitted year round at designated campsites. Camping during non-hunting periods requires a free reservation from the Southwest Florida Water Management District which can be obtained by visiting www.watermatters.org.

CROOKED RIVER MAP 14

FO#379.3

Camping reservations required www.reserveamerica.com.

BLACKWATER CREEK MAP

FO#396.3

Campsites must be reserved by calling 877-879-3859.

SULPHUR CAMP MAP FO#397.6

Campsites must be reserved by calling 877-879-3859.

NORTHERN REGION

SEMINOLE STATE FOREST

MAP 21

FO#393.2

Entrance fee required. Campsites must be reserved in advance by visiting www.ReserveAmerica.com.

RESERVATIONS REQUIRED



CLEARWATER LAKE MAP 21

FO#412.7

Requires a fee to camp and entrance fee. Camping reservations www.recreation.gov

ALEXANDER SPRINGS

CAMPGROUND MAP 20 FO#422.7

Requires a fee to camp and entrance fee. Reservations recommended- www.recreation.gov

JUNIPER SPRINGS CAMPGROUND

MAP 20 FO#440.5

Requires a fee to camp and entrance fee. Reservations recommended- www.recreation.gov

SANTOS CAMPGROUND

MAP 26 FO#468.6

Camping fee. Reservations recommended. www.reserve.floridastateparks.org .

SILVER SPRINGS MAP 26

FO#475.6

Camping fee. Reservations recommended. www.reserve.floridastateparks.org .

RODMAN CAMPGROUND MAP 19

FO#480.2

Requires a fee to camp and entrance fee. Reservations recommended- www.reserve.floridastateparks.org.

CROSS FLORIDA GREENWAY

MAP 26

Call 352-236-7143 to inform them when you will arrive and what sites you plan to use.

GOLD HEAD BRANCH STATE

PARK- MAP 18. FO#521.4

Requires a fee to camp in the State Park including primitive sites. Hikers entering from the south end of the park can call the entrance station and pay the next day on the way out.

STEPHEN FOSTER STATE PARK

MAP 15 FO#624.8

Fee for camping. Reservations by calling 386-397-4331 or at www.reserve.floridastateparks.org .

HOLTON CREEK MAPS 14

FO#653

Reservations recommended at 800-868-9914 or at www.reserve.floridastateparks.org

RESERVATIONS REQUIRED



PANDHANDLE REGION

CAMEL LAKE MAP 9

FO#862.2

Reservations required at www.recreation.gov.

WALSINFOAM PARK MAP 7

FO#919.8

Free camping permit at www.nfwater.com/lands/recreation.

RATTLESNAKE LAKE SOUTH MAP 7

FO#924

Free camping permit at www.nfwater.com/lands/recreation.

PINELOG STATE FOREST- MAP 6

FO#947.6

The established campground (fee) is the only camping allowed in Pinelog during hunting dates.

BLACKWATER CREEK- MAP 1

FO#1091.0 & 1091.9

Reservations on www.recreation.gov.

FORT PICKENS- MAP 1

FO#1107.4

Reservations by calling 850-934-2656 or www.recreation.gov.



PERMITS REQUIRED

THE FOLLOWING PERMITS ARE REQUIRED FOR HIKING AND CAMPING THROUFOOUT THE FLORIDA TRAIL. MAP NUMBERS INDICATE THE FTA MAPS AND FO# IS THE GUTHOOK MILEAGE POINTS AS OF 09/2023.



SOUTHERN REGION

BIG CYPRESS- MAP 41 & 42- FO#0-38.3

All hikers in Big Cypress National Preserve must carry a backcountry permit with them at all times. These can be found at Oasis Visitor's Center and at the Mile Marker 63 Rest stop or can be printed from page 26.

SEMINOLE RESERVATION- MAP 40 FO#38.3-57.6

Permission is required to hike through the Reservation. Follow the instructions on page 29 for submitting your General Release and Covenant Not to Sue. This must be notarized for submission. No camping permitted here, you must pass straight through.

NORTHERN REGION

CAMP BLANDING- MAP 17 FO#526.4

Hikers should self register at the kiosks located just inside the east and west entrances to Camp Blanding. Camp closures are posted on these kiosks. If the Camp is closed for military exercise hikers should follow the white blazed alternate trail around the base.

PANDHANDLE REGION

ST. MARKS- MAP 17 FO#801.5

Requires a permit and small fee for each campsite used. Camping is only available to persons hiking the entire length of the Refuge. You must obtain the written permit prior to entering the refuge. St Marks is the only National Wildlife Refuge that allows hikers to camp and that privilege is extended only to thru and section hikers of the Florida Trail. Failure to obtain your permit may jeopardize this agreement for future hikers. St Mark's National Wildlife Refuge, PO Box 68, St Marks, FL 32355, (850) 925-6121

PERMITS REQUIRED



EGLIN- MAP 2-4 **FO# 981.8**

The Florida Trail crosses portions of Eglin Air Force Base, an active military installation. Thru-Hikers (hikers whose journey originates >50 miles outside the Eglin boundary) need to contact Jackson Guard (850-882-4165 or 4166) for special permitting.

Hikers must also consult the Public Access Map (PAM) each day to check for mission closures. Please see www.eglin.isportsman.net/FloridaTrail.aspx for more information.

Two sections of the trail are exempt from the PAM closures, provided they are not blocked by signage, range personnel, or barriers. When using these PAM exemptions hikers must stay on the trail corridor in these sections:

1. The section of trail passing through the Brier Creek East MU (TTA's N-14, N-13, N-11, N-9). (FTA Map 2)
2. The section of the trail passing through the Choctaw West MU west of Hwy 87. ALL portions of the trail east of Hwy 87 are subject to the PAM restrictions. (FTA Map 4)



Buckman Lock

NORMAL OPERATING HOURS ARE 6:30AM TO 2:00PM TH-SUN

LOCK TENDER'S NUMBER 386-329-3575

The lock combination is restricted to FTA Members who are thru-hiking the Florida Trail only. All other trail users should arrange their hiking schedules to cross the Buckman Lock during normal lock operating hours. FTA members who are thru-hiking should call the FTA office for the combination to the locks. Both locks are set to the same number but the numbers are changed randomly. The Buckman Lock operates Thursday through Sunday. Inbound from the river: 7 a.m., 8 a.m., 11 a.m. and 1:30 p.m. Outbound from the lake: 7:30 a.m., 8:30 a.m., 1 p.m. and 2 p.m. Closed on Thanksgiving and Christmas.

The locks are on the high chain-link fences on either side of the Buckman Lock. Hikers will only need to use the combination locks outside of normal operating hours. Call the locktender when you are close.

Some hikers have had trouble getting the combination locks open due to unfamiliarity with the lock design. These locks do not spring open like the combination locks used on school lockers. To open these locks depress the lock hasp into the lock body, dial in the correct combination numbers - aligning them with the arrow on the left side of the lock body - then jerk the lock open. To close, depress the lock hasp into the lock body and spin the combination to a different number.

Hikers should take care to make sure that the combination locks are closed after they pass through. If the FTA combination locks are left open, the FTA locks will have to be removed and hikers will no longer be able to cross the Lock outside of the normal operating hours.

Prescribed Burns



Florida's conservation land depends on fire to maintain its diversity of plant and animal life.

Without fire, the plants and animals unique to the original habitat maintained by fire are lost. Fox squirrels, gopher tortoises, scrub jays, red-cockaded woodpeckers, wire grass and longleaf pines are just a few of the many species which depend on fire.

Burning occurs at various times of year to produce the best mix of grasses and shrubs preferred by a wide range of wildlife species.

Burns can take place with little to no warning. Check the FTA notices and social media for information but know land managers may not have time to contact us. Lands often post burn notices on their entrance information boards.

What to do if you encounter a burn



Make yourself known to those performing a sweep of the area who may be able to transport you out.



If able, contact the land manager or dial *FWC or 911 for emergencies.



Get to a road or fire break and follow it away from the area burning



Do not return to the area until the land manager indicates it is safe to do

Hunter Safety

The Florida Trail crosses many wildlife management areas and other lands where hunters may be present.

Stay safe by following these tips.



Wear bright clothing, preferably orange.
Consider a hat, vest or pack cover at a minimum.



Avoid hiking at sunrise and dusk.



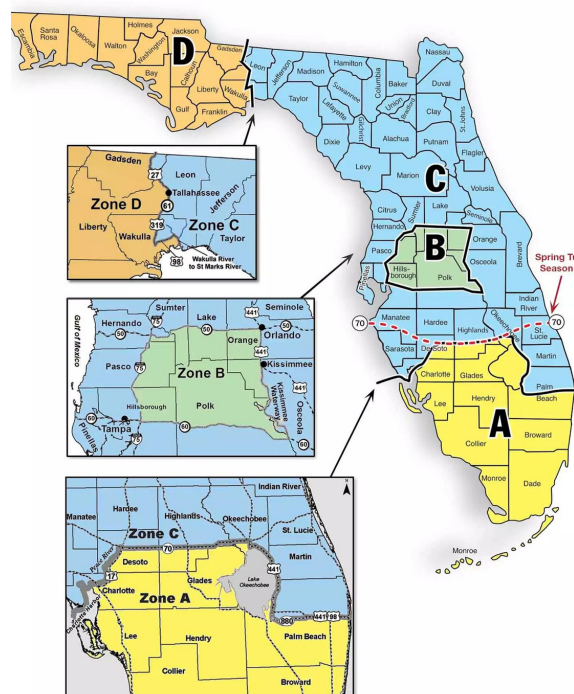
Be heard.

If you hear hunters on the trail, speak up.

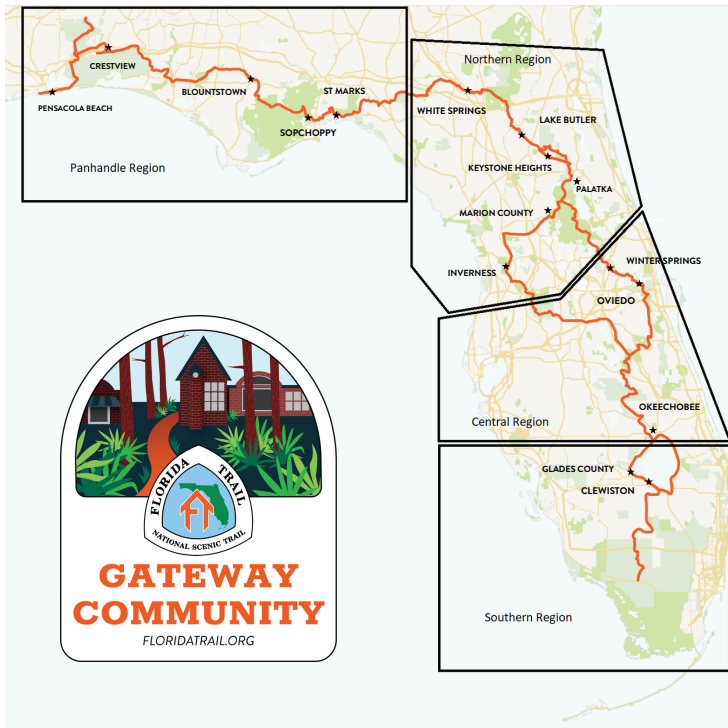


Know if hunting is taking place. Check before you go or stop at check station for more information.

Florida's hunting season is typically from August through April by zones. Florida Fish & Wildlife Conservation Commission's website www.myfwc.org provides dates for each zones. Check before you hike.



Gateway Communities



What is a Gateway Community?

A Gateway Community is a city, town, or county in close proximity to the Florida Trail that offers accommodation, restaurants, grocery stores, and recreational opportunities. This program works by connecting our hikers to these towns and local businesses along the Florida Trail, and vice versa. Look for our logo in the windows of local businesses!

floridatrail.org/gatewaycommunities

Bring along your Florida Trail Passport and collect stamps at participating locations!
floridatrail.org/passport



Gateway Communities



Don't miss these hiker favorites along the trail!



Check out the smallest post office in the U.S. near the southern terminus in Ochopee



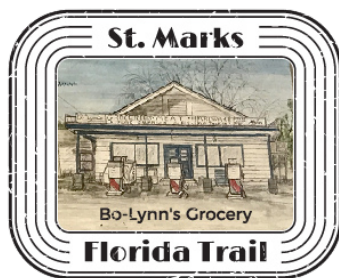
Enjoy free coffee for hikers at Back Home Bakery Cafe in Crestview!



Collect the White Springs town stamp at the White Springs Library. While you're there, get some rest at the cozy White Springs B&B!



Stop by Bo-Lynn's Grocery in St. Mark's for resupply and homemade comfort food!



Be a Good Steward of the Trail

Set a good example for the hiking community



Practice Leave No Trace Principles - Visit LNT.org



Share the trail with other trail users - Be friendly, say hello!



Be respectful while visiting towns along the trail



Educate others about the trail and share your experience



Join the FTA and volunteer to help maintain the trail

THE 7 PRINCIPLES of Leave No Trace

1. Plan Ahead & Prepare
2. Travel & Camp on Durable Surfaces
3. Dispose of Waste Properly
4. Leave What You Find
5. Minimize Campfire Impacts
6. Respect Wildlife
7. Be Considerate of Other Visitors



End to End Hiker Designation

The Florida Trail Association confers the designation END TO END on any individual who affirms they have walked end to end on the Florida Trail. The policy gives equal recognition to through hikers and section hikers alike. The Florida Trail Association assumes that those who apply for END TO END status have hiked every mile of the Florida Thru Trail including any roadway connectors. Alternate trails are considered viable substitutes to the orange blazed trail in an emergency such as flooding or severe storms, which have made the trail impassable. Parallel road walks are accepted as alternative routes when conditions put the hiker in peril. The sequence, direction, speed, length of time taken to finish and whether one carries a back pack or not are not considered issues.

Note: The Florida Trail has been in transition for the past 25 years. Therefore, it will not be necessary for anyone who walked the trail before the end of 1999 to have completed all the road walks and consideration will be given as to the location of the Florida Thru Trail terminus changes.

Thru Hiker – is a person who is attempting to hike end to end within a year in a single continuous journey by hiking from one terminus of the Florida Thru Trail to the other.

Section Hiker – is a person who is attempting to hike all of the Florida Trail in segments, over a period of time. The length of time, sequence of segments, and direction of travel on each segment are not considered issues.

To apply for your end to end certificate and to be put on the list with others who have completed the trail follow this link:

www.floridatrail.org/end-to-end-hikers/



Partnerships & Resources

TO SEE ALL THE FLORIDA TRAIL'S LAND MANAGERS AND PARTNERS VISIT OUR WEBSITE FOR THIS [LIST](#). HERE ARE A FEW OF OUR FAVORITES!



Florida Hikes



Florida State Parks



Florida Greenways and Trails



FWC



FT Thru Hikers Alliance



"The Florida Trail Guide" Sandra Friend & John Keatley

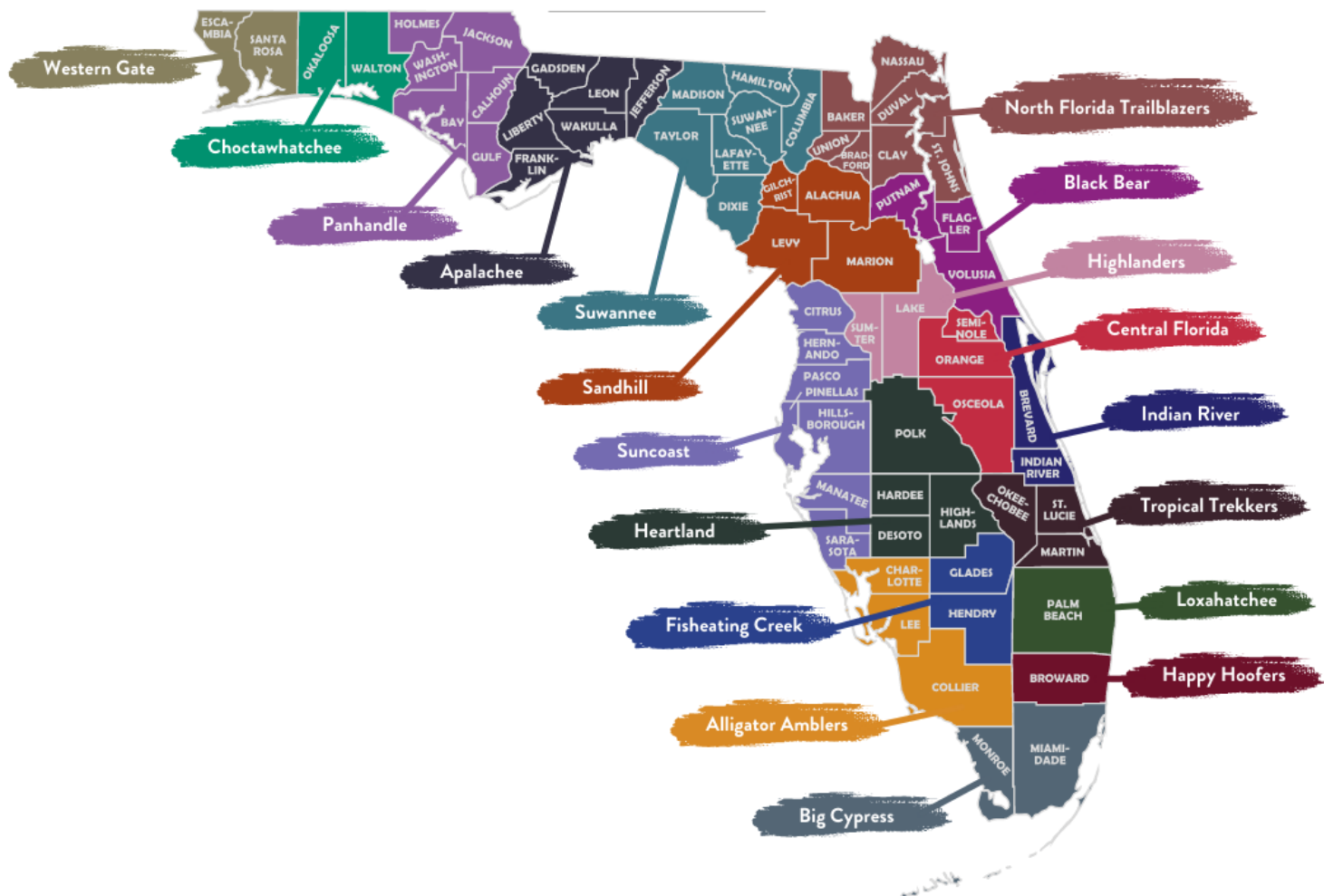


The U.S. Forest Service serves as the administrator for the Florida National Scenic Trail.

Their website, www.fs.usda.gov/fnst, hosts the most up to date online map, in addition to other valuable resources.

Florida Trail Association Chapters

FTA CHAPTERS



By becoming an FTA Member, a requirement to hike through several sections of the trail, you gain valuable contacts at the local chapter. Each local chapter can give you current trail condition information, recommend the best stops along the trail and connect you to trail angels. Visit our website for each chapter's local pages with contact information or to join them in maintaining the trail!

For friends and families of a thru-hiker

We know that those of you at home play an important role in supporting your hiker. Here are a few tips on how you can make their hike enjoyable and safe:

- For safety purposes - have a written description of their gear, trail name and planned route
- Send re-supply packages (the Florida Trail guidebook has a complete list)
- Keep a list of favorite trail foods and preferred gear in case they need replacement items
- Help plan their zero days: Arrange transportation to get into town; Make lodging reservations
- Meet them at trailheads with snacks and cold beverages
- Know how often they plan to check in
- Offer to pass along progress updates to others so they can save battery - but delay public posts by a few days to ensure hiker safety
- Mental and emotional support: Let your hiker know how proud and supportive you are!
- Trust that hikers are capable and have done their research. Don't place your worries onto them - offer encouragement instead!

WHAT DO I DO IF I HAVEN'T HEARD FROM MY HIKER?

The best thing you can do for your hiker, if you truly believe they are in danger, is to contact local law enforcement. The local sheriff's office or FWC (888-404-FWCC (3922) or *FWC) are the best places to begin. Remember cell phone service and opportunities to recharge can be very limited in some sections for hikers.



Florida Trail Maps

MAPS CAN BE PURCHASED AT THE FLORIDA TRAIL WEBSITE WITH AN ANNUALLY CORRESPONDING DATA BOOK. THESE WATERPROOF MAPS ARE \$99.95 FOR THE SET OR \$6 EACH PLUS S/H & TAXES.





SEMINOLE RESERVATION PERMIT

IN ORDER TO CROSS THE SEMINOLE
RESERVATION YOU MUST APPLY FOR A
PERMIT.

1. Print the "General Release and Covenant Not To Sue from the the next pages.
2. Read, sign and have the form notarized.
3. Visit the online permit request form at <https://bit.ly/FTSeminole>
4. Complete the form and upload a copy of your notarized release.
5. No news is good news, you should not expect to hear back from the Reservation unless there was a problem with your application.
6. Carry a copy of your completed form printed or digitally with you through the Reservation. Be prepared to show it to law enforcement if asked.

As a reminder, the following are always prohibited in the Seminole
Reservation:

Stealth or random camping
Fishing
Hunting
Fires

General Release and Covenant Not To Sue

I _____, the undersigned, hereinafter Releasor, being a member of the Florida Trail Association, which has been issued a permit by the Seminole Tribe of Florida for the purpose of the Association's members hiking on and over the Big Cypress Seminole Indian Reservation, will attend and participate in a hike, hereinafter Event, to be conducted through the Tribe's Big Cypress Seminole Indian Reservation, hereinafter Premises, and in consideration of of being permitted to attend and/or participate in said Event do hereby voluntarily assume the risks and consequences of attending and participating in Event in said Premises. The Releasor knowingly, freely and voluntarily releases waives, acquits and discharges the United States of America, the Seminole Tribe of Florida, The Seminole Tribe of Florida Inc., and any of their Tribal Council Members, Tribal members, officers, directors, employees, gents, shareholders and volunteers together with their heirs, personal representatives, successors, assigns, all referred to as Releasees, from liability to me, my representatives, assigns, heirs, and next of kin for all loss or damage, and any claims therefore brought by, or on behalf of, me on account of injury to my person, property, or resulting in my death.

Releasor agrees to indemnify the Releasees and each of them from any loss, liability, damage or cost Releasees may incur due to presence of the Releasor in or on the Premises and during participation in the Event whether caused by negligence of the Releasees or otherwise, or by persons who may be on the Premises lawfully or otherwise.

Releasor assumes full responsibility for and risk of bodily injury, death or property damage due to negligence of Releasees, or otherwise, while Releasor is in or on the Premises and while participating in said Event.

Releasor further acknowledges and agrees that the following restrictions and limitations shall apply to all Florida Trail Association, Inc. members and hikers, when hiking on Seminole Tribe of Florida lands:

- a. Adult members and adult members acting as parent(s) and/or guardian(s) of minors of the Florida Trail Association, Inc. are covered by this General Release and Covenant Not to Sue
- b. Hikers shall remain within the designated trails, except to visit Billie Swamp Safari, Big Cypress Landing, Swampwater Café, Ah-Tah-Thi-Ki Museum, and Big Cypress Campground.
- c. Hikers shall observe a strict "Leave No Trace" policy. All garbage and trash generated by hikers shall be removed from and carried off-reservation by the hikers using the "pack it in, pack it out" policy.
- d. No open fires are permitted.
- e. Possession of alcoholic beverages, controlled substances and firearms is strictly prohibited.
- f. Fishing, hunting, camping on, or use of the lands as a transient or residential dwelling place, unless specifically provided otherwise herein; and
- g. any conduct, purpose, or use which is in violation of the applicable law.

Releasor agrees on behalf of himself/herself and his/her successors and assigns not to institute any action or suit at law or at equity against the Releases, nor to assist in the institution or prosecution of any claim, demand, action or cause of action for damages, costs, loss of services, expenses, or compensation by any other reason or entity, and to indemnify and hold harmless Releases from any and all claims brought by, or on behalf of himself/herself.

Releasor agrees that this Release, Waiver, and Indemnity Agreement is intended to be as broad and inclusive as permitted by the laws of the United States and the Seminole Tribe of Florida. If any portion of this Agreement is held invalid, it is agreed that the balance shall, notwithstanding, continue in full legal force and effect.

Releasor, being of lawful age, in consideration of being permitted to attend and participate in the Event on the Premises does for himself/herself, his/her heirs, executors, administrators, and assigns hereby release and forever discharge said Releasees, their heirs, administrators, and executors of and from any and every claim, demand, action or right of action, of whatsoever kind or nature, either in law or in equity, arising from or by any reason of any bodily injury or personal injuries, known or unknown, death and/or property damages resulting or to result from any accident which may occur as a result of attendance and participation in said Event conducted on the Premises by the Florida Trail Association whether or not by negligence.

Releasor further states that he/she has carefully read the above Release, that Releasor knows the contents of the Release and understands it and agrees to be bound by its terms and signs this Release as his/her own free act.

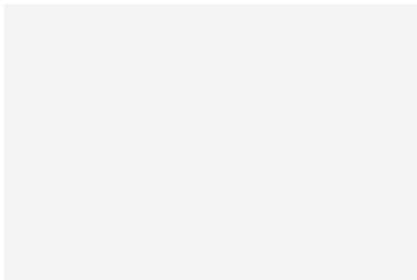
This Release contains the entire agreement between the parties to this Agreement and the terms of this Release are contractual and not a mere recital.

This Agreement is executed on _____, 20____ by _____, referred to as Releasor, County of _____, State of _____, Phone No. (____)_____.

Releasor signature _____
Date _____

I _____,
Notary Public, do hereby certify that _____ has appeared before me and is the Releasor whose signature appears on this document.


Notary
Signature _____



Affix seal/stamp here

BIG CYPRESS NATIONAL PRESERVE PERMIT

PRINT 3 COPIES AND COMPLETE. ONE COPY SHOULD REMAIN WITH YOU AT ALL TIMES, THE OTHER SHOULD BE LEFT AT THE TRAILHEAD DROP BOX AND ONE ON YOUR DASH IF YOU ARE LEAVING A VEHICLE. THESE ARE AVAILABLE AT ALL TRAILHEADS AS WELL.



Form 10-404A (Rev. 09/2016)
OMB Control No. 1024-0022

**U.S. DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE**

BACKCOUNTRY – WILDERNESS USE PERMIT
The Visitor must have this permit during the visit.

When signed, this single-visit permit authorizes: Name			Campsite/Zone Name	Zone/Site #	Nights
Address					
City	State	Zip Code			
Communication Device* (Optional) <input type="checkbox"/> Satellite <input type="checkbox"/> Cell <input type="checkbox"/> Personal Locator Device (include contact number, type, and provider)					
Park Name					
Estimated Start and Finish Dates		From Month/Day			
		Through Month/Day			
Location of Entry	Location of Exit				
Primary Method of Travel	Number of People in Group		Remarks		
Number of Pack or Saddle Stock	Number of Watercraft or Other Craft		Visitor's Signature / Date	Issuing Official Signature / Date	
1	2	3	4	5	6
7	8	9	10	11	12
13	14	15	16	17	18
19	20	21	22	23	24
25	26	27	28	29	30
31					

FASTEN THIS TAG TO YOUR PACK, SADDLE, BOAT, OR TENT
 Communication devices may be helpful, but do not guarantee your safety or rescue. It is your responsibility to accept the risks inherent with your trip and to be self-reliant in the event of an emergency.