

Guide to the

Big Bend Scenic Byway



The Big Bend Scenic Byway will transport you to a different time and place through its **Wildlife, Woods, Waterways, and Way of Life**





Acknowledgements

This is the second edition of The Guide to the Big Bend Scenic Byway. Since its original publication in 2005, all information has been updated and **New Attractions** detailed for both the Coastal and Forest Trails (pages 32-35). In addition, we are proud to report that this 220-mile drive has now received recognition and designation as both a Florida Scenic Highway and a National Scenic Byway.

Visit our website www.floridabigbendscenicbyway.org for other current news and sample itineraries.

To help make your drive more enjoyable, **Directional Signage** has been installed throughout the route and twelve **Information Centers** with maps and literature are open to serve your needs. Stop by and get information on Green Guides for fishing, kayaking, hiking, biking, birding, and more. You'll definitely want to get out of your car to experience the Byway's exquisite natural wonders first hand.

Please take a moment at the end of your trip to complete and return the **Visitor Questionnaire** at the end of The Guide, so that we may use your comments and suggestions to improve our service to other travelers. On your future trips, we hope that our **Information Kiosks** and **Roadside Interpretive Exhibits** will be completed to help tell the remarkable story of this region.

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Sponsors

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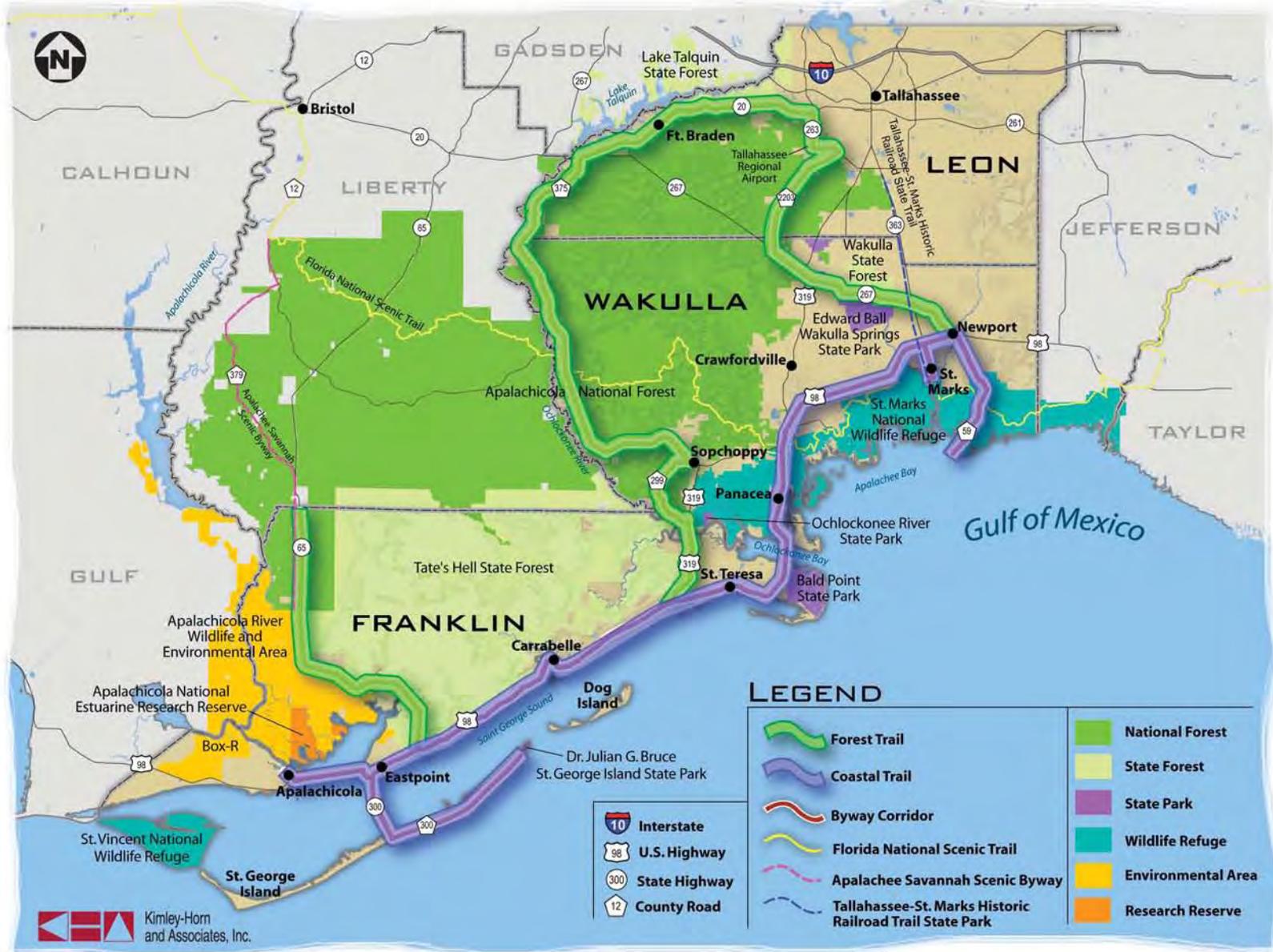


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Big Bend Scenic Byway





Introduction

Open the door to a world of memories. The Big Bend Scenic Byway is waiting for you!

Use this *Guide* to plan day trips. Learn about the natural history and culture of this very special place. Discover something new.

Relive your childhood...searching for shells on a beach, eating ice cream at festivals, riding a horse through the woods, fishing on a dock on the bay, or watching sunsets over the water. There are over 200 miles of wonderland to explore. And there are fun activities for the whole family. Historic forts, battlegrounds, museums. Wildflowers, butterflies, birds, and animals. Coastal dunes, forests, beaches, and marshland. Fishing villages, historic towns, and rural communities. Fishing, hunting, hiking, kayaking, and biking. Shopping, fresh seafood restaurants, plays, and festivals.

Whether you have a day, a week, or a month, *The Guide* can help you make the most of your visit.

Be amazed at the diversity of scenery, places, and experiences that await you. There are no crowds, high prices, or pressures. The Big Bend is slower paced, relaxed, and full of great values! Smiles and very friendly people are the norm. You will want to return again and again.

So sit down, look though *The Guide*, and then hit the road to your planned destination. You won't be disappointed... rain or shine. Go make memories!



Planning a Day Trip

So where do you want to go? The Scenic Byway offers two distinct choices: the Coastal Trail and the Forest Trail. Each is divided into three segments: East, Central, and West. No matter where you are staying along the Byway, you can easily reach one or more of these segments. *The Guide* will help you understand what activities, facilities, and attractions to expect.

Though the distances may seem short, remember to allow plenty of time. The Byway travels along two-lane roads through rural communities and open countryside. Take your time and enjoy the views. Driving slowly also helps wildlife — keep your eyes open for Black Bear, Bobcat, White-Tailed Deer, River Otter, Fox Squirrel, Raccoon, Pine Snake, and other critters that may cross the road. Several wildlife photographs in *The Guide* were taken directly from the roadway. Also, please do not feed or disturb wildlife. Animals, especially Alligators and Black Bears that have become accustomed to human handouts or garbage, can become dangerous — which often results in their being killed or displaced.

Look at the **Facilities Chart** before you begin your trip. Some segments do not have restaurants, so plan accordingly. Stop by a deli or pack a great picnic lunch. Some roads through forests and natural areas (Ft. Braden to Sopchoppy and SR 65) do not have service stations for many miles, so it's always prudent to start your trip with a full tank of gas.



Would you like to kayak or canoe down a scenic river? Go fishing or horseback riding? There are outfitters along the Byway to make any activity a reality and canoe and kayak rentals are readily available. *The Guide* provides contact information for Chambers of Commerce and Tourist Development Councils in each county. They will be happy to give you the names and numbers of outfitters, guides, and rental sites. There are ample opportunities in the forests for horseback riding, mountain biking, and hiking. Trails for Off-Highway Vehicles (OHV) are being expanded.

Some recommended side trips are on graded dirt roads. *The Guide* indicates their location. Under normal conditions they can easily be driven by regular two-wheel drive vehicles. However, these roads are not suitable for large travel homes and should not be attempted during or soon after heavy rain.

How much time you allot for a given segment depends on the type and number of activities that you are planning. You can spend two hours or two days in each segment. It's up to you.

Please note that recreational licenses are required for fishing and hunting. They can be purchased at county tax collectors' offices, sporting goods stores, and other retailers selling hunting or fishing equipment, or call 1-888/347-4356. Though certain species are hunted year-round, hunting activity

is generally at its peak from mid-November through mid-January. You are strongly encouraged to wear bright clothing, preferably a "hunter orange" vest or hat, if you are visiting forested areas at this time. **You do not need a fishing license if you are:**

- A child under age 16.
- Fishing from a guide, charter, or party boat that has a valid vessel license.
- A Florida resident fishing from land or a structure fixed to land.
- A Florida resident 65 years or older with a no-cost license obtainable from any tax collector's office.

Please take insect repellent with you as well as suntan lotion and plenty of water for outings during warmer months.



Estimated Driving Distances and Times

	Apalachicola FC	Carrabelle FC	Ft. Braden LC	Panacea WC	Sopchoppy WC	St. George Island FC	St. Marks WC	St. Teresa FC	Wakulla Springs WC
Apalachicola	0	22.4 miles 32 min.	85 miles 2 hrs. 22 min.	48.4 miles 1 hr. 9 min.	43 miles 1 hr. 12 min.	12.5 miles 20 min.	68 miles 1 hr. 35 min.	36.5 miles 50 min.	71 miles 1 hr. 40 min.
Carrabelle	22.4 miles 32 min.	0	62 miles 1 hr. 40 min.	26.3 miles 45 min.	20.9 miles 32 min.	23 miles 45 min.	45 miles 1 hr. 10 min.	14.4 miles 22 min.	47 miles 1 hr. 10 min.
Ft. Braden	85 miles 2 hrs. 22 min.	62 miles 1 hr. 40 min.	0	34 miles 56 min.	38 miles 1 hr. 5 min.	81 miles 2 hrs. 17 min.	35.1 miles 55 min.	48 miles 1 hr. 20 min.	23 miles 45 min.
Panacea	48.4 miles 1 hr. 9 min.	26.3 miles 45 min.	34 miles 56 min.	0	9.6 miles 14 min.	49.2 miles 1 hr. 23 min.	19.1 miles 29 min.	11.9 miles 17 min.	20.5 miles 30 min.
Sopchoppy	43 miles 1 hr. 12 min.	20.9 miles 32 min.	9.6 miles 1 hr. 5 min.	43.8 miles 14 min.	0	43.8 miles 1 hr. 16 min.	22.4 miles 34 min.	14.7 miles 30 min.	23.8 miles 35 min.
St. George Island	12.5 miles 20 min.	23 miles 45 min.	81 miles 2 hrs. 17 min.	49.2 miles 1 hr. 23 min.	43.8 miles 1 hr. 16 min.	0	68.3 miles 2 hrs. 5 min.	37.3 miles 1 hr. 10 min.	68 miles 1 hr. 58 min.
St. Marks	67.5 miles 2 hrs. 30 min.	45 miles 1 hr. 10 min.	35.1 miles 55 min.	19.1 miles 29 min.	22.4 miles 34 min.	68.3 miles 2 hrs. 10 min.	0	31 miles 45 min.	11 miles 22 min.
St. Teresa	36.5 miles 50 min.	14.4 miles 22 min.	48 miles 1 hr. 20 min.	11.9 miles 17 min.	14.7 miles 30 min.	37.3 miles 1 hr. 10 min.	31 miles 45 min.	0	32.4 miles 46 min.
Wakulla Springs	71 miles 1 hr. 40 min.	47 miles 1 hr. 10 min.	23 miles 45 min.	20.5 miles 30 min.	23.8 miles 35 min.	68 miles 1 hr. 58 min.	11 miles 22 min.	32.4 miles 46 min.	0

FC - Franklin County
LC - Leon County
WC - Wakulla County



Facilities in Byway Communities

	Lodging	Camping	Restaurants	Shopping
APALACHICOLA	Y	N	Y	Y
CARRABELLE	Y	Y	Y	Y
FT. BRADEN	N	Y	N	N
PANACEA	Y	Y	Y	Y
SOPCHOPPY	N	Y	Y	Y
ST. GEORGE ISLAND	Y	Y	Y	Y
ST. MARKS	Y	N	Y	Y
ST. TERESA	N	N	Y	N
WAKULLA SPRINGS	Y	N	Y	Y



Big Bend Scenic Byway Information Centers

- ST. MARKS NATIONAL WILDLIFE REFUGE VISITOR CENTER, St. Marks, Wakulla County
- WAKULLA WELCOME CENTER, Panacea, Wakulla County
- WAKULLA SPRINGS STATE PARK & LODGE, Wakulla Station, Wakulla County
- APALACHICOLA NATIONAL FOREST HEADQUARTERS, Crawfordville, Wakulla County
- SOPCHOPPY HISTORIC DEPOT, Sopchoppy, Wakulla County
- CARRABELLE CHAMBER OF COMMERCE, Carrabelle, Franklin County
- ST. GEORGE ISLAND VISITOR CENTER, St. George Island, Franklin County
- APALACHICOLA BAY CHAMBER OF COMMERCE, Apalachicola, Franklin County
- SUMMERCAMP BEACH, St. Teresa, Franklin County
- VISIT TALLAHASSEE, Tallahassee, Leon County
- TALLAHASSEE MUSEUM, Tallahassee, Leon County
- FT. BRADEN LIBRARY, Ft. Braden, Leon County



Interpretation along the Byway

Coastal Trail

Site	Area of Interpretation
COASTAL TRAIL EAST	
St. Marks National Wildlife Refuge Visitor Center	Museum of local flora & fauna. Bookstore with field guides, touring guides for region & state, gifts, insect repellent, etc. Bird list, trail guides, map, fact sheets on Bald Eagle, Alligator, lighthouse. Plum Orchard Nature Trail with signed interpretation. Designated Whooping Crane sanctuary.
St. Marks Lighthouse	History of lighthouse, Monarch Butterfly plaque, nature trail with printed guide to plants. Kiosk with refuge maps and wading bird descriptions.
Tallahassee-St. Marks Historic Railroad State Trail	Interpretation on Port Leon at the St. Marks Trailhead.
San Marcos de Apalache Historic State Park	Museum featuring history of the Fort from Spanish period to Civil War, artifacts, tourist pamphlets.
Wakulla County Welcome Center	Natural and cultural history, maritime displays, historic photographs, viewing deck with telescope, nature trail, tourist brochures, and art display.
Gulf Specimen Marine Laboratory	Aquarium with touch tanks, bookstore, and gifts.
Big Bend Maritime Center	Maritime history exhibits, artifacts, photographs, vernacular boats, oral histories, and much more.
Bald Point State Park	Boardwalk with interpretive display on wetlands.
Leonard's Landing	Roadside kiosk display on clam aquaculture and sea grass beds.
COASTAL TRAIL CENTRAL	
Camp Gordon Johnston Museum	History of World War II amphibious landing training site for the invasion of Normandy, docents, artifacts, maps.
Carabelle History Museum	Unique collection of memorabilia and artifacts.
Crooked River Lighthouse	Historic lighthouse, keeper's house, and interpretive exhibits.
COASTAL TRAIL WEST	
John Gorrie State Park	Museum with historic background of period and replica of 1851 ice machine.
Orman House State Park	Period home, guided tours, one-hour presentation of its history.
St. George Island Lighthouse	Reconstructed lighthouse, grounds, visitor center, and museum.
St. Vincent National Wildlife Refuge Visitor Center	Natural history interpretation of Refuge property and Red Wolf breeding program.
Apalachicola National Estuarine Research Reserve and Visitor's Center	Natural history of the Gulf of Mexico, Apalachicola River and Bay with interactive displays, aquarium, diorama, video room, artifacts, nature trail, and much more.
Apalachicola Maritime Museum	Historical displays, artifacts, and exhibits.



Forest Trail

Site	Area of Interpretation
FOREST TRAIL EAST	
Natural Bridge State Historic Site	Monument and plaque on Civil War battle.
Edward Ball Wakulla Springs State Park and Lodge	Historic lodge, park history including filming of motion pictures such as "Tarzan of the Apes" and "Creature from the Black Lagoon," nature museum, bookstore, bird lists, guided river tours, swimming and diving platforms.
Wakulla Springs State Forest	Kiosk with interpretation at parking area.
Apalachicola National Forest, Trout Pond and GF&A Bike Trail	Interpretive kiosks along trail and at trailhead.
Leon Sinks Geological Site	Geologic interpretation of Karst Topography and sinkholes, trails, displays.
Tallahassee Museum	Natural habitat zoo of indigenous wildlife, collection of historical buildings from the Big Bend, and artifacts.
FOREST TRAIL CENTRAL	
Mission San Luis de Apalache	Museum and grounds of mission and fort complex, typical of Spanish mission system in Florida. Administrative center for Apalachee missions of the Franciscan religious order.
Silver Lake Recreation Area	Short interpretive trail on natural history.
Lake Talquin State Park	Self-guided boardwalk on flora and fauna.
Ft. Braden Community Center	Plaque describing Fort Braden, which was established on December 3, 1839, as a military outpost during the Second Seminole War. National Registry of Historic Places.
Sopchoppy High School & Gymnasium	Plaque describing history and architecture of site. National Registry of Historic Places.
Sopchoppy Depot	Restored Georgia, Florida, and Alabama Railroad Depot with photos, memorabilia, and exhibits.
Ochlocknee River State Park	Interpretive kiosk on Florida Black Bear and Red-Cockaded Woodpecker, hiking trails, boat launch, swimming, bird lists.
FOREST TRAIL WEST	
Tate's Hell State Forest Ralph Kendrick Dwarf Cypress Dome	Kiosk with natural history of site, background on Ralph Kendrick, boardwalk, and observation platform.
Apalachicola River Wildlife and Environmental Area- Sand Beach Recreation Area	Interpretive panels on archaeology of area, Bald Eagles, and Apalachee Bay, observation tower, nature trail, bird list, and site guide.
Ft. Gadsden Historic Site, Apalachicola National Forest	Interpretive exhibits of historic fort and battles. Artifacts are displayed along a level pathway on the banks of the Apalachicola River.



Celebrations along the Byway

If you're lucky, your visit may coincide with one or more of these great events! Plan at least a half-day to take in the fun and sample some great food! Contact the Chambers of Commerce or Tourist Development Councils of the counties indicated for specific information.

January

- Season of plays, music, and art opens at Dixie Theater, Apalachicola (FC)

February

- African American History Festival, Apalachicola (FC)

March

- Battle of Natural Bridge Reenactment (LC)
- Camp Gordon Johnston Reunion, Carrabelle (FC)
- Stone Age and Primitive Arts Festival, Ochlockonee River State Park (WC)
- St. Vincent Island Open House, St. Vincent National Wildlife Refuge (FC)

April

- Worm-Gruntin' Festival, Sopchoppy (WC)
- Wakulla Wildlife Festival, Wakulla Springs State Park (WC)
- Apalachicola Antique & Classic Boat Show (FC)
- Riverfront Festival, Carrabelle (FC)
- Pioneer Breakfast/Tallahassee Jazz and Blues Fest, Tallahassee Museum (LC)
- Humanatee Festival, St. Marks (WC)

May

- Blue Crab Festival, Panacea (WC)
- Tour of Historic Homes, Apalachicola (FC)
- Plein Air Paint-Out, Apalachicola (FC)
- Military Muster, Mission San Luis (LC)

October

- Monarch Butterfly Festival, St. Marks NWR (WC)
- Stone Crab Festival, St. Marks (WC)
- Mighty Mullet Maritime Festival, Panacea (WC)
- Crooked River Lighthouse Lantern Festival, Carrabelle (FC)
- Black Bear Festival, Carrabelle (FC)

November

- Florida Seafood Festival, Apalachicola (FC)
- Historic Apalachicola Christmas Celebration (FC)
- Big Bend Days, Tallahassee Museum (LC)

December

- Boat Parade of Lights, Carrabelle (FC)
- Operation Migration—Welcome the Ultralight and new class of Whooping Cranes, St. Marks (WC)
- Christmas Street Boat Parade, Panacea (WC)



For additional information, contact the following:

VISIT FLORIDA

Florida's Tourism Marketing Corporation
VISITFLORIDA.com

Leon County (LC)

Visit Tallahassee
106 East Jefferson Street (across from City Hall)
Tallahassee, FL 32301
850/606-2300
VisitTallahassee.com

Franklin County (FC)

Apalachicola Bay Chamber of Commerce
and Visitors Center
122 Commerce Street, Apalachicola, FL 32320
850/653-9419
ApalachicolaBay.org;

Carrabelle Chamber of Commerce

105 St. James Ave., P.O. Drawer DD,
Carrabelle, FL 32322
850/697-2585
Carrabelle.org

Wakulla County (WC)

Wakulla County Chamber of Commerce
P.O. Box 598, 23 High Drive
Historic Wakulla Courthouse, Crawfordville, FL 32326
850/926-1848
WakullaCountyChamber.com

Wakulla County Tourist Development Council

P.O. Box 67
Panacea, FL 32346
850/544-6133
VisitWakulla.com

Wakulla County Welcome Center

1493 Coastal Highway
Panacea, FL 32346
850/984-3966

Headquarters, Apalachicola National Forest

57 Taff Drive
Crawfordville, FL 32347
850/926-3561

State of Florida

MyFlorida.com

**Florida Circumnavigational Saltwater
Paddling Trail**

Dep.state.fl.us/gwt/paddling/saltwater.htm

**Florida Fish & Wildlife Conservation
Commission**

Big Bend Saltwater Paddling Trail
MyFwc.com/viewing/recreation/wmas/lead/
Big-bend/paddling-trail

Florida Division of Forestry

FL-Dof.com

Florida Scenic Highways

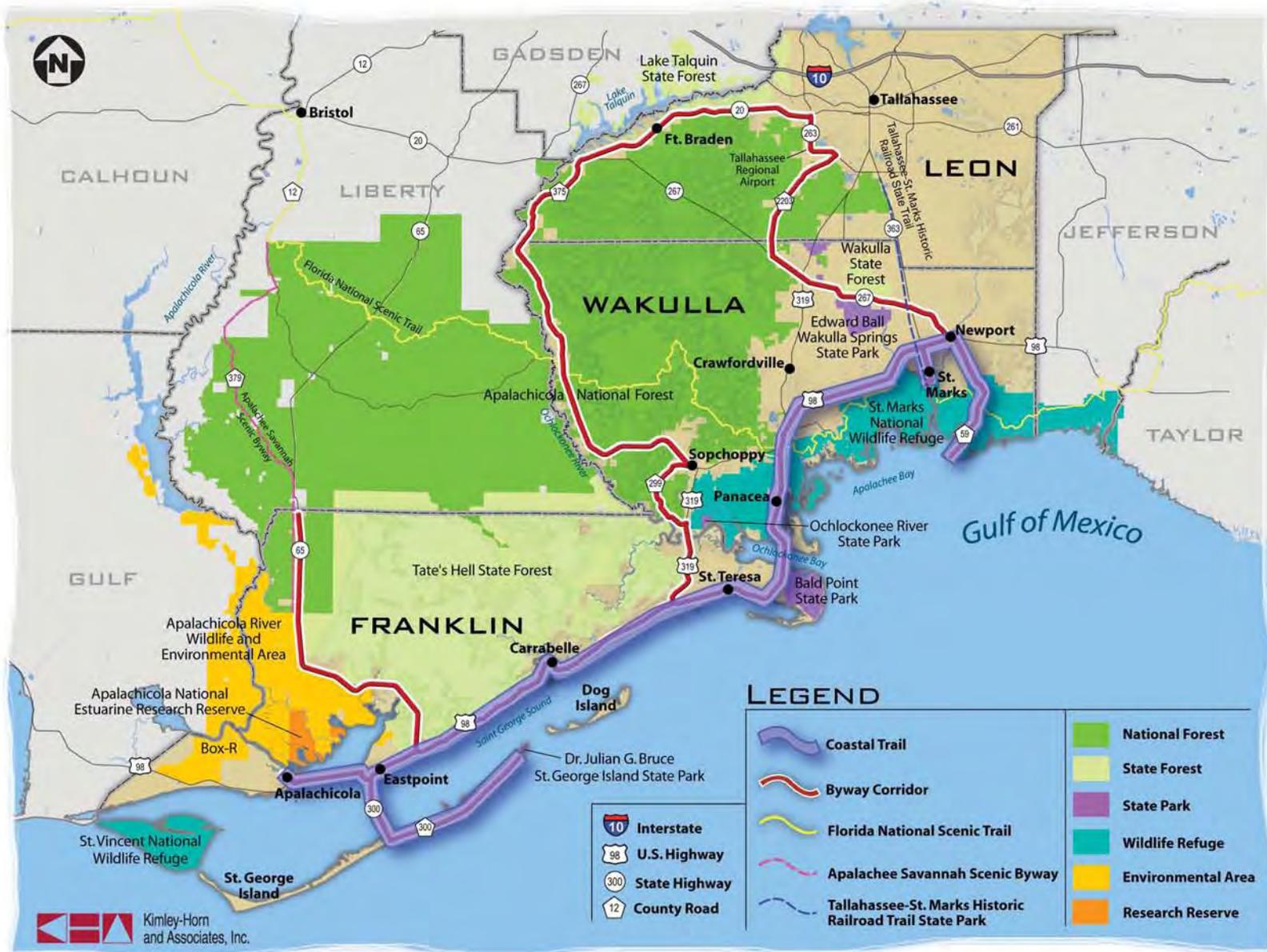
FloridaScenicHighways.com

Florida Green Guide Association

FloridaGreenGuideAssociation.com



Coastal Trail



Coastal Trail Natural History

These are some of the types of habitat that you will see while visiting the Coastal Trail of the Big Bend Scenic Byway, from the St. Marks National Wildlife Refuge to Apalachicola.

Beaches

These are constantly reshaped by waves, winds, and tides. Waves and winds pick up sands and reshape the shoreline. Tides sweep sand, shells, and trash onto land and back out to sea. There's so much change in this zone that



vegetation doesn't have a chance to get established. Both birds and sea turtles lay their eggs on beaches. Resident wading birds and migrating shorebirds feed at the water's edge.

Coastal Strand

This long, narrow strip between the beach on one side (where plants can't grow) and the much more stable communities on the inland side may be dry oak scrub, pineland, or hardwood forest. It includes the inland edge of the beach as well as the dunes. Plants and animals must adapt to salt spray, wind, and occasional flooding to survive here. Most of the plant species are vines, grasses, and herbs (that is, non-woody plants). After a storm wipes out the plants the coastal strand is

recolonized from seeds blown in on the wind or contributed in bird and animal droppings. Dunes can be formed when the wind hits plants such as sea oats. The plants slow the wind down just enough to drop the sand it's carrying. Isn't it remarkable that these plants can withstand salt spray and strong winds but cannot survive human footsteps?

Salt Marsh

The marsh's boundaries are fluid, adjusting themselves according to storms, erosion, sedimentation, the ebb and flow and meandering of tidal creeks, and sea level changes. A salt marsh may not be much to look at but what it does for us is remarkable. These monotonous stretches of grasses produce an enormous amount of dead plant matter, which is quickly broken down by crabs and other little creatures into tiny pieces, called detritus, which in turn



feeds the young of many fish and shellfish species that end up on our tables. Blue Crabs, Shrimp, Mullet, Spotted Sea Trout, and Large-Mouth Bass spend part of their lives in the marshes of the Apalachicola estuary. No marsh? No seafood.

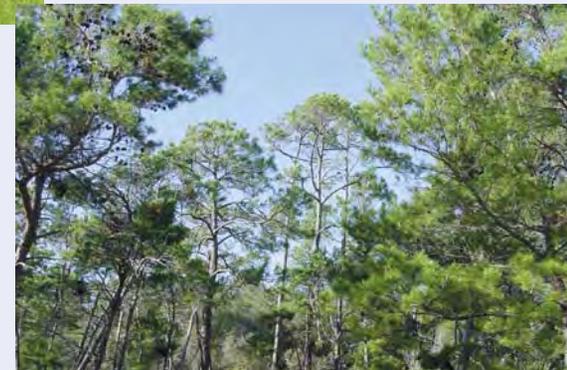
You can detect where the tide is strongest by which species of grass is dominant. There's Smooth Cordgrass where the marsh is flooded by tides most frequently and Black Needlerush

where the tides don't reach quite as far. In transition zones between the marsh grasses and the adjacent uplands you'll find Glasswort, Saltwort, and Marsh Elder.

Many of the salt marsh's inhabitants are seldom seen but are sometimes heard. Listen for the clack-clack-clacking of Clapper Rails and the piercingly loud song of the tiny Marsh Wren. If you're really and truly lucky you'll hear the Black Rail's "KEEE-KEEE-doo." For many birders the Black Rail is a Holy Grail of sorts because it is so seldom seen — and not often heard, either.

Scrub (Xeric Oak Scrub and Sand Pine Scrub)

Scrub is miraculous. How can anything grow on old, deep sands that have practically no capacity for hanging onto water or nutrients? Yet trees, shrubs, lichens, and even flowering non-woody plants are found in scrub, along with a full list of animals. Along the corridor you'll find scrub near the coast on sandy ridges that used to be either dunes or sandbars. As more and more sand accumulated shoreward of these once-coastal features and the shoreline moved farther and farther away, the formerly coastal features became inland communities. At least scrub plants don't have to contend with the salt spray, windblown sand, and flooding that challenge coastal strand species.



A lot of the land in scrub has nothing growing on it and resembles a white sand beach with trees. Stunted-looking oaks, along with Saw Palmetto, are the dominant plant species in some scrubs; in others Sand Pine is the tallest plant. Scrub relies on fire to keep on being scrub. Without fire, other tree species (such as Live Oak, Laurel Oak, Red Oak, Sparkleberry, Pignut Hickory, Southern Magnolia, and Redbay) that can't stand burning will establish themselves, and scrub will become a xeric hammock — a different kind of community.

Sand Pine is unusual in that the cones in some populations are sealed with natural resin. Fire is required to open the cones and release the seeds. Fire kills adult Sand Pine, so once the parent population has been burned a new generation starts up from seed, resulting in a forest of trees all the same age. But other Sand Pine populations — including most of those in the Panhandle — do not have closed cones. Instead their cones open up and drop their seeds in the fall, perpetuating the species and resulting in a forest with trees of many different ages.

It takes a long time to accumulate enough fuel in a scrub forest to sustain a fire. As Sand Pine grows its lower limbs die but do not fall off the trunk. When enough dead limbs accumulate they may be ignited by lightning or another source

and create high-intensity fires. In a Sand Pine forest where the cones are closed until fire opens them, a lot of seeds are released all at once. In an open-coned population Sand Pine can only regenerate if there are nearby unburned trees to supply seed. If no Sand Pine seed is available, or if fires are so frequent that Sand Pine doesn't live long enough to produce seed, the forest will end up as an Oak Scrub.

Tidal Flats

These are stretches of shoreline that are protected from the waves that pound the beaches. Tidal flats are also known as mudflats (because their surface soils are muds brought in by channels from uplands) and intertidal zones (because they are between the tides, exposed at low tide and flooded at high tide). We may not see much besides mud when we look at tidal flats, but many animals see breakfast, lunch, and dinner. A world of invertebrate animals lives in and on that mud, including Tube Worms, Sand Dollars, Burrowing Shrimp, Sea Cucumbers, and assorted Mollusks and Crabs. Not only are there lots of species, there are also thousands of animals per square foot. These invertebrates live on tiny bits of leaves and stems of both land and aquatic plants that are brought into the mudflats in freshwater channels or by tides. The invertebrates become food for fish and birds. When the tide comes in, fish come with

it to feast; when the tide goes out, birds dig in. Tidal flats are essential refueling stops for migrating shorebirds.

Coasts and Estuaries

The Byway coastline spans two major estuaries: Apalachee and Apalachicola Bays, where fresh water from the land mixes with salt water from the ocean. This mixture has a level of salt (salinity) that's somewhere between fresh water and salt water. Without this mixture the fish and shellfish industries, as well as sportfishing, would dry up.

Apalachicola Bay wears a necklace of narrow, sandy strips (St. George and St. Vincent Islands) that boast postcard-perfect beaches. Apalachicola Bay is a type of estuary called a closed embayment, where waves have enough strength to push sand into piles that create barrier islands. The Apalachicola River's huge drainage basin also supplies sediments to the Bay and the river's enormous contribution of fresh water carries these sediments into the estuary.



Because open bays are directly connected to the open waters of the Gulf of Mexico they are generally a little saltier than their sheltered cousins, the closed embayments. Both still qualify as brackish, however.

Salinity

Type of Water	Salt content in parts per thousand
Fresh	Less than 0.5
Brackish (estuarine)	0.5 to 30
Salt (coastal ocean)	30-37

Estuaries are edged with beaches, salt marshes, or tidal flats. In and under the water of the region's estuaries you can find:

Oyster bars (colonies of oysters), which are most common where the salinity is between 15 and 30 parts per thousand. Oysters can't survive in fresh water and in saltier water they are attacked by predators, parasites, and diseases. Oyster bars provide habitat for a multitude of invertebrates and fish, including Sponges, Anemones, Whelks, Worms, Barnacles, Blue Crabs, Stone Crabs, Pinfish, Sea Trout, Spot, Black Drum, and Mullet. At low tide shorebirds, wading birds, and Raccoons help themselves.

Seagrass beds, which get their name from a half-dozen species of plants that flower just as land plants do, although they are not related to



grasses that grow on land. Hundreds of species of algae grow on the leaves of these plants, which would smother them if it weren't for animals

that graze on algae, such as Pinfish. Grazers, in turn, are eaten by larger fish and invertebrates. The young of many fish and invertebrate species rely on seagrasses for food and shelter. Without seagrass beds we would have no scallops or shrimp and our fisheries would be much poorer. Sea turtles savor Turtlegrass and Manatees munch on Manatee Grass, which are two of the most widespread seagrasses in the area. Because seagrasses, like other plants, depend on sunlight, they cannot grow in muddy or very deep water.



Coastal Trail Animals, Reptiles, Amphibians, Crustaceans

Florida Black Bear, Bobcat, White-Tailed Deer, Gulf Salt Marsh Mink, River Otter, Raccoon, Opossum, Brown Squirrel, Red and Grey Fox, Coyote, Armadillo, St. Andrew's Beach Mouse, Florida Mouse, Old Field Mouse, Cotton Mouse, Short-Tailed Shrew, Mole, Least Shrew, Salt Marsh Rabbit, Ghost Crab, Blue Crab, Gulf Crab, Grass Shrimp, Six-Lined Racerunner, Eastern Tiger Salamander, Red-Tailed Skink, Southern Fence Lizard, Alligator, Diamondback Terrapin, Gopher Tortoise, Oak Toad, Gopher Frog, Eastern Spade Foot Toad, Gulf Salt Marsh Snake, Coachwhip, Southern Hognose Snake, Florida Pine Snake, Pygmy Rattlesnake, Diamondback Rattlesnake, Indigo Snake, Coral Snake

Coastal Trail Plants and Trees

Sea Oats, Beach Morning Glory, Railroad Vine, Sandspur, Seashore Paspalum, Godfrey's Blazing Star, Large-Leaved Jointweed, Smooth Cordgrass, Black Needlerush, Glasswort, Saltwort, Saltgrass, Salt Meadow Hay, Cattail, Sea Oxeye Daisy, Marsh Elder, Saltbush, Godfrey's Spiderlily, Saw Palmetto, Rosemary, Rusty Lyonia, Ground Lichens, Seaside Elder, Wax Myrtle, Yaupon Holly, Corkwood, Sand Pine, Longleaf Pine, Sand Live Oak, Myrtle Oak, Chapman's Oak, Scrub Oak, Southern Magnolia, Cabbage Palm

Coastal Trail Birds

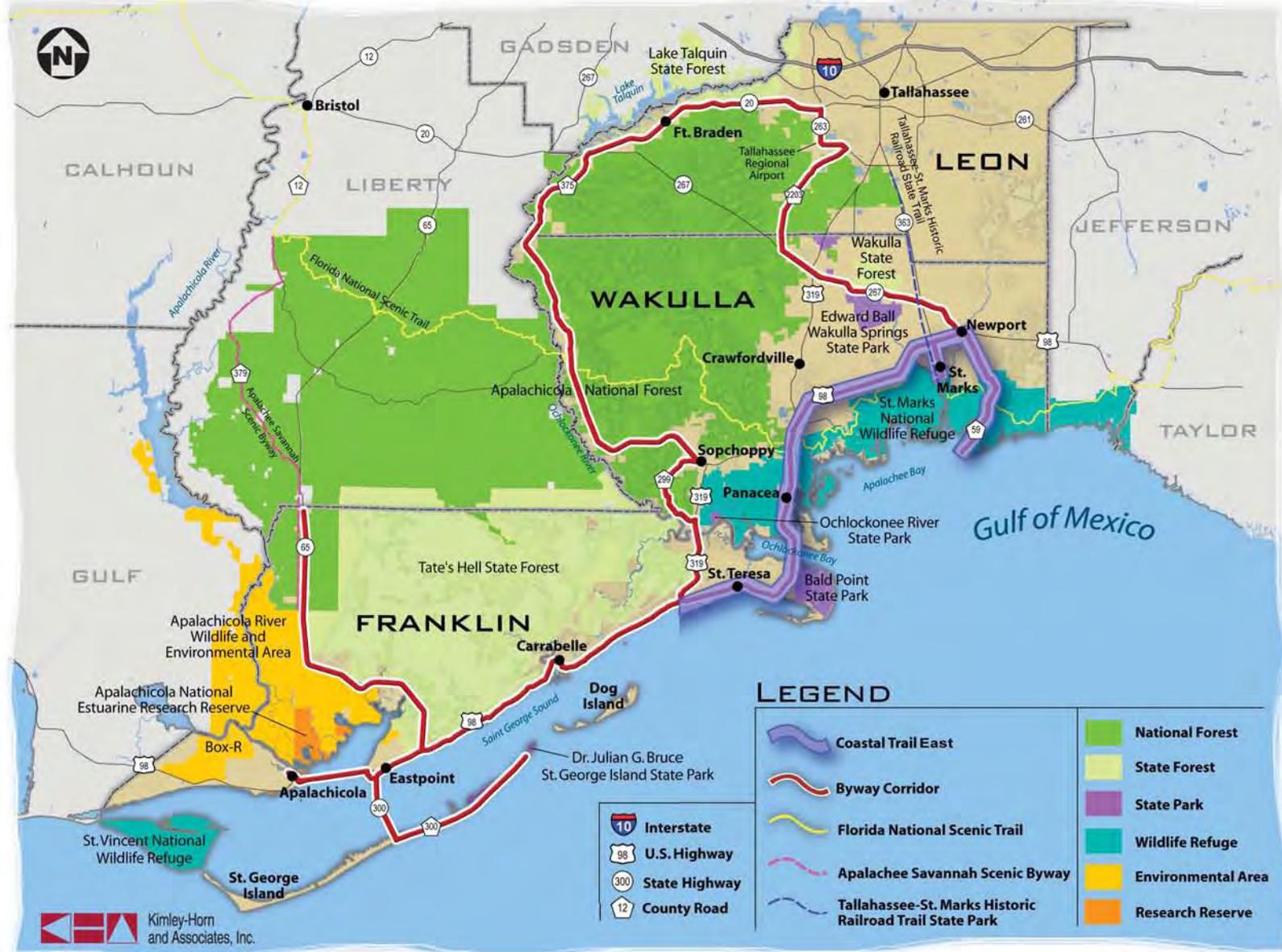
Osprey, Bald Eagle, Brown Pelican, White Ibis, Great Egret, Great Blue Heron, Snowy Egret, Tri-Colored Heron, Little Blue Heron, Snowy Plover, Piping Plover, Wilson's Plover, Least Tern, Royal Tern, Caspian Tern, Sandwich Tern, American Oystercatcher, Black Skimmer, Willet, Ruddy Turnstone, Sandpiper, Dowitcher, Black-Bellied

Plover, Sanderling, Herring Gull, Laughing Gull, Common Moorhen, Savannah Sparrow, Belted Kingfisher, Black Rail, Clapper Rail, Marsh Wren, Red-Winged Blackbird, Ground Dove, Yellow-Rumped Warbler, Rufous-Sided Towhee



Coastal Trail East

47.3 miles (including the drive to the St. Marks Lighthouse and the City of St. Marks) Begin: Wakulla County at intersection of Coastal Highway (US 98) and Lighthouse Road (CR 59). End: Franklin County at intersection of Coastal Highway (US 98) and Sopchoppy Highway (US 319).



Coastal Trail East: Destinations

This segment begins in southeastern Wakulla County near the town of Newport, at the intersection of Coastal Highway (US 98) and Lighthouse Road (CR 59).

St. Marks Unit, St. Marks National Wildlife Refuge

Directions: From US 98 in Newport follow signs on CR 59 for 3.7 miles to the Refuge Nature Center. The road winds 6.5 miles from a mixed hardwood/pine forest at the Visitor's Center across a vast salt marsh dotted with large man-made pools to the historic St. Marks Lighthouse on Apalachee Bay.

Description: Covering more than 68,000 acres of land and 31,000 acres of bay, the Refuge is internationally recognized for its more than 300 species of birds. The Refuge also has strong ties to a rich cultural past and is home to the St. Marks Lighthouse, which was built in 1832 and is still in use today.

Excellent birding at Refuge ponds along the road. Outstanding nature trails and viewing platforms. Excellent migratory waterfowl viewing in fall and winter

months. Wildflowers in spring and fall plus Monarch and other butterfly migration in fall. During winter months you may glimpse one of the Whooping Cranes that reside here from December - March.

Activities: Birding, hiking, fishing, bicycling, boating, kayaking, nature photography, wildlife viewing.

Facilities: Nature center, book/gift store, bathrooms, drinking water, classroom, picnic areas, boat ramps.

Minimum time to allow: One hour.

Fee: Yes. Golden Eagle passport accepted.

Hours: Sunrise to sunset. Arrive early or late for best wildlife viewing.

Contact: 850/925-6121; www.fws.gov/saintmarks
View the Whooping Crane Pen at www.stmarksrefuge.org/cranecam.cfm

Return to the Byway (US 98) and head west. The **Wakulla County Newport Park** on the north side of the road almost directly opposite the road to the Refuge offers camping, picnic facilities, bathrooms, a boat launch, and a boardwalk on the **St. Marks River**. A marker at the park entrance notes that the old town of Magnolia was established about two miles from the park. Boat rentals are available on the northwest side of the river (look for the painted Manatee on the roof). In the 1800s the St. Marks River provided the basis for a lucrative cotton transport business, which in turn supported the establishment of five towns along the river bank. **Newport** (originally called New Port when it was founded to replace Port Leon following a disastrous hurricane) became an economic center with as many as 1,500 inhabitants and a dozen large stores, warehouses, wharves, and stills. Newport was designated the county seat in 1844. In 1846 the Wakulla Hotel was built next to a sulfur spring (at a site on Plank Road one mile north from the intersection with US 98) and was marketed as a health resort for the allegedly medicinal quality of the mineral water. The town was seriously damaged during the Civil



War. Once Florida's second largest city, Newport had fewer than 30 residents by 1872. Newport revived for a few years during World War II when PT boats were built near there on the St. Marks River.

From the river continue west on the Coastal Highway for 2.5 miles to the intersection with Port Leon Drive (SR 363). Turn left (south) on the Byway to visit the **City of St. Marks, Tallahassee-St. Marks Historic Railroad State Trail, and Fort San Marcos de Apalachee.**

City of St. Marks

Located at the juncture of the St. Marks and Wakulla Rivers, St. Marks has one of the longest histories of any place in Florida. In fact the city may be third oldest settlement in North America. Today the city retains much of its charm with a marina, restaurants, and city park along the waterfront. Boat rentals, gas, lodging, and a bed and breakfast inn, as well as fishing and guide services, are available.



San Marcos de Apalache Historical State Park

Directions: From the city of St. Marks follow signs at Riverside Drive .6 of a mile to this historic site.

Description: The first European known to have seen this point was Panfilo de Narvaez in 1528. In 1679 the Spanish started building the first fort on this site, using logs painted with lime to look like stone, but pirates weren't fooled by the camouflage. They looted and burned the fort a few years later. Forts in St. Marks were later occupied by Spanish, British, Spanish again, then (for five weeks) by a force seeking to establish "the Nation of Muskogee," and Spanish yet again, before being taken over by Andrew Jackson in 1818. The fort passed back

into Spanish control one more time before U.S. troops occupied it in 1821. In 1861 it was reoccupied by Confederate troops and named



Fort Ward. The site became a permanent possession of the United States at the end of the Civil War.

Activities: Walking trails, exhibits, interpretive signage, picnicking.

Facilities: A well-marked trail with an informative brochure leads visitors on a journey through the historic fortification ruins.

A visitor center containing exhibits and artifacts covering the area's history is built on the foundation of an old marine hospital. Picnic areas are provided.

Minimum time to allow: One hour.

Fee: Yes.

Hours: 9 a.m. until 5 p.m., Thursday through Monday. Closed on Thanksgiving, Christmas, and New Year's Day.

Contact: 850/925-6216; www.floridastateparks.org/sanmarcos



The City of St. Marks has enhanced this site, located at the confluence of the Wakulla and St. Marks Rivers, with an attractive canoe and boat launch, picnic pavilion, tables, and restrooms.

Tallahassee-St. Marks Historic Railroad State Trail

Description: Florida's first designated state trail follows the abandoned railbed of the historic Tallahassee-St. Marks Railroad. The Trail runs south from Florida's capital city, Tallahassee, through the Apalachicola National Forest and ends in the coastal community of St. Marks.

Through the early 1900s this historic railroad corridor was used to transport cotton from the plantation belt to the coast for shipment to textile mills in England and New England. Today, as a paved trail, it provides an excellent recreational workout for bicyclists, walkers, and skaters. It also provides opportunities for horseback riding on the adjacent unpaved trail.

Facilities: 16 miles of paved trail, 8-12 feet wide; parking, picnic area, restrooms.

Activities: Biking, skating, walking, horseback riding, and birding.

Minimum time to allow: 30 minutes.

Fee: No.

Hours: 8 a.m. until sundown 365 days a year.

Contact: 850/245-2081;

www.floridagreenwaysandtrails.com



Return to the Byway and continue west on US 98 for 2.1 miles to the Wakulla River. Canoe and kayak rentals are available at the southeast side of the bridge. The Wakulla River, which originates at Wakulla Springs, flows south for about 10 miles before joining the St. Marks River near Fort San Marcos de Apalache. The crystal clear waters make it a popular place for swimming, boating, and fishing.

Whether you explore up stream or down, you will see lots of wildlife including West Indian Manatees, Turtles, Alligators, and a wide variety of birds and plants.



Continue on US 98 1.3 miles to Wakulla Beach Road (a graded dirt road on the south side of the highway). If you have time, you might wish to take the following side trip.

Side Trip: Wakulla Beach, Florida Scenic Trail to Shepard's Spring and Cathedral of the Palms

This scenic road passes through the Wakulla Unit of the St. Marks National Wildlife Refuge. Located west of the town of St. Marks, the Wakulla Unit offers upland forests, palm hammocks, fresh and brackish water marshes, and tidal beach access to Apalachee Bay. This unit is open to quota-hunting during the fall and winter months, and it provides an ideal launching point for small boats year-round. Approximately 5.5 miles of the **Florida National Scenic Trail** traverses this portion of the refuge. No facilities. Use of launch point and access to trails are free to the public.



After the first mile the road passes a trailhead for the Florida National Scenic Trail, which leads hikers through Florida's natural wonders as it meanders 1,300 miles across the state. In 1983 the U.S. Congress designated the Florida Trail as part of the National Trails System,



making it one of only eight National Scenic Trails. At the end of the road, approximately 3.9 miles south of US 98, is **Wakulla Beach**. There you will find the ruins of an old hotel, an unimproved boat landing, a wonderful view of Goose Creek Bay, and vast seagrass beds to explore. There are no other public facilities but the solitude and views are worth the drive.

Back on the Byway, continue west on US 98 for 3.8 miles. At the intersection with Shell Point Road (CR 365) you may wish to take these side trips. Travel south for 1.3 miles and park at the trailhead at the intersection of CR 365 and 367. From here it is a comfortable 2.25 mile walk to Shepard's Spring and 2.5 miles to the Cathedral of Palms. To return, take the blue blazed trail that follows the two-track road back to the orange blazed Florida National Scenic Trail, the entire loop is 5.5 miles.

This is a beautiful spring surrounded by lush vegetation. The path to the spring is now a raised walkway with benches at the end. However lovely this site is, you haven't seen anything yet! Opposite the path to Shepard's Spring is a trail leading into "**The Cathedral of the Palms.**" As you walk in you will notice Cabbage Palms and other trees that are much larger than those you passed earlier. You will then find yourself in the middle of an ancient, old-growth palm forest. There is really nothing else like this on the Byway. Save some quiet time to

appreciate the scene and take lots of pictures.

Side Trip: Shell Point Beach and Spring Creek.

Continue south on CR 367 onto Shell Point Road, passing through sections of the Wakulla Unit of the St. Marks National Wildlife Refuge. At the first fork in the road you can choose to go to **Shell Point** (left) or Spring Creek (right). Shell Point is a coastal community with a public beach some 5.9 miles from the Byway turnoff. Facilities include parking and restrooms. On windy days this is a popular spot for sailing and surf boarding. Follow the signs before the turnoff. **Spring Creek** is an historic fishing village on the banks of Dickerson Bay. The name comes from a first magnitude spring that upwells just off shore. No facilities except for a restaurant.

Continue west on the Coastal Highway for 2.8 miles. On your right you will see **Wildwood Golf and Country Club**,





a popular 18-hole course open to the public. Wildwood has a restaurant, golf shop, and driving range. A nature-oriented hotel, called the Inn at Wildwood, is located adjacent to the Country Club. The **Medart Recreation Park**, which is 1.3 miles farther along US 98, has ball fields, basketball courts, a children's playground, and ample parking. There is no fee. This portion of the Byway is planted with native wildflowers in bloom during spring and fall.

The Byway passes the red brick **Wakulla High School** on your left. At the next intersection turn



right (north) on Crawfordville Highway (US 319) from US 98 toward Crawfordville to visit these additional sites.

Side Trip: Pigott Cemetery

Turn left on Friendship Church Road opposite the Eden Springs Rehabilitation and Nursing home and drive one mile to visit an excellent example of an old family cemetery.

Back on US 319 Lake Ellen Church and Cemetery will be on your right as you continue north for .7 miles. The church, the oldest portion of which was built in 1948, and adjacent cemetery are clearly visible from the road.

Continue past Lake Ellen Church for 1.8 miles to see Harvey's Historic Truck Display, a line of rusting old trucks in an open field that is one of the most photographed features along the Byway.

Return to the Byway and continue west on US 98 from the intersection with US 319 through Medart. The Byway passes a sugar cane field and several houses dating from the early 1900s.

At the fork in the road in 1.5 miles, continue on US 98 past the **Wakulla Middle School** and into the Panacea Unit of the St. Marks National Wildlife Refuge. This Unit is largely dominated by uplands pine and oak forests with several fresh water lakes interspersed. Primitive walking trails crisscross this unit, which is open to quota-hunts during the fall and winter months. Located within the Panacea Unit is the **Otter Lake Recreation Area**, which offers picnic tables and shelters, restrooms, and a launching point for small boats with a motor size limit of 10 horse power or less. About 6.5 miles of the Florida National



Scenic Trail traverses this unit of the Refuge. The Panacea Unit is located west of the Wakulla Unit on US 98, just inside the town of Medart, and along US 98 south toward the town of Panacea. The picnic facilities, trails, and launch point are free to the public.



Skipper Bay Road, Panacea Unit, St. Marks National Wildlife Refuge

Approximately 1.8 miles farther south on US 98 you will reach the turnoff on the left to Skipper Bay Road, a graded but very narrow and unpaved lane leading to Skipper Bay. Roughly 1 mile down this road, look carefully to see a number of "cat-faced" **turpentine trees**. Some actually still have the tin drains attached and are the best surviving remnant along the Byway of the important turpentine and naval stores industry that once characterized the area. Skipper Bay Road continues over a small bridge with views of a vast salt marsh full of Fiddler Crabs and then enters a hardwood hammock of giant oaks draped in moss before ending at Skipper Bay, which once was the site of one of the area's several mullet seineyards.

Caution: this road is beautiful, but it is deeply rutted in places and should not be attempted in rainy weather. There are no public facilities, just magnificent views of Old Florida scenery.



Bottoms Road, Panacea Unit, St. Marks National Wildlife Refuge

Continue along the Byway on US 98 for 2 miles and turn left onto Bottoms Road just



before entering the town of Panacea. Only 2.5 miles long, this road passes through the Refuge along Dickerson Bay and offers fantastic marsh views. This is an excellent birding spot where

you may find large congregations of White Pelicans in winter, Marsh Hawks in the fall, Marsh Wrens, Clapper Rails, and a wide variety of shore birds in spring. In summer you might even spot a Roseate Spoonbill.

Birding or not, the view alone is worth the drive. A boat ramp at the end of the road offers fishermen direct access to the Bay. You can also park there and walk along the beach or road. At night Bottoms Road is a great place for star-gazing.

Panacea

Continue on US 98 .6 of a mile into Panacea, a long-time commercial fishing village and a designated Waterfronts Florida community.

Panacea is steeped in maritime history, from the early days of catching huge runs of Mullet by hand-drawn seine nets to later oystering, shrimping, and crabbing. Panacea has antique shops, a grocery store, gas stations, post office, lodging, seafood

restaurants, a marina, marine supplies, fishing guides, RV camping, and several retail seafood houses offering fresh Grouper, Shrimp, Oysters, and other delicacies.

Wakulla County Welcome Center, Mineral Springs, and Woolley Park

As you enter Panacea the Wakulla County Welcome Center will be on your left. Perched on pilings overlooking Dickerson Bay, the Center offers sweeping views of the surrounding marshland and coastline. Stop in to look at old photographs, artifacts, artwork, and educational displays; pick up information about area attractions; and talk with the knowledgeable and friendly volunteer staff. You can walk directly across the road to visit the **Panacea Mineral Springs**.



Founded in 1895, Panacea was named for the healing properties of its many mineral springs.

Visitors arrived from far away by buggy and plank road trams drawn by mules to bathe in the springs' curing waters. Another nice stop is **Woolley Park**, which has a children's playground, walking trail, parking, and fishing pier. Each

May the park is the site of the popular **Blue Crab Festival**, and in October it hosts the **Mighty Mullet Maritime Festival**. Turn left on Mound Street at the south end of Bayside shopping center to access the parking lot at Woolley Park.

Otter Lake Recreation Area, Panacea Unit, St. Marks National Wildlife Refuge.

Directions: From the center of Panacea look on your right for Otter Lake Road and follow it approximately one mile to this Recreation Area.

Description: Only minutes from town, this picnic spot — a great favorite of locals — is cooled by beautiful moss-draped oaks. The scenic view of Cypress tree reflections in the still lake waters are worth a picture or two. A nice hiking trail circles the lake.

Activities: Picnicking, hiking, fishing, boating, nature photography, wildlife viewing.

Facilities: Picnic tables and shelters, hiking trails, restrooms, boat launch for small boat, with a motor size limit of 10 horse power or less.

Minimum time to allow: 30 minutes

Fee: No.

Hours: Sunrise to sunset.

Contact: 850/925-6121; saintmarks@fws.gov; www.fws.gov/saintmarks



To see a wide variety of marine life such as Sand Shark, Grouper, Horseshoe Crab, and



Seahorse, follow signs in Panacea to the Gulf Specimen Aquarium and Marine Lab.

Gulf Specimen Marine Laboratory

Directions: 225 Clark Drive in Panacea. Directional signs are located on US 98 and elsewhere in Panacea.

Description: 25,000-gallon marine aquarium. A fun experience for the whole family with open touch tanks providing visitors a close look at the enormous diversity of Big Bend sea life. **Facilities:** Touch tanks, aquarium displays, dioramas, gift and book shop. **Minimum time to allow:** 30 minutes. **Fee:** Yes.

Hours: 9:00-5:00 Monday-Friday, 10:00-4:00 Saturday, 12:00-4:00 Sunday. **Contact:** 850/984-5297; gspecimen@sprintmail.com; www.gulfspecimen.org

Information on the newly established **Big Bend Maritime Center** in Panacea, is detailed

in the New Attractions section on page 33.

Continue south from Panacea on Coastal Highway (US 98) to Ochlockonee Bay. The wetland views along this portion of the Byway are stunning. Watch for Bald Eagles, Osprey, and Herons along the roadside ponds.

Ochlockonee Bay

2.4 miles south of Panacea lies the tranquil bayside community of Ochlockonee Bay, which offers fishing supplies, deli food, coastal home rentals at realty offices, RV camping, gas stations,



and restaurants. On your right you will see the Wakulla County Regional Airport, with a grass runway for small planes. During the summer airplane rides and skydiving are offered here. At the blinking traffic light before the Ochlockonee Bay Bridge turn right (west) onto Surf Road, which leads some 3.6 miles past private coastal homes to the entrance of another portion of the Panacea Unit of the St. Marks National Wildlife Refuge. Alternatively, turn left at the blinking traffic light onto Mashes Sands Road to visit this small but attractive county park.

Side Trip: Mashes Sands Recreation Area, Wakulla County Park

Directions: Turn left (east) from US 98 onto Mashes Sands Road for 2.7 miles.

Description: A nice place to view Apalachee Bay, watch Dolphins, cast for Mullet and, at low tide, walk the sandbars to see a great variety of shorebirds, including Black Skimmers. Good mile-long loop walk. From the beach parking lot walk along the road past the marsh ponds, then turn into the parking lot for the bike trail and fishing pier, walk to the water, go left past the fishing pier along the Bay, then back to the beach parking lot.

Facilities: Sand beach, restrooms, fishing pier, boat landing, picnic tables, tidal marshes, and trailhead for **Ochlockonee Bay Trail**. The 15-mile trail, currently under construction, will travel alongside Mashes Sands Road and Surf Road through the Panacea Unit of the St. Marks National Wildlife Refuge to another trailhead near Sopchoppy.

Activities: Beachcombing, bird and wildlife watching, picnicking, biking (when the trail is completed), boating, fishing.

Minimum time to allow: 30 minutes.

Contact: 850/926-7227



Continue on US 98 across the Ochlockonee Bay Bridge and look both ways for sweeping water views. At the end of the bridge turn into the Ochlockonee Bay Boat Ramp to walk the shoreline, fish off the pier, or launch small boats and kayaks. On windy days it is also popular with windsurfers. Approximately 2.4 miles from the Mashers Sands Road intersection you will reach



the turnoff to Alligator Point (CR 370). Turn left (east) for 3.8 miles to Bald Point Road, turn left again and follow signs.

Side Trip: Bald Point State Park

Directions: The entrance to the park is 2.9 miles from the turnoff from Bald Point Road and CR 370. **Description:** Some of the most picturesque areas along the North Florida Gulf Coast can be found at this park, one of the newest additions to the award-winning Florida Park System. Located on Alligator Point where Ochlockonee Bay meets Apalachee Bay, Bald Point offers a multitude of land and water activities. Coastal marshes, pine flatwoods, and oak thickets foster a diversity of biological communities that make the park a popular destination for birding and wildlife viewing. Every fall, Bald Eagles, other migrating raptors, and Monarch Butterflies are commonly sighted here as they head south for the winter. A surprising site, you might see Black Bears, Sea Turtles, and Alligators sharing the same stretch of beach...watch for tracks!

Activities:

Birding, picnicking, swimming, beachcombing, fishing, canoeing, kayaking, windsurfing, and hiking.

Facilities:

Two beaches, fishing dock, picnic pavilions, restrooms, hiking trails, boardwalk with interpretation.

Minimum time to allow: 30 minutes.

Fee: Yes.

Hours: 8 a.m. until sundown 365 days a year.

Contact: 850/349-9146;
www.floridastateparks.org



Return to the Byway and continue west on US 98, the Coastal Highway. You will begin to catch glimpses of Alligator Harbor and Alligator Point on your left through the trees. A short drive from the intersection of US 98 and CR 370 is **Leonard's Landing**, a small waterside pull-off and boat



launch. There is a nice kiosk with information on clam farming and seagrass beds. The tall stakes you will see in the water are aquaculture sites. Clam farming is increasing in importance in this area and seems to offer a promising alternative to other seafood harvesting practices that are in decline.

The Byway continues on US 98 through **St. Teresa**, a traditional seaside community adjacent to Alligator Harbor (the homes in St. Teresa are almost totally invisible from the road except for mailbox signs). You will pass numerous lily-clad ponds and, approximately 8.4 miles from the Alligator Point

turn-off (CR 370), you will see the **Florida State University Marine Laboratory at Turkey Bayou** on your left. It was constructed in

1968 to facilitate a study of the coastal environment. Facilities include laboratories, classrooms, a modest library, housing, a fleet of small boats, a 47-foot multi-purpose research vessel, diving technology, and other equipment for education and research in the marine environment.

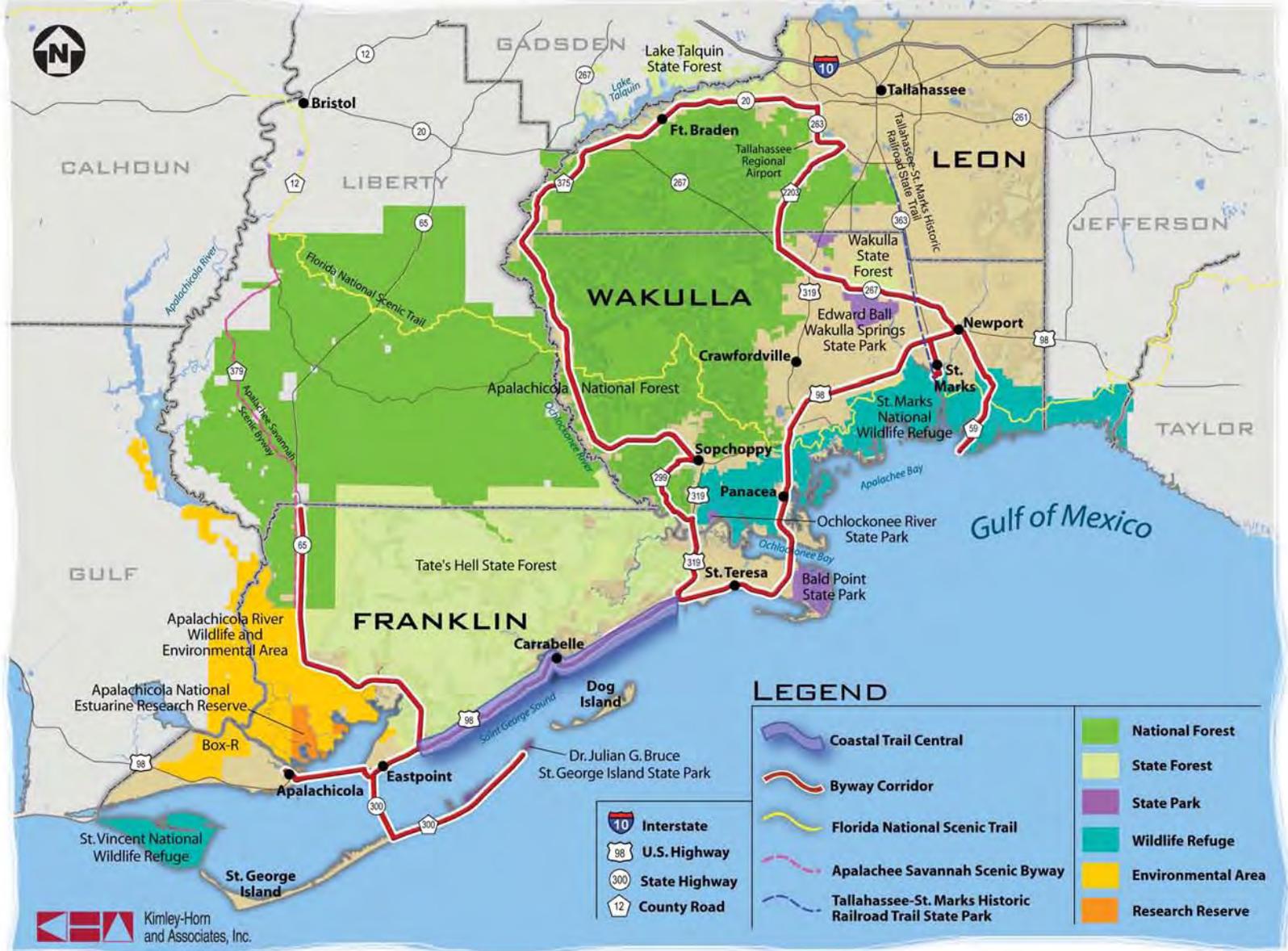
The laboratory is open year-round. Its facilities are available for use by Florida State University faculty, staff, and students as well as (by prior arrangement) investigators and educational groups from outside the university. Plans are under way to incorporate a stop on the Byway for the traveling public. Watch for signage or visit the web site at www.marinelab.fsu.edu.

This portion of the Coastal route ends .6 mile past the FSU Marine Lab at the intersection of Coastal Highway (US 98) with Sopchoppy Highway (US 319).



Coastal Trail Central

23.1 miles. Begin: Franklin County at intersection of Coastal Highway (US 98) and Sopchoppy Highway (US 319). End: Franklin County at intersection of Coastal Highway (US 98) and SR 65.



Coastal Trail Central: Destinations

From the intersection of Coastal Highway (US 98) and Sopchoppy Highway (US 319), continue west. Down the road 3 miles you will come to the **St. James Bay Golf Course** on your right.. This 18-hole championship course, designated as an Audubon International Sanctuary, is both challenging and beautiful. Facilities include a



restaurant and pro shop. Approximately .6 of a mile farther, also on your right, you will see **Lanark Village**, a retirement

community with a small golf course that is open to the public. Many of the homes in Lanark were originally officers' quarters for Camp Gordon Johnston during World War II. Lanark once boasted a mineral springs and a luxurious resort, the Lanark Springs Hotel. Reportedly, the springs became plugged and locals decided to clear it out with dynamite. Instead of opening the springs, the blast unfortunately collapsed the source. The hotel later burned down.



As you pass Lanark Village look to your left along the water at low tide to see **Lanark Reef**. It is a nesting site and a feeding ground for Terns and many shore birds. Franklin County maintains a boat launch here for direct access to Dog Island and the reef, highly prized for Tarpon fishing.

In 6.6 miles you will reach a Forest Service Fire Tower on the right (north) side of the road. This is the future location of a trailhead planned to connect with the **GF&A Bike Trail** running from Leon County south through Sopchoppy to the Gulf Coast. Opposite the tower, on your left, is the turn-off to CR 30A. Turn left on 30A (Gulf Avenue) to continue on the Byway past wetlands that serve as a rookery for wading birds. This route enters the town of **Carrabelle** along Marine Street, where you will find a waterfront pavilion, shops, restaurants, views of the harbor and Timber Island.

In 1.7 miles you will come to the **Camp Gordon Johnston Museum** on your right.



Camp Gordon Johnston Museum

Directions: 1001 Gray Avenue in Carrabelle

Description: Dedicated to the heritage of soldiers of World War II, this museum focuses in particular on those who trained for amphibious landings at Camp Gordon Johnston. It includes extensive history of these units as well as a photographic display of the area and life as it existed at the camp. Artifacts are displayed in six rooms: Barracks, Equipment, War, Home Front, Camp Gordon Johnston, and Franklin County Veterans. This site for the museum is considered temporary and the local volunteers and national membership group, including many WWII veterans, are working to secure a larger and more suitable facility.

Activities: Docents available for interpretation.

Facilities: 5,000 square feet of exhibit space, World War II military vehicles (both US and Axis), video theater, gift shop.

Minimum time to allow: 30 minutes.

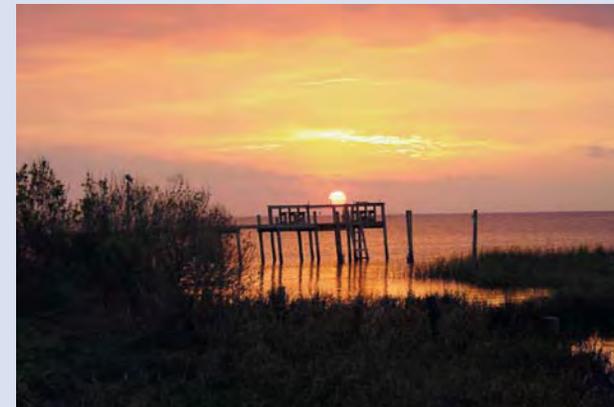
Fee: Donation.

Hours: Monday-Thursday, noon-4:00 p.m. Friday and Saturday, 10 a.m. - 2:00 p.m. Closed Sunday.

Contact: 850/697-8575; <http://www.campgordonjohnston.com>



Continue on Marine Street to the intersection with US 98, which serves as Carrabelle's main street. Carrabelle, incorporated in 1893, flourished during the early part of the 1900s when the lumber and turpentine industries were at their height. Today tourists visit the area to fish, swim, dive, scallop, and just relax. The area's identification as an active base for shrimping is now changing rapidly to waterfront residential development. Carrabelle offers shopping, a grocery store, gas stations, post office, lodging, restaurants, marina and marine supplies, fishing guides, beach, and RV camping. Visit the Carrabelle Chamber of Commerce for information at 105 James Avenue (US 98). Open Monday-Friday, 10:00 a.m.-2:00 p.m. 850/697-2585; www.carrabelle.org.



Turn right on Tallahassee Street for one block to the **Old Carrabelle Hotel**, a nicely renovated structure dating from the late 1800s.



The property once was used as a railroad hotel serving the line from Tallahassee.

Featured on "Real People," "Ripley's Believe It or Not," and the "Today Show," the **World's Smallest Police Station** is located in Carrabelle on the north side of US 98 as you drive west.



In the early 1960s the police phone was bolted to a building at the corner of US 98 and Tallahassee Street. To avoid problems with tourists making unauthorized long distance calls and protect officers from the elements, the phone was later placed in a booth at its current location. However, the illegal calls continued and eventually the dial was removed from the phone. Vandals later ripped phones from the booth, shot holes through its glass, and knocked it over. A tourist once asked a gas station attendant to help him load it into his vehicle so he could take it back to Tennessee. The original booth is on display in the Carrabelle Chamber of Commerce office.



Carrabelle Beach is 1.5 miles west of Carrabelle on US 98. Here you may enjoy sunbathing, swimming, volley ball, and surf fishing. Public restrooms and covered picnic areas are available. Stroll along the beach toward town for good shelling and birding.



There are a number of good diving locations off the coast, most within 20 miles of shore, making them readily accessible. Artificial reefs, shipwrecks, and five Air Force signal towers are just a few of the sites to visit. Portions of the old St. George Bridge were used to create an offshore artificial reef, located in 75 feet of water at latitude 29° 30'00" north and longitude 84° 48'68" west. Diving charters and instructors are available locally.

Continue west on US 98 1.9 miles to the **Crooked River Lighthouse**. For 115 years the Lighthouse stood as a beacon, guiding timber ships as well as local fishermen and oystermen through the treacherous pass between Dog and St. George Islands. Built in 1895, this iron and steel structure replaced the lighthouse on Dog Island,

which was destroyed by a hurricane in 1873. The lens was built in 1894 by Henri La Paute in Paris. **The Keeper's House Museum and Gift Shop** is open from noon to 5:00 p.m. Thursday through Sunday. Weather permitting, you can climb the Lighthouse on Saturdays and Sundays from 1:00 p.m. till 4:00p.m. The cost for climbing the lighthouse is \$5.00 per person. All climbers must be 44 inches tall. Visit the

website at www.crookedriverlighthouse.org.

A short distance farther along US 98 you will see the **Tate's Hell State Forest** sign on the right (north) side of the road. Pull into the parking lot for the **High Bluff Coastal Hiking Trail**. This four-mile trail features coastal scrub habitat unique to this coastline.



The route crosses old sand dunes covered by plants, Scrub Oaks, and isolated groups of Sand Pines, and lower elevations with dense Palmettos, Slash and Longleaf Pine. A picnic table is located at the halfway point and a park bench at the end of the spur trail.

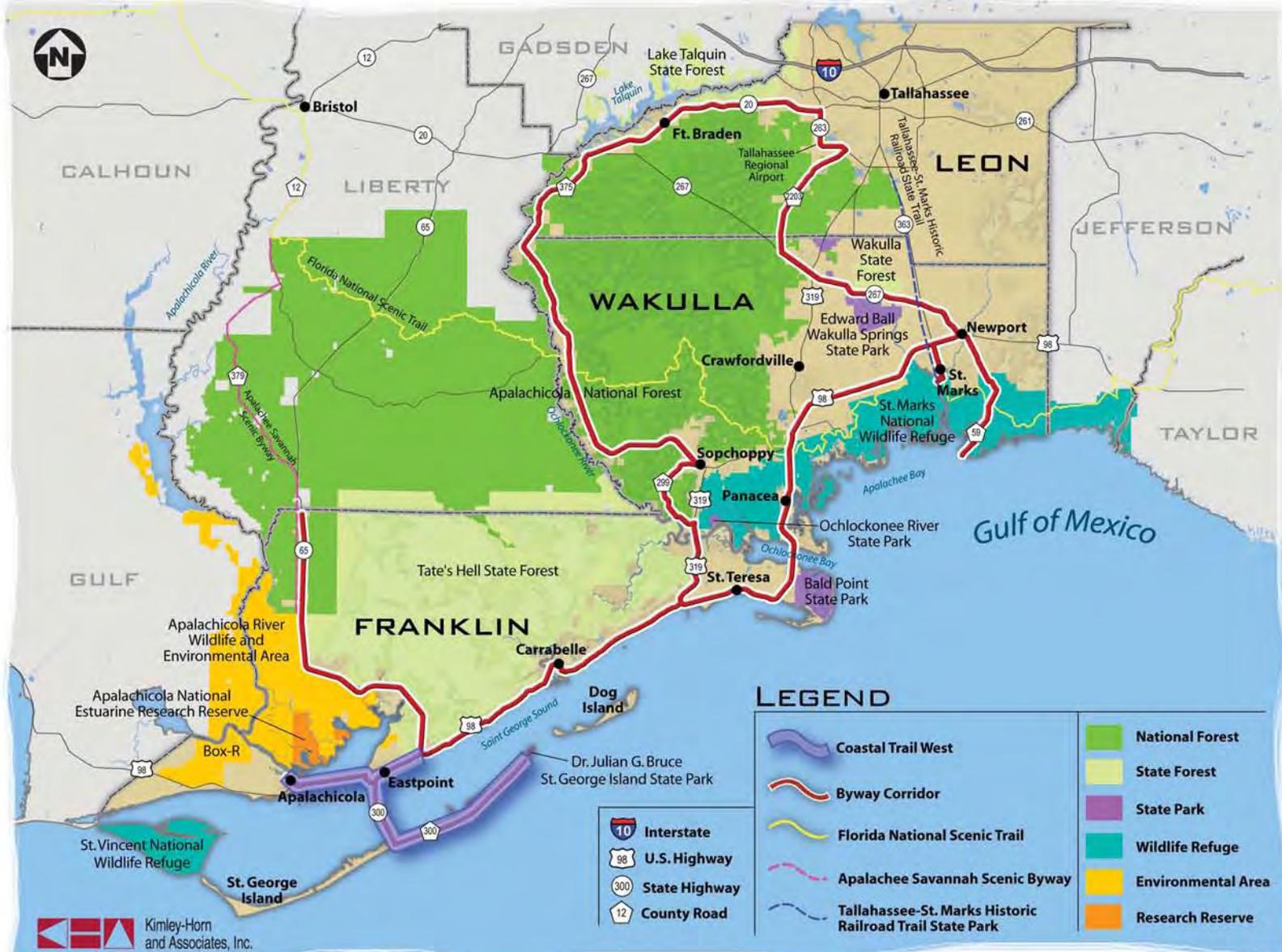


Slow down at the bridge as you pass over **Yent Bayou**, a scenic stream winding through marsh grass into the Gulf of Mexico. This picture of a mother Black Bear and her two cubs was taken here by Blair Butler Putz, so keep your eyes open. The next few miles along the Coastal Highway offer great views of St. George Sound. Some 1.5 miles north of the High Bluff Trail is a sign to **The Cypress Boardwalk**. Take this scenic route through the forest. Rather than entering and exiting the Cypress Boardwalk via SR 65, this new route makes a terrific loop drive.



Coastal Trail West

25.6 miles including the drive to the end of St. George Island State Park. Begin: Franklin County at intersection of Coastal Highway (US 98) and SR 65. End: Franklin County at west end of Market Street in Apalachicola.



Coastal Trail West: Destinations

From the intersection of US 98 and SR 65 continue on the Coastal Highway west to **Eastpoint**, a commercial fishing town with processing plants, docks, seafood markets, and restaurants stretching the length of town along St. George Sound. It doesn't get any more authentic than this. Large piles of oyster shells attest to the main activity.

Oystermen harvest oysters from more than 7,000 acres of public oyster bars and 600 acres of private leased bars in Apalachicola Bay. Public bars are divided into "winter" bars, which

are harvested from October through June, and "summer" bars, harvested from July through September. There are more than 1,000 people employed by the oyster industry along this part of the Byway. Tongers (traditionally called "oystermen")

harvest the oysters today in the same manner they have for a century. From small wooden boats 20-23 feet long, using tongs that look somewhat like two rakes attached scissor-style, the oystermen haul the oysters to the surface. In 2000 approximately

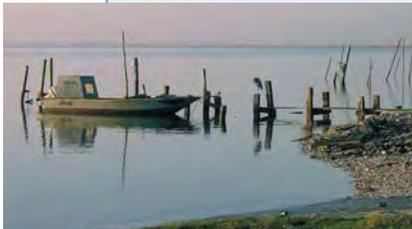
\$3.5 million dollars worth of oysters (2.3 million pounds) were shucked in local seafood houses. Historically, Franklin County supplies more than 90% of Florida's oysters and 10% of the nationwide supply.

Eastpoint has gas stations, restaurants, post office, seafood houses, and shopping.

In Eastpoint, 2.9 miles from the intersection with SR 65, bear left from US 98 onto SR 30 (Patton Drive) and continue along the water past several old seafood houses. Watch for a sign on your left to the **Marion Millender Site**, a lovely shaded picnic area on St. George Sound. From here it is only a short distance to the **St. George Island Bridge Fishing Pier**, which is a remnant of the old bridge that was completed in 1965. Left standing on both sides of the Sound, these piers today are popular fishing spots. Continue on SR 30 for .7 of a mile until the roadway intersects with Island Drive. Turn left (south) over the newly constructed **Bryant Patton Bridge** to St. George Island. The water views are wonderful from the bridge and provide a great opportunity to watch oystermen in their boats "tonging" for oysters.

St. George Island

This 28-mile barrier island proudly boasts some of the most beautiful and serene beaches in the United States. The island has an extensive residential community as well as restaurants, shopping, beach home rentals, lodging, bike and kayak rentals, and bike trail. After dark the island nightclubs offer live music, billiards, darts, and other games. Turn left (east) on Gulf Beach Drive (CR 300) and travel 4.5 miles to **St. George Island State Park**. The park road ends in 4 miles.



St. George Island State Park

Directions: Located on St. George Island, 10 miles southeast of Eastpoint, off US 98.

Description: 1,962 acres of long, narrow barrier island, with miles of undeveloped beaches, dunes,



and emerald waters providing the perfect setting for a day on the Byway. Few parks offer better opportunities for Gulf Coast shelling. Anglers can fish for Flounder, Redfish, Sea Trout, Pompano, Whiting, and Spanish Mackerel. During spring migration birders should look for songbirds in the small oaks near the youth camp area restrooms and park campground. Shore birds such as the Snowy Plover, Least Tern, Black Skimmer, and Willet often nest along the park's sandy shores and grass flats. Watch for Gopher Tortoise near the youth camp area. Sea turtles nest along the park beaches, with Loggerhead Turtles being the

most common. There is a display of an oyster boat at the boat launch facility.

Activities: Birding, sunbathing, swimming, canoeing, photography, boating, hiking, biking, camping, and nature study.

Facilities: Six large picnic shelters equipped with grills, tables, and restrooms. The campground features full-facility campsites as well as a primitive campsite that can be accessed by trail or by private boat. Two boat ramps provide access to Apalachee Bay

Minimum time to allow: One hour.

Fee: Yes.

Hours: 8 a.m. until sundown 365 days a year.

Contact: 850/927-2111; www.floridastateparks.org/stgeorgeisland.

To continue on the Byway take the bridge back to the mainland. Once off the bridge, turn left (west) on South Bayshore Drive and continue for 1.1 miles to US 98. Then turn left (west) and drive 5.1 miles across the **John Gorrie Bridge** to Apalachicola.

Apalachicola

Apalachicola has an exceptionally rich history and its maritime culture reflects the area's bountiful natural resources. Visitors can stroll



past beautiful Victorian homes or spend time browsing through unique galleries, stores, and antique shops.

There are over 200 historically significant homes and commercial structures around town. The **Chestnut Street Cemetery**, established in 1831, is one of the most significant on the Byway. Stop by the Apalachicola Bay Chamber of Commerce

and Visitors Center at 122 Commerce Street for brochures and walking maps. Home of "The Official Big Bend Scenic Byway Sandwich," Apalachicola has a live theater/cinema (the historic **Dixie Theatre**), a variety of lodgings and B&Bs, restaurants, gas stations, grocery stores, post office, marina and marine supplies, public docks, parks, outfitters and guides, and fast food chains. Another noteworthy stop is the **John Gorrie State Park**, celebrating the local doctor



who pioneered the development of artificial ice-making, refrigeration, and air conditioning.

Continue through town on Market Street to the terminus of the Coastal Trail. Along the route visit **Chapman Botanical Garden**, named for a prominent local Botanist of the 1800's, and the **Three Servicemen Monument at the Apalachicola Veterans Memorial Plaza**, featuring a duplicate bronze sculpture from the Vietnam Memorial in Washington, D.C.



Orman House Historic State Park

Directions: Follow signs on Market Street to 177 5th Street in Apalachicola.

Description: Built in 1838 by Thomas Orman. The wood for this two-story home was cut to measure near Syracuse, New York, and shipped to Apalachicola by sailing vessel around the Florida Keys, then assembled on the bluff.

Facilities: Restored two-story home combining Federal and Greek Revival styles.

Minimum time to allow: 30 minutes.

Fee: Yes.

Hours: Open 9-5 Wednesday through Sunday.

Contact: 850/653-1209

Visitor's Center, St. Vincent National Wildlife Refuge

Directions: Located in the Harbor Master Building, 479 Market Street in Apalachicola.

Description: The Center offers interpretive displays and information on St. Vincent, a remote 12,300-acre barrier island at the west end of Apalachicola Bay. The wildlife refuge contains an 86-acre unit in Franklin County as well as 45-acre Pig Island in St. Joe Bay, Gulf County. St. Vincent is dissected by dune ridges, which are geological records of ancient beaches and fluctuating sea levels over the last 5,000 years. Many of the sand roads follow these ridges extending from east to west the length of the

island. The interdune areas vary from freshwater lakes and sloughs to dry upland pine forests.

Four miles wide and nine miles long, St. Vincent is larger and wider than most of the northern Gulf Coast barrier

islands. Previous owners introduced a variety of exotic wildlife to the island. A population of Sambar Deer, an elk native to Southeast Asia, still roams the island. In 1990 St. Vincent was selected as one of several southeastern coastal islands for the breeding of endangered Red Wolves. An island shuttle service provides transportation to St. Vincent.

Facilities: Displays, brochures, restrooms.



Minimum time to allow: 30 minutes in the Visitor Center; several hours for a visit to St. Vincent.

Fee: None for the Wildlife Refuge. Private boats may charge a fee.

Contact: 850/653-8808; fws.gov/saintvincent

Apalachicola National Estuarine Research Reserve (ANERR)

Directions: Located in Eastpoint at 108 Island Drive, but accessed on SR 300 towards St. George Island. After ¼ mile turn left into gravel driveway by Reserve sign.

Description: ANERR is one of 25 sites designated by the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration

to provide for long-term estuarine research and monitoring, education and interpretations, resource management, and for more informed

coastal management decisions. The 246,000-acre reserve includes two barrier islands and a portion of a third, the lower 52 miles of the Apalachicola River and its floodplain, portions of adjoining uplands, and the Apalachicola Bay estuarine, riverine, and floodplain systems.

Facilities: Newly constructed Headquarters and Visitor's Center with interactive displays, diorama, aquatic tanks, theater, and nature trail offers excellent introduction to the natural history of the gulf, bays, rivers, and floodplains.

Minimum time to allow: One hour.

Fee: No

Hours: 9 a.m. – 4:30 p.m. Tuesday – Saturday

Contact: 850/670-7700; www.dep.state.fl.us/coastal/sites/apalachicola



New Attractions along the Big Bend Scenic Byway's Coastal Trails

Circumnavigational Paddling Trail

Beginning at Big Lagoon State Park near Pensacola, extending around the Florida



peninsula and Keys, and ending at Fort Clinch State Park near the Georgia border, the Florida Circumnavigational Saltwater Paddling Trail (commonly referred to as The CT) is a 1,515-mile sea kayaking paradise. The trail includes every Florida coastal habitat type, from barrier island dune systems to salt marshes to mangroves. Several historical sites and points of interest are accessible by kayak along with colorful fishing communities and urban centers. The CT is divided into 26 segments. Each segment is unique, ranging from the remote Big Bend Coast and Everglades/Florida Bay wilderness, to the more urbanized coastlines of Pinellas County and Fort Lauderdale. The trail is utilized by thousands of Florida residents and visitors alike who paddle the trail

for a few hours, days, weeks, or months. Some hardy souls have paddled the entire trail, and others seek to complete the trail in segments over several years, similar to how hikers often tackle the Florida or Appalachian Trail.

Big Bend Segment: St. George Island to St. Marks Lighthouse

From traditional fishing communities to wild stretches of shoreline, tidal creeks, and rivers, this segment is one where paddlers can steep themselves in Old Florida. This is also the only segment where paddlers can follow two scenic rivers for a significant distance: the Crooked and Ochlockonee Rivers. The Crooked River is the only area along the trail where paddlers have a good chance of spotting a Florida Black Bear. Several hundred Black Bears roam the Tate's Hell/ Apalachicola National Forest area, one of six major Black Bear havens in the state.

www.dep.state.fl.us/gwt/paddling/saltwater.htm

Apalachicola River Paddling Trail System

The Apalachicola River Paddling Trail System



offers nearly 100 miles of marked waterway trails providing opportunities to paddlers of all abilities. Visitors may explore mysterious tupelo swamps, floodplain forests, or wide open bays by kayak or canoe and choose from short, easy jaunts to more strenuous multi-day adventures. Most trails are accessible from boat ramps along State Road 65, a segment of Forest Trail West on the Big Bend Scenic Byway. The area's outstanding diverse wildlife habitats support significant populations of both rare and common wildlife and features rewarding

sites along the Great Florida Birding Trail. Fall and spring offer pleasant temperatures, colorful wildflowers, and fewer biting insects while fishing, birding, and wildlife viewing may be enjoyed all

year round. The Apalachicola River Paddling Trail System was designated a "National Recreation Trail" by the Department of Interior in 2008. View hunting calendar and download paddling trail maps from: myfwc.com/recreation.

Great Florida Birding Trail

The Great Florida Birding and Wildlife Trail (GFBWT) is a program of the Florida Fish

and Wildlife Conservation Commission. At its core is a network of nearly 500 sites throughout Florida selected for their excellent birdwatching, wildlife viewing, or educational opportunities. This 2,000-mile, self-guided highway trail is designed to conserve and



enhance Florida's wildlife habitats by promoting birdwatching and wildlife

viewing activities, conservation education, and economic opportunity. Maps and information for the segment along the Coastal and Forest Trails of the Big Bend Scenic Byway can be downloaded at: <http://floridabirdingtrail.com/>



New Attractions on Coastal Trail East

Florida National Scenic Trail – Thompson Property Trailhead

Directions: On US 98 about 5 miles east of the intersection with CR 365, just before the Wakulla River Bridge. Look for the street number 6295 and wood fence on the property. Enter

through the fence and take the left fork to park at the trailhead.

Description: A one-mile easy hike through the



St. Marks National Wildlife Refuge will take you to the site of an old saw mill evidenced by a very large sawdust mound. To our knowledge, this is the only remaining sawdust mound along the Byway.

Activities: Hiking, birdwatching, photography.

Minimum time to allow: One-hour.

Big Bend Maritime Center (BBMC)

Directions: US 98 in Panacea. The Mini-Museum at the Bayside Shopping Center will be relocated to the permanent home of the BBMC on Crum Drive,



adjacent to Woolley Park. Turn east on Mound Street, which is next to the shopping center, and

travel two blocks to the entrance.

Description: The Big Bend Maritime Center and Waterfront Park are located on 5.61 acres fronting on Dickerson Bay.

Activities: Maritime History Tours of Apalachee Bay, boat building, photography, nature study, birdwatching.

Facilities: Once open to the public, the property will offer a dock, interpretive trail, native plantings, interpretive kiosks, kayak/canoe launch, picnic pavilions, and more. The two houses on the property will house a wooden boat shop, offices, gift shop, and interpretive center with displays, oral histories, photographs, boats, artifacts, and more.

Minimum time to allow: 30 minutes.

Fee: Donations accepted.

Hours: call 962-4138.

Contact: <http://www.floridaforesight.org>.

Rock Landing Waterfront & Dock

Directions: From US 98 in Panacea, turn east on Rock Landing Road, and travel to the end.

The newly rebuilt dock and parking area are adjacent to a waterfront restaurant with wonderful



views of Dickerson Bay. Once home to over 200 commercial fishermen, the dock now supports both commercial and charter fishing. Watch catches of blue crab, oysters, pink and white shrimp, mullet, trout, and grouper being unloaded.

New Attractions on Coastal Trail Central

Carrabelle History Museum

Directions: Behind the BP station on US 98 at 106 Avenue B S.E.

Description: This unique collection of memorabilia and artifacts tells the story of Carrabelle from the perspective of its long-term residents, the people who have personally experienced the tides of change in the area.

Activities: Viewing displays, artifacts, and newspaper collections.

Facilities: Museum is housed in the old City Hall building with on-street parking.

Minimum time to allow: 30 minutes.

Fee: No.

Hours: 10 a.m. – 4 p.m. on Friday and Saturday.

Contact: 850/524-1153



New Attractions on Coastal Trail West

St. George Island Visitor Center and Lighthouse Museum

Directions: In the middle of St. George Island at 2 East Gulf Beach Drive.

Description: Experience 175 years of maritime



history as you touch the old brick walls of the Cape St. George Lighthouse, smell the heart-of-pine stairs, and look out for miles into the Gulf of Mexico and Apalachicola Bay.

Activities: Climb the lighthouse stairs; take the boardwalk to the beach; shoot hoops on the basketball court.

Facilities: Visitor Center, Cape St. George Light, and St. George Lighthouse Park.

Minimum time to allow: 30 minutes.

Fee: Grounds and museum are free; a fee is charged to climb the lighthouse stairs.

Hours: 10 a.m. – 5 p.m. on Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, Friday, and Saturday; noon – 5 p.m. on Sunday.

Contact: 850/927-7744; sgilight@fairpoint.net; www.seestgeorgeisland.com.

Apalachicola Maritime Museum

Directions: 103 Water Street.

Description: The museum preserves, celebrates, and promotes the maritime heritage of

Apalachicola and provides a glimpse into the rich and diverse history of the three rivers that form the Apalachicola River.

Activities: Sailing, boat-building, restoration, and educational tours.

Facilities: Museum with artifact exhibits and store

Minimum time to allow: 30-minutes.

Fee: \$3.00 donation for adults, children free.

Hours: 9 a.m. – 5 p.m. daily.

Contact: 850/653-2500; www.ammfl.org.



New Attractions along the Big Bend Scenic Byway's Forest Trails

Lake Talquin State Forest

Lake Talquin State Forest offers the public a variety of recreational opportunities on its



many diverse tracts of land. Hiking, bird/wildlife viewing, and nature study can be enjoyed utilizing existing service roads, old road beds, and established trails.

The Lines Tract has 9.5 miles of trail designated for bicycling and hiking.

The Bear Creek Tract offers trails for hiking and nature study.

Bear Creek Educational Forest is located in adjoining Gadsden County. After crossing the Ochlockonee River at the dam, turn right (north) on SR 267 and follow the signs. The educational center provides free programs for all age groups of students. Outdoor forest exploration can be done on any of the three nature trails. The facility also includes an arboretum and paved "talking tree" trail.

Bloxham Tract Recreational Area

Directions: Off Blountstown Highway (SR 20), just south of intersection with Bloxham Cutoff (SR 267), and north of intersection with CR 375.

Description: This group picnic area is perched on a high bluff with sweeping views of Lake Talquin and the surrounding area. The facility is open by advance group reservation only.

Activities: This is an ideal place for groups to spend the afternoon cooking out and/or fishing.

Facilities: The recreation area boasts a picnic pavilion, renovated country home, boat ramp and dock, shaded grounds, large grill, and restrooms.

Minimum time to allow: Half-day.

Fees: \$40.00 for groups from 1 - 25
 \$60.00 for groups from 26 - 50
 \$90.00 for groups from 51 - 75
 \$120.00 for groups from 76 - 100
 \$180.00 for groups from 102 - 150
 \$240.00 for groups from 151 to a maximum of 300

Groups over 150 are required to provide portable toilets arranged and paid for by the group.

Hours: Day use

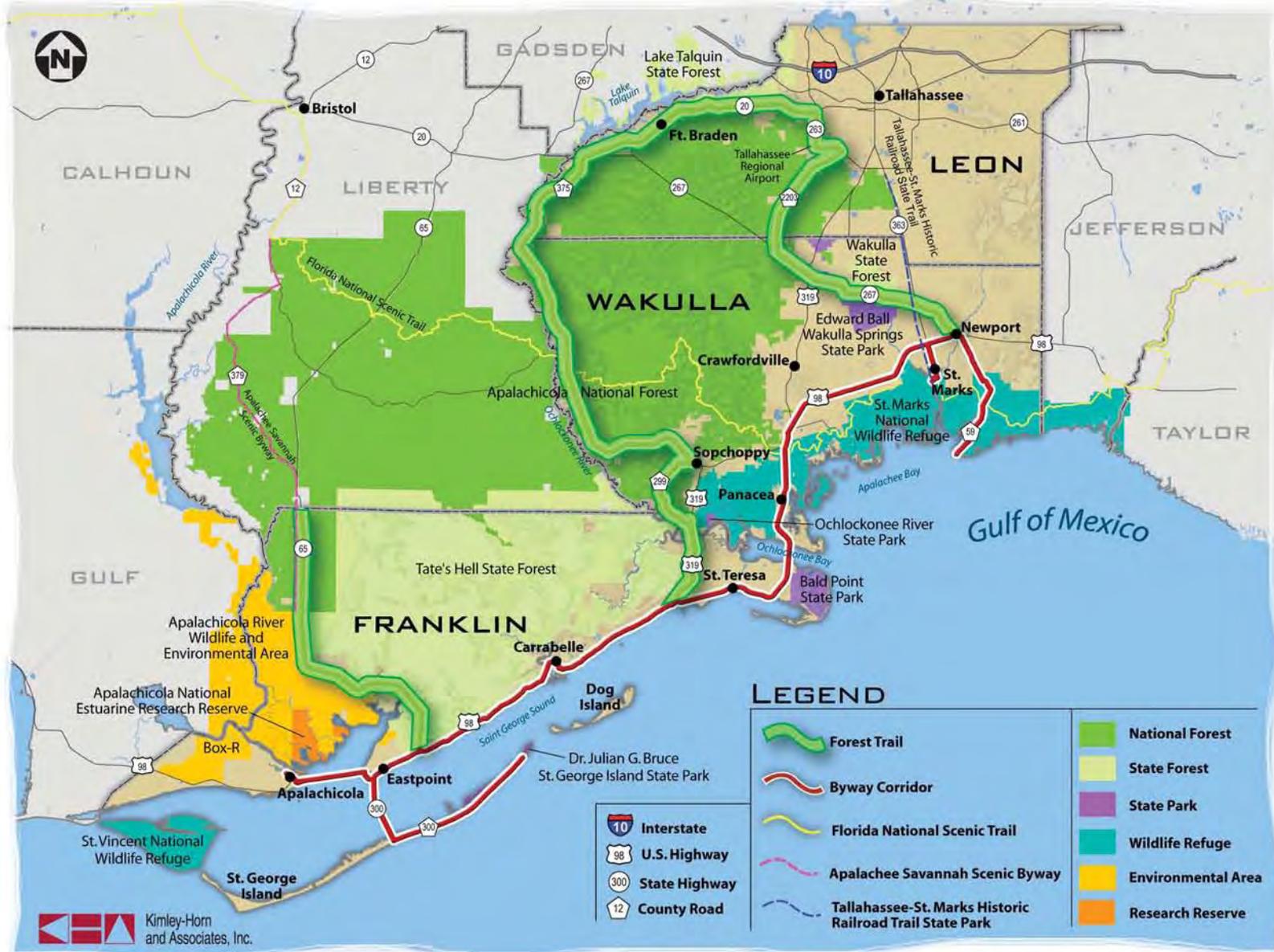
Contact: Division of Forestry, 865 Geddie Road, Tallahassee, FL 32304; 850/488-1871.

New Attractions - At a Glance:

- **Circumnavigational Paddling Trail**
- Coastal Trail
- **Apalachicola River Paddling Trail System**
- Coastal Trail
- **Great Florida Birding Trail**
- Coastal Trail
- **Florida National Scenic Trail – Thompson Property Trailhead**
- Coastal Trail East
- **Big Bend Maritime Center (BBMC)**
- Coastal Trail East
- **Rock Landing Waterfront & Dock**
- Coastal Trail East
- **Carrabelle History Museum**
- Coastal Trail Central
- **St. George Island Visitor Center and Lighthouse Museum**
- Coastal Trail West
- **Apalachicola Maritime Museum**
- Coastal Trail West
- **Lake Talquin State Forest, Bloxham Tract Recreational Area**
- Forest Trail



Forest Trail



Forest Trail Natural History

These are some of the types of habitat you will see while visiting the Forest Trail of the Big Bend Scenic Byway.

Hardwood and Mixed Pine-Hardwood Forests

Mixed hardwood-pine forest and hardwood hammocks and forests include many combinations of plant species, but they all have in common a moderate amount of moisture (i.e., they are mesic) and practically never burn. In the northern Florida Panhandle some of these communities can contain at least as many species of trees in the overstory (the tallest layer of trees) as Appalachian forests, and even more species of midstory trees and shrubs. Some have among the highest numbers of tree species of any forest type in the eastern United States.



These communities have served as refuges for northern plant species during eras when glaciers

expanded and the climate was much colder. When the planet warmed up again, some plants expanded their ranges back north into the mountains. Thus it's not surprising that North Florida boasts the southernmost occurrences of a number of plant species. Other species in North Florida mixed forests and hammocks are "disjunct," that is, they have two or more populations separated by great distances. They also have "endemic" plant and animal species (that is,



Pine Snakes, Gopher Frogs, and countless other

they are found nowhere else in the world) such as the Torreya tree, the Florida Yew, and the Fire-Backed Crayfish.

The mix of species changes over time. Pine may dominate in young stands, while in older stands hardwoods take over. The soil is rich in organic matter and usually has a thick topping of decaying leaves on the surface, which helps to hold moisture and provides nourishment for the fine roots of trees and shrubs. The trees form a nearly solid canopy, so very little light reaches the forest floor. It's shady and humid in the summer when all the trees are fully leafed out.



Sandhills

A noteworthy characteristic of the Forest Trail of the Big Bend Scenic Byway, running through the Apalachicola National Forest, are sandhills, which resemble dunes along a beach. Indeed, some geologists believe these sandhills are in fact remnants of beach dunes, while others maintain that they were once offshore sandbars. In any case they were probably formed in the geologic eras when sea levels rose and fell, and much of what is now Florida was under water.

Despite their dry, hot, and sandy soils, the sandhills are of high ecological value. At ground level there is a breathtaking variety of grasses and non-woody flowering plants. Their native Longleaf Pine, Wiregrass, and Turkey Oak ecosystems are largely intact, and provide habitat for Red-Cockaded Woodpeckers,

animals and plants that have been lost in areas to the north where the more fertile soils led settlers to clear fields for farming. Small ponds and lakes abound in the Panhandle sandhills and sustain as many as 30 species of frogs, salamanders, and turtles, including the world's best populations of the Striped Newt and Gopher Tortoise as well as numerous species of fish such as the Banded and Golden Topminnows.

The dominant tree of the sandhills is the Longleaf Pine, which has adapted amazingly to Florida's dry spells and thunderstorm season in late spring and summer. Prior to human management of forest lands through prescribed fire, wildfires caused by lightning were a frequent characteristic of the sandhills ecosystem.

Longleaf seedlings exist in a "grass stage" for several years, at which time they resemble dense clumps of grass that can easily withstand low-density fires. Appearances are deceiving, however, since the seedlings at this stage are developing very large root systems. The roots collect water and nutrients that prepare the seedling for a sudden spurt of growth, sometimes as much as six feet in one year. This spurt raises the tree bud quickly above the height at which it is most vulnerable to fire. As the tree matures its thick bark provides further protection from fire. Indeed, the Longleaf Pine depends on fire for propagation, since fire removes dense vegetation and decaying leaf



matter, enabling the Longleaf seeds to reach the soil and germinate.

Before the frenzy of logging and turpentine production in the 19th and 20th centuries,



Longleaf uplands formed a nearly continuous forest that stretched from Virginia south into the Florida peninsula and west to Texas. An early traveler described a forest that seemed to go on forever.

“There was something, I thought, very graceful in the millions upon millions of tall and slender columns, growing up in solitude, not crowded upon one another...” (B. Hall, 1829).

Extensive long-term efforts are under way to restore the native ecosystems of the sandhills. Since 1996 the U.S. Forest Service has undertaken a plan to restore more than 14,000 acres of the Munson Sandhills. The Florida Division of Forestry is working in the Lake Talquin State Forest to convert some 1,000 acres of planted pines, mostly Slash Pine, to traditional Longleaf Pine and Wiregrass habitat. Prescribed burning in these sandhill areas is timed to mimic natural fire regimes.

Pinelands - Flatwoods and Plantations

Pinelands are the most abundant forest type in Florida, if you count not only pine flatwoods but also planted pines. Pine flatwoods have been

estimated to occupy from 30 to 50 percent of all uplands in Florida. The terrain is flat and drainage ranges from moderate to very poor. Water movement downward through the soil is slowed considerably by hardpan a foot or more below the soil surface. The technical name of the hardpan is “spodic horizon.” During rainy seasons water can collect on the ground surface, but when it’s dry there may be no water at all above the spodic horizon. Life as a plant in flatwoods requires considerable adaptability.

Pine plantations can appear to be monotonous with endless straight rows of skinny trees with little growing underneath them. Natural flatwoods, on the other hand, are sprinkled with slightly higher, drier places where the natural community is similar to scrub. Flatwoods also have slightly lower, wetter spots here and there. Some of these low spots have trees in them and these trees may form an entirely different natural community such as a Cypress dome or a Baygall. Some low spots do not have trees. They might be temporary ponds, which are vital for many flatwoods amphibians, or they might fill with peat and become bogs, which support an amazing collection of insect-eating plants. Streams bordered by Cypress or by hardwoods wind through the flatwoods. There’s a lot of habitat diversity in flatwoods where the drainage has not been altered.



Freshwater Marshes

Ecologists use the word “marsh” to describe wetlands without trees, whereas “swamps” are wetlands with trees. Freshwater marshes don’t cover large areas in the region except at the mouth of Apalachicola River and around Lake Wimico, on Bald Point. There are hundreds of little marshes scattered all over the region,

however, providing wildlife habitat and storing and filtering stormwater runoff from highways, parking lots, and other impermeable surfaces.

Freshwater marshes are associated with several other natural communities: low spots in flatwoods, shallow edges of lakes and rivers, forested wetlands such as hardwood and Cypress swamps, and edges of artificial bodies of water such as farm ponds, impoundments, and canals. The type of vegetation in these marshes depends on the soil, depth of water, and frequency of flooding.



Forested Wetlands

Fish do grow on trees! What do wetland forests have to do with fish? Two very important things:

1. Wetland forests lining the Apalachicola and Ochlockonee Rivers help feed fish in bays. In the swamps along the rivers most of the trees lose their leaves in the winter (that is, they are deciduous). What happens to all those leaves? They are swept downstream by the river’s high winter waters and pulverized along the way, providing a substantial amount of bite-size nutrients to the estuary’s food chain.

2. Floodplain forests also provide feeding and breeding habitat for freshwater fish. When the river is high and water fills the streambeds and backwater pools in the floodplain forest, fish from the river find their way into these newly flooded habitats, which provide food, shelter, and protection for newly hatched fish.

Forested wetlands, generally known as swamps, are the second most widespread



natural community in the region, next to pinelands. They are divided into two groups: (1) floodplain wetland forests, which are connected to a river or a lake, and (2) isolated wetland forests, which are not.

Floodplain wetland forests cover a vast amount of territory. They tailor themselves to the shores of the Apalachicola and

Ochlockonee, widening where the rivers widen as they approach the Gulf. The Apalachicola River's floodplain wetland forest is the largest in Florida. It is 71 miles long, 1 to 5 miles wide, and covers 175 square miles. The lowest parts are flooded almost all year and have few plants besides the dominant trees, which are often swollen at the base (foresters call this "buttressing").

Shrubs and ground-level plants are few. On slightly higher ground flooding doesn't last quite as long and there are different communities of trees. It's easy to walk (or wade) through some of these forests while others are packed with an assortment of vines and shrubs that make great cover for wildlife but unpleasant hiking.

These forests boast some 60 species of trees. There is no one classification that's widely



accepted and you'll come across terms such as bottomland hardwoods, floodplain forest, floodplain swamp, freshwater tidal swamp, river swamp, back swamp, second bottom, levee forest, or river terrace. Be aware, however, that different classifiers use the same terms but assign different meanings to them. One person's bottomland hardwood might be another's floodplain swamp.

Fresh Water - Rivers and Streams

The personality of a river is a product of the land it travels through. The Byway is loaded with rivers, which can be divided into four basic types:

Alluvial rivers, like the Apalachicola, are muddy. They carry a lot of sand, silt, and clay, collectively called alluvium, which is transported into the river by surface runoff. Alluvial rivers tend to wander around the landscape, leaving behind oxbow lakes and abandoned channels. The river dumps sediments in some spots and in others it scours its sides, eroding the banks. In times of

heavy rain, particularly in winter or early spring, alluvial rivers in the region can overtop their banks and flood adjoining lands. These floods carry nutrient-rich waters into the river's floodplain and the estuaries where the rivers empty into the Gulf of Mexico. Flooding creates habitat for many fish species that move into flooded areas to feed and lay eggs.

Blackwater streams, like the New River, are actually more brown than black. The color

comes from fallen leaves that soak in the water, the same process and the same color that you



get from soaking tea leaves in water. The name of the stain is tannic acid.

Seepage streams, such as those that drain from ravines into the east side of the northern Apalachicola and Ochlockonee Rivers, usually have clear or very lightly tinted waters. Rain



falls on the hilltops and filters downward until it hits a layer it cannot penetrate. It then moves sideways and eventually seeps out of the hillside, forming a stream.

Spring runs, like the Wakulla and St. Marks Rivers, emerge from springs. Their waters can be so clear that you can see all the way to the stream's bottom but they can also be clouded or darkened when heavy rains wash dead leaves, oil and gas from highways, and anything else on the ground surface into the springs or into the channels that feed to the springs.



Forest Trail Animals, Reptiles, Amphibians, Crustaceans

Florida Black Bear, Bobcat, White-Tailed Deer, Gray Fox, Raccoon, Opossum, Southern Mink, Beaver, Coyote, Armadillo, Gray Squirrel, White Squirrel, Fox Squirrel, Wood Rat, Cotton Mouse, Cotton Rat, Slimy Salamander, Bronze Frog, Spring Peeper, Oak Toad, Little Grass Frog, Cricket Frog, Chorus Frog, Bird-



Voiced Treefrog, Gray Treefrog, Bullfrog, River Frog, Southern Leopard Frog, Alligator, River Cooter, Stinkpot, Southeastern Five-Lined Skink, Broadhead Skink, Narrowmouth Toad, Box Turtle, Green Anole, Broadhead Skink, Ground Skink, Fire-Back Crayfish, Red-Bellied Snake, Gray Rat Snake, Rough Green Snake, Eastern King Snake, Coral Snake, Southern Copperhead, Black Racer, Red Rat Snake, Yellow Rat Snake, Cottonmouth, Pygmy Rattlesnake, Brown Water Snake

Forest Trail Plants and Trees

Longleaf Pine with Wiregrass and Runner Oak, Slash Pine with Saw Palmetto, Gallberry, Fetterbush, Wax Myrtle, Rusty Lyonia, Loblolly Pine, Sand Pine, Pond Pine, Shortleaf Pine, Spruce Pine, Southern Magnolia, Pignut Hickory, Mockernut Hickory, Sweetgum, Sourwood, Florida Maple, Devil's Walking Stick, American Beech, American Hornbeam, Redbud, Flowering Dogwood, Carolina Holly, American Holly, Dahoon Holly, Eastern Hophornbeam, Live Oak, Swamp



Chestnut Oak, White Oak, Laurel Oak, Southern Red Oak, Water Oak, Diamond-leaf Oak, Willow Oak, Cypress, Black Gum, Water Tupelo, Ogeechee Tupelo, Water Hickory, Green Ash, Florida Elm, River Birch, Red Maple, Sweetgum, Partridgeberry, Saw Greenbrier, Sarsaparilla Vine, Trilliums, Silverbell, Christmas Fern, Witchhazel, Mountain Laurel, Carolina Laurelcherry, Sebastianbush, Fringe Tree, Bigleaf Snowbell, Tulip Poplar, White Ash, Horse Sugar, Dwarf Huckleberry, Blueberry, Bog Buttons, Blackroot, Yellow-Eyed Grass, Cutthroat Grass, Spikerush, Chain Fern, Willows, Maidencane, Wax Myrtle, Swamp Primrose, Bloodroot, Buttonbush, Fire Flag, Pickerelweed, Arrowheads, Bladderwort Wiregrass, Toothache Grass, Maidencane, Spikerush, Beakrush, Hatpins, Marsh Pinks, Crownbeard, Sundews, Stargrass, White-Top Sedge, Meadow-beauty, Sneezeweed, Pitcherplants



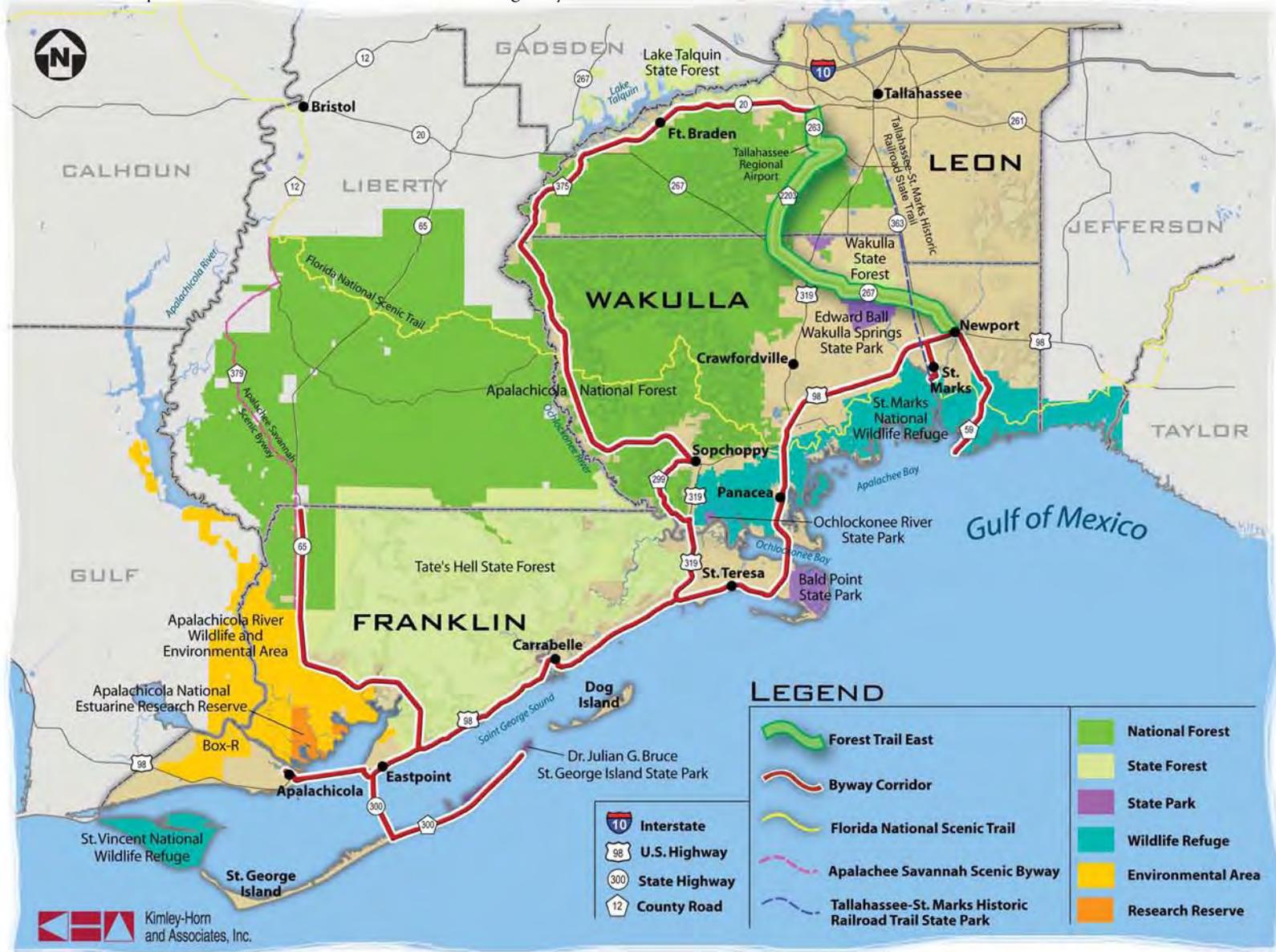
Forest Trail Birds

Turkey, Woodcock, Barred Owl, Mourning Dove, Yellow-Billed Cuckoo, Screech-Owl, Great Horned Owl, Red-Tailed Hawk, Common Night Hawk, Ruby-Throated Hummingbird, Red-bellied Woodpecker, Yellow-Bellied Sapsucker, Downy Woodpecker, Pileated Woodpecker, Red-Cockaded Woodpecker, Eastern Phoebe, Eastern Kingbird, Blue Jay, Tufted Titmouse, Carolina Chickadee, Brown-Headed Nuthatch, Carolina Wren, Hermit Thrush, Robin, Brown Thrasher, Cedar Waxwing, White Eyed Vireo, Red-Eyed Vireo, Yellow-Throated Warbler, Pine Warbler, Palm Warbler, Ovenbird, Summer Tanager, Cardinal, Rufous-Sided Towhee, White-Throated Sparrow, Orchard Oriole, Wood Duck, Mississippi Kite, Red-Shouldered Hawk, Swallow-Tailed Kite, Parula Warbler, Prothonotary Warbler, Hooded Warbler ■



Forest Trail East

28.6 miles (plus side trips). Start: Wakulla County at intersection of Coastal Highway (US 98) and Bloxham Cutoff (SR 267). End: Leon County at intersection of Capital Circle SW (SR 263) and Blountstown Highway (SR 20).



Forest Trail East: Destinations

You should start your tour of this segment in Wakulla County at the intersection of Coastal Highway (US 98) and Bloxham Cutoff (SR 267) west of Newport. There is often a Tupelo honey stand at this intersection. If you've never tasted Tupelo honey, a sweet southern delicacy, now may be the time for a try. We think you'll like it.

The roadway along SR 267 is wooded and lined with wildflowers in spring and fall. Keep your eyes open for Swallow-Tail and Mississippi Kites that soar gracefully above the treetops in search of insects. At the intersection with Woodville Highway (SR 363) you may wish to take the following side trip.

Side Trip: Natural Bridge Battlefield State Historic Site

Directions: At the intersection of Bloxham Cutoff (SR 267) and Woodville Highway (SR 363), take Woodville Highway north for 5.6 miles into Leon County. In the town of Woodville, turn right (east) onto Natural Bridge Road (CR 2192). Follow signs 6 miles to the Park at the St. Marks River.

Description: Natural Bridge is the site of the second largest Civil War battle in Florida, which took place where the St. Marks River drops into a sinkhole and flows underground for one-quarter of a mile before reemerging. During the final weeks of the Civil War a Union flotilla landed at Apalachee Bay, planning to capture Fort Ward (now San Marcos de Apalache Historic State Park) and march north to the state capital, Tallahassee. With a timely warning, volunteers from the Tallahassee area — some Confederate soldiers joined by old

men and young boys — intercepted the Union forces at Natural Bridge and successfully repelled three major attacks. The Union troops were forced to retreat to the coast and Tallahassee was the only Confederate capital east of the Mississippi not captured by the Union.

Activities: Hiking, fishing, birding.

Facilities: Picnic area, interpretive plaque.

Minimum time to allow: 30 minutes.

Fee: Yes.

Hours: 8:00 a.m. until sundown, 365 days a year.

Contact: 850-922-6007; floridastateparks.org/naturalbridge

Back on the Byway, you will cross the **Tallahassee-St. Marks Historic Railroad State Trail**. A great local favorite, the Tallahassee-St. Marks Trail follows the abandoned railbed of Florida's longest operating railroad line. The first designated bike trail in the state, it stretches 16 miles through dense pine forests and quiet rural communities before ending in the small coastal town of St. Marks. Many cyclists find that a stop at one of their restaurants for fresh seafood and a cold beverage perfectly rounds out the afternoon. Horseback riding and skating are also enjoyed.

After crossing SR 363, continue along the Byway on SR 267 to access the Wakulla Tract of the Wakulla State Forest.





Wakulla State Forest

Directions: Trailhead is on the Byway 3.1 miles west of intersection with CR 363.

Description: This 4,219 acre property is being managed to protect the water quality of Wakulla Springs, convert pine plantations back to native ecosystems, and expand outdoor recreation.

McBride Slough, a major watershed feature, meanders through the forest and combines with two small springs before joining the Wakulla River. Recreation features include two trails: the Nemours Hiking Trail -- a 1.75 mile loop through mixed pine/hardwood forest, pine plantation, wildlife clearings, and a hardwood/cypress slough, and the Double Springs Multi-Use Trail -- a 4.5 mile loop with low water crossings, inclines, and winding trails.

Activities: Hiking, horseback riding, bird watching, biking.

Facilities: Parking, multi-use and hiking trails, service roads.

Minimum time to allow: 30 minutes.

Fee: No.

Hours: Sunrise to sunset, 365 days a year.

Contact: 850/ 488-4274; www.fl-dof.com/state_forests/wakulla

Edward Ball Wakulla Springs State Park & Lodge

Directions: On the Byway 1.9 miles west of Wakulla State Forest Trailhead, and east of the intersection of SR 267 and SR 61.

Description: Wakulla Springs is internationally known as one of the

largest and deepest freshwater springs in the world and the park is host to an abundance of wildlife, including White-Tailed Deer, Alligators, Suwannee River Cooters, Manatees, Wood Ducks, Anhinga, Yellow-Crowned Night Herons, other birds, and snakes. Daily guided riverboat tours provide a close view of wildlife and glass-bottom boat tours are offered when the water is clear. Swimming is a popular activity during the hot summer months but remember that the water temperature remains a constant 69 degrees year-round! A nature trail offers a leisurely walk along the upland wooded areas of the park. The Wakulla Springs Lodge was built in 1937 by financier Edward Ball and is open year-round. Wakulla Springs State Park and Lodge is listed on the Natural Register of Historic Places and is designated as a National Natural Landmark.



Activities: Birding, wildlife viewing, swimming, photography, boat rides, hiking.

Facilities: 6,000 acres. Lodge with full-service dining room overlooking the spring, gift shop, hiking trails, horse trails, interpretive exhibits, picnic areas, restrooms, showers/changing rooms.

Minimum time to allow: One to two hours.

Fee: Yes.

Hours: 8:00 a.m. until sunset, 365 days a year.

Contact: 850/224-5950; www.floridastateparks.org/wakullasprings

Cherokee Sink Side Trip: Exit Wakulla Springs State Park, turn left onto SR 267 and drive 0.1 miles. At the caution light intersection of SR 267 and SR 61 turn left (south) onto SR 61 for 1.2 miles. Drive into the Park at the Cherokee Sink sign. Park at the trailhead and hike 1 mile to this beautifully restored sinkhole lake with observation platform. Fee \$4, picnic tables, restroom, no water.

Bethel Historic Site

After crossing SR 61, continue on the Byway route along SR 267. The Bethel Historic Site, consisting of an old church and cemetery, is at the intersection with Spring Creek Highway (SR 365).

At the signaled intersection with Crawfordville Highway (US 319), you may wish to try one of the following side trips:

Side Trip: Leon Sinks Geological Site, Apalachicola National Forest

Directions: From the intersection of Bloxham Cutoff (SR 267) and Crawfordville Highway (US 319) take US 319 north (toward Tallahassee) for 3.2 miles to the entrance to the Leon Sinks Geological Site in the Apalachicola National Forest. It is located on the left (west) side of US 319.

Description: 5.9 miles of marked, interpreted trail running past Longleaf Pine forest, Gum Tree swamps, sinkholes, swales, caverns, a natural bridge, streams, and depressions. Excellent presentation of the area's unique geology known as Karst Topography. This term is applied to terrain in which rain and groundwater have dissolved underlying limestone bedrock over long periods of time, leading to collapsed surface formations, which often are then filled with water. Good variety of trees especially in spring when dogwood and magnolias are in bloom.

Activities: Hiking, wildlife viewing, photography.

Facilities: Interpretive kiosk, restrooms, picnic tables, interpretive trails, viewing platforms.

Minimum time to allow: One hour.

Fee: Yes.

Hours: 8:00 a.m. to 8:00 p.m. daily.

Contact: 850/926-3561; www.fs.fed.us/r8/florida/recreation/index_apa.shtml

Side Trip: Crawfordville

Directions: From the intersection of Bloxham Cutoff (SR 267) and Crawfordville Highway (US 319) on the Byway, take US 319 south 5 miles to the town of Crawfordville, the county seat of Wakulla County.

Points of Interest: Historic Courthouse.

The wooden vernacular-style courthouse in Crawfordville was designed by G. W. Tully and constructed in 1892-93. It is said to be the oldest wood-frame courthouse still in use in Florida. In 1948 it was relocated one block away from its original site and now houses the Wakulla County Chamber of Commerce. The old Jail which stands across the street, houses the museum and genealogical archives of the Wakulla County Historical Society (phone 926-1110).

Azalea and Hudson Parks. Attractive parks in the center of town with walking trails and picnic facilities.

Apalachicola National Forest Headquarters.

From US 319 turn east on Taff Drive approximately two blocks to the USDA Forest Service headquarters at 57 Taff Drive (850/926-3561). Pick up information on the Apalachicola National Forest, including bird lists, activities, natural features, maps, trails, etc.

Facilities: Gas stations, restaurants, grocery store, hardware store, library, drug store, fast food service, etc.

Contact: <http://www.wakullacounty.org>.

Back on the Byway, continue west on SR 267 for 2.6 miles to Springhill Road (CR 373 in Wakulla County and CR 2203 in Leon County) and turn right (north) to access resources of the **Apalachicola National Forest (ANF)**. The largest of the three National Forests located in Florida, the ANF covers 569,804 acres between Tallahassee and the Apalachicola River. When established in 1936 the land had been devastated by logging. Today this is one of the best remaining examples of the native Longleaf Pine/Wiregrass ecosystem. The upland parts of the forest are covered by stands of Longleaf and

Slash Pine. Wet lowlands are covered by trees such as Oak, Southern Magnolia, and Cypress. More than 300 species of mammals, birds, reptiles, and amphibians make the Apalachicola National Forest their home.

Apalachicola National Forest-Springhill Road

Directions: This portion of the Byway encompasses the eastern portion of the ANF along Springhill Road (CR 373/CR 2203).

Description: The roadway first passes through the site of the historic mill town of Helen. Though there is nothing left of the town itself, you will notice a raised roadbed on the west side of the Byway, which was the railbed for the Georgia, Florida, and Alabama Railroad of 1893 (nicknamed the "Gopher, Frog, and Alligator" by old timers). This railbed is now being converted into the GF&A bike trail. It is planned to extend eventually to Sopchoppy and Carrabelle.

Facilities: There are two major recreation sites available along Springhill Road: Trout Pond and Lost Lake. Trout Pond is wheelchair accessible, with parking, a playground, picnic tables with shelter, restrooms, a scenic lake and fishing pier. No swimming is allowed. It has interpretive kiosks and currently serves as the trailhead for the GF&A trail. Lost Lake has parking and picnic tables around the lake. No swimming is allowed. Lost Lake is also projected as a trailhead for the GF&A Trail.

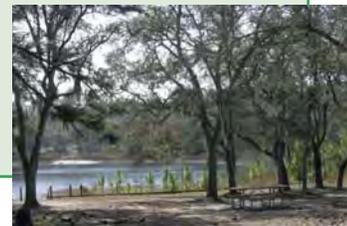
Activities: Hiking, birding, picnicking.

Fee: No.

Hours: Day use only.

Contact: 850/926-3561; www.fs.fed.us/r8/florida/recreation/index_apa.shtml

Continue north on the Byway through the forest for 9.4 miles until you reach the intersection with





Capital Circle SW (SR 263). Turn left (west) toward the Tallahassee Regional Airport.

Tallahassee Regional Airport

Directions: On Capital Circle SW (SR 263) 1.5 miles from Springhill Road.

Description: This modest but attractive Regional Airport has an Airport Gallery on the main floor, which features Big Bend artists and subject matter, and an Aviation Museum on the second floor. Both are in public areas accessible without passing through security gates. The information kiosk offers a variety of brochures on local areas and attractions.

Activities: Art and photography viewing, aviation history.

Facilities: Short-term and long-term parking, restrooms, restaurant, and gift shop.

Minimum time to allow: 30 minutes.

Fee: None for entry, but parking fees apply.

Hours: 9:00 a.m.–5:00 p.m. Monday–Saturday; 12:30–5:00 p.m. Sunday.

Contact: 850/891-7802; talgov.com/citytlh/aviation.

Continue on the Byway for 2.9 miles. Turn right (east) at the intersection of Capital Circle SW and Orange Avenue and follow the signs to the **Tallahassee Museum**.

Side Trip: Tallahassee Museum

Directions: From intersection of Capital Circle SW and Orange Avenue, follow signs west for .8 miles to Museum Drive and turn left to the Museum parking lot.

Description: Exciting opportunity to learn about the rich history and natural beauty of the Big Bend

region. This site combines a natural habitat zoo of indigenous wildlife (as well as exotic animals on loan) with a collection of historic buildings, exhibits, and artifacts in a beautiful 52-acre lakeside setting. Among the collection is Bellevue, the 1840s plantation house and home of the great-grandniece of George Washington. Bellevue is listed in the National Register of Historic Places, and is an excellent example of mid-19th century plantation “cottage” architecture.

Activities: Touring the grounds, wildlife viewing, and photography.

Facilities: Museum grounds, restrooms, cafeteria, and gift shop.

Minimum time to allow: One to two hours.

Fee: Yes.

Hours: 9:00 a.m.–5:00 p.m. Monday–Saturday; 12:30–5:00 p.m. Sunday.

Contact: 850/ 576-1636; www.tallahasseeemuseum.org

Once back on the Byway, continue on Capital Circle SW (SR 263) for 1.1 miles until you reach the intersection with Blountstown Highway (SR 20). At this point you may wish to take the following side trip:

Side Trip: Mission San Luis de Apalache

Directions: Continue on Capital Circle SW past Blountstown Highway (SR 20) to the next major intersection, which is Tennessee Street (SR 90). Turn right (west). The site is 2.8 miles at the intersection with Ocala Road.

Description: A beautiful 60-acre archaeological park. The site of a 17th century Spanish mission, San Luis contains archaeological

evidence of a Spanish fort, church, and residences, as well as an Apalachee Indian council house and village. The Apalachee Indians and the Spanish lived here together for 50 years. Interpretive displays and programs bring these early settlers to life. Regular tours are provided on weekdays at noon.

Facilities: Beautiful grounds, reconstructed Apalachee Indian council house (one of the largest historic Native American structures in the southeastern United States, accommodating 2,000–3,000 people) and other buildings, gift shop, bathrooms.

Minimum time to allow: One hour.

Fee: Yes.

Hours: Closed Monday. Open Tuesday – Sunday 10:00a.m. – 4:00 p.m.

Contact: 850/487-3711; missionsanluis.org.

Forest Trail Central: Destinations

This portion of the Byway continues west on Blountstown Highway (SR 20). From the turnoff at Capital Circle SW it is 3.6 miles to the



Forest Trail Central

69.6 miles (plus side trips). Begin: Leon County at intersection of Blountstown Highway (SR 20) and Capital Circle Southwest (SR 263). End: Franklin County at intersection of Sopchoppy Highway (US 319) and Coastal Highway (US 98).





intersection with Silver Lake Road (SR 260). Turn left (south) to reach **Silver Lake**.

Side Trip: Silver Lake Recreation Area, Apalachicola National Forest

Directions: Located 3.2 miles south of the turnoff from SR 20.

Description: The largest recreation area in the Apalachicola National Forest, with large pines and moss-draped Cypress trees creating a beautiful backdrop for the spring-fed lake. Notice a sign by one of the picnic pavilions identifying this as one of the many fine Civilian Conservation Corps projects completed in Florida. This is the only remaining CCC structure on the Byway.

Activities: Swimming, hiking, fishing.

Facilities: 50 picnic tables, 3 picnic shelters, 250-foot white sand beach, mile-long interpretive trail, restrooms, and hot showers.

Minimum time to allow: 30 minutes.

Fee: Yes.

Hours: Daytime use only.

Contact: 850/926-3561; www.fs.fed.us/r8/florida/recreation/index_apa.shtml

As you continue west along the Byway on SR 20 you will notice that the roadway is bordered by **Lake Talquin State Forest**. Established in 1977, it consists of 16,326 acres of flatwoods, rolling uplands, swamps, sand hills, and hardwood forests. This forest has the distinction of offering access to two Outstanding Florida Waters, the Ochlockonee River and Lake Talquin.

Fort Braden Trails, Lake Talquin State Forest

Directions: 5 miles west from the turnoff to Silver Lake on SR 20 on the right side of the road.

Description: Picnic facilities, three hiking loops, and two equestrian trails. Each trail explores a range of different ecosystems, offering stunning views of Lake Talquin and opportunities to explore steep slopes and ravines which shelter many rare plants more characteristic of the southern Appalachian region.

Activities: Hiking, horseback riding, fishing, birding, wildlife viewing, photography.

Facilities: 9 miles of hiking trails, with 3-5 mile loops, moderately strenuous, with some steep

inclines, restrooms, picnic facilities.

Minimum time to allow: One hour.

Fee: No.

Hours: Day use and overnight primitive camping.

Contact: 850/488-1871; www.fl-dof.com/state_forests/lake_talquin.html

River Bluff Picnic Site, Lake Talquin State Park

Directions: Continue 1.8 miles from Fort Braden Trails on SR 20 to Jack Vause Landing Road, then turn right and follow signs into park.

Description: In 1927 the Jackson Bluff Dam was





constructed on the Ochlockonee River to produce hydroelectric power. Construction of the dam created Lake Talquin, which is 12,000 acres in size and encompasses 14.5 linear miles of the Ochlockonee River floodplain, offering outstanding recreational opportunities. Visitors can catch Large-Mouth Bass, Bream, Shellcracker, and Speckled Perch or enjoy nature walks, picnicking, boating, and canoeing. Nature lovers will find rolling hills and deep ravines with forests of pines and hardwoods where they may sight Turkeys, Bald Eagles, Ospreys, and Deer. Seepage streams emerge from ravine heads and feed into the lake. These small streams are generally clear and are instrumental in shaping ravine ecosystems over time. On occasion the park may be closed to the public to accommodate private parties. Before planning your visit, call to make sure the River Bluff site has not been reserved.

Activities: Hiking, wildlife viewing, fishing.

Facilities: 554-acre park with interpretive trail, fishing pier, boat launch, restrooms, excellent picnic pavilion.

Minimum time to allow: 30 minutes.

Fee: No.

Hours: 8:00 a.m. until sundown, 365 days a year.

Contact: 850/922-6007; www.floridastateparks.org/laketalquin

Continue on SR 20 for .7 of a mile to the historic **Fort Braden School**, which now serves as a Community Center. A plaque describes the history of the school, which is listed on the National Registry of Historic Places. Continue west on SR 20 for 2.2 miles to the turn-off (on the right side of the road) to Luther Hall Road to

visit this county park.

Luther Hall Landing County Park

Directions: 2997 Luther Hall Road

Description: This picturesque park is perched on a hill overlooking Lake Talquin.

Activities: Hiking, boating, fishing, camping.

Facilities: Hot showers, restrooms, tent camping, picnic pavilion, extensive boardwalk, boat launch.

Minimum time to allow: 30 minutes

Fee: No.

Hours: Day use only.

Contact: 850/488-0221; www.co.leon.fl.us/PARKS/camping.asp

Returning to the Byway, with the Apalachicola National Forest bordering the left (east) side of the road, continue to sign marking the Vinzant Riding Trail.

Vinzant Riding Trail, Apalachicola National Forest

Offering over 30 miles of wooded countryside to explore, the trail crosses open pinelands interrupted by wet and scenic titi bays that are studded with a variety of wildflowers. The trail is even and flat with occasional rises and low wet areas and a stream to cross. Enjoyable for both experienced and beginning horseback riders. Hiking is also permitted. There are private horse rental stables in the area.

Continue south on SR 20 until it intersects with SR 267. Turn right and continue west on SR 20 to the intersection with Smith Creek Highway (CR 375). Turn left (south) on CR 375. This part

of the Scenic Byway borders the Ochlockonee River, passes through the central portion of the Apalachicola National Forest, and leads to the quaint town of **Sopchoppy** and the **Ochlockonee River State Park**.

For a great view of the Ochlockonee River take this brief side trip before leaving SR 20.

Side Trip: Ochlockonee River and C. H. Corn Hydroelectric Power Generating Plant

Continue past the intersection with CR 375 on SR 20 for less than a mile to view the river. Aside from producing electricity and providing flood control, a beneficial side effect of the dam is the lake that was created — Lake Talquin — stretching some 14 miles along the Byway. The dam is operated by the City of Tallahassee with a major goal of maintaining it for recreation and preserving the beautiful environment. There is great fishing both above and below the dam and on summer weekends the lake is alive with recreational water skiers and boaters. A fish camp with boat rentals is located on the southeast side of the river.

Turn around and head back on SR 20 to the intersection with CR 375. Turn right (south) and continue on the Scenic Byway.

The first recreational facility along the river is **Pine Creek Landing**, approximately 12 miles from the CR 375 intersection with SR 20. It lies just 1.3 miles to the right (west) from the turnoff on CR 375 and offers a great view of the Ochlockonee River. There are picnic facilities, primitive camping, and a boat launch.



Back on the Byway, head south 5 miles to the community of **Smith Creek**. An old one-room school house is located next to the Volunteer Fire Department. At **Jack Langston's Fish Camp and Boat Ramp**, just to the right off the Byway, you can still see some original fish camp cabins by the river.

Spring and fall are particularly beautiful seasons along this portion of the Byway. The roadsides are filled with wildflowers and beautiful butterflies. As you travel through the Apalachicola National Forest you also may notice white bands painted around large longleaf pine trees. These trees are marked to indicate Red-Cockaded Woodpecker (RCW) nests (see page 56). Another "keystone species," the Gopher Tortoise, inhabits pine flatwoods along the Byway. Read about its important contribution to the web of life on page 56. Both of these species depend on prescribed fire to reduce underbrush, protect against wildfire, and keep the flatwoods open for Wiregrass and other indigenous plant species.

About one mile from Smith Creek, FR 13 crosses the Byway. Turn right (west) for a sweeping view of the Ochlockonee River and the floodplain swamp dominated by Tupelo gum trees.

Side Trip: Two Rivers Bridge, Ochlockonee River.

Stop in a safe area at the bridge and walk its length to get a full view of the river and the adjacent forest. If you are here in April and May

you will notice the flowering Tupelo trees a-buzz with bees.

The Ochlockonee River Bridge also serves as the route for the Florida Scenic Trail, with a trailhead at **Porter Lake**, the ANF facility on the western end of the bridge. The bridge is also an excellent area for birdwatching since you are at eye level with the treetops!

Return to the Byway. The next ANF facility you will come to is **Mack Landing**, which is 6 miles farther down CR 375 from FR 13. Turn right onto the graded dirt road (FR 336) for 1 mile to reach the river. Mack Landing is a fee area with camping, boat launch, picnic tables, restrooms, and fishing. As you continue southward the

Apalachicola National Forest gives way to gently rolling fields and farms.

Sopchoppy

In another 9 miles from the Mack Landing turnoff, you will cross the Sopchoppy River and enter the charming town of Sopchoppy on Rose Street (CR 22). If you watched any of the Andy Griffith shows, Mayberry will come to mind as white picket fences frame your drive into town and the Black Lab reluctantly gives up his station in the middle of the street. As the locals say, "Sopchoppy and easy living go together."

Over 100 years ago Sopchoppy was a bustling railroad town, with a depot built in 1893. The City of Sopchoppy was incorporated in 1905. Shops and restaurants in the small historic



district date from the early 1900s. In 1906 the Carrabelle, Tallahassee, and Georgia Railroad (which was later reincorporated as the Georgia, Florida, and Alabama) ran through town. The old depot has been rehabilitated into a nice museum. Sopchoppy is now a haven for outdoor enthusiasts. Kayaking, hiking, swimming, fishing, hunting, and birdwatching are just a few of the activities that are enjoyed by locals and tourists alike. Outfitters in town offer bike and kayak rentals and a B&B is planned. There are many musicians and two recording studios in the area as well.

Sopchoppy is also known as the **Worm Gruntin'** capital of the world, and locals still practice the art of coaxing earthworms from the ground to sell as bait. They go into the woods at dawn, drive a hardwood stob into the ground, and rhythmically rub the top of the exposed wood with a heavy piece of iron, such as a leaf spring from an old tractor. The friction sends vibrations into the ground which mimics those made by their enemy, moles, causing them to rise to the surface where they are collected in bait cans. Each year in early April the town celebrates its tradition of Worm Gruntin' with a daylong festival, coronation of the Worm Grunters' Queen, and the Worm Grunters' Ball held outdoors in the evening.

Like many Florida place names of Native American origin, the original meaning of "Sopchoppy" is not known for certain. Its most popular interpretation is "dark water river," but some believe it comes from Creek words meaning "long" and "twisted" (although not terribly long, the Sopchoppy River is definitely both twisted and dark). Others think it's a corruption of another

Creek word for "Red Oak." The best view of, and access to, the Sopchoppy River is at **Myron B. Hodge City Park**. Turn right on Yellow Jacket Avenue and after a few blocks turn right again. From Park Avenue turn left to the park.

Side Trip: Myron B. Hodge City Park

Description: 35-acre park located on the banks of the pristine Sopchoppy River. The park serves as the location for Sopchoppy's annual July 4th celebration with live music, food, and fireworks.

Activities: Boating, kayaking, swimming, birdwatching, wildlife viewing, fishing.

Facilities: Camping, restrooms, hot showers, nature trails, boat ramp, fishing dock, boardwalk, gazebo, children's playground, and picnic pavilions. The park grounds also house the historic Ed Whaley log home and Curtis Mill School.

Minimum time to allow: 30 minutes.

Contact: 850/962-4611 or 962-3873.

Side Trip: Historic Sopchoppy High School and Gymnasium

Take Yellow Jacket Street from the center of town to reach the High School. A plaque describes the history and architecture of this site, constructed in 1939 in native limestone by Works Progress Administration (WPA) labor. It is listed on the National Register of Historic Places. The auditorium is also the site of live productions, such as "South Pacific," "Oklahoma," and "My Fair Lady," by the Wakulla Community Theatre, and the Sopchoppy Opry, which presents monthly concerts of country, gospel, and blue-grass music in the Grand Ole Opry tradition. Proceeds are donated to the school's restoration fund.

Call 850/926-3711 for more information.

To continue on the Byway, return to Rose Avenue (CR 22) and go back the way you came. Take the left fork when you reach the river on CR 22. In just over a mile turn left on Curtis Mill Road (CR 299). When completed, the GF&A Bike Trail will follow this Byway route from town. The route enters the Apalachicola National Forest in a few miles. Follow signs to **Wood Lake**, a facility of the Apalachicola National Forest, which has a boat launch and fishing.

In 6.2 miles you will reach the intersection with Sopchoppy Highway (US 319). Turn right (south) for .2 of a mile and turn left into the entrance of this beautiful state park.

Ochlockonee River State Park

Directions: Located at the juncture of the Ochlockonee River and US 319 in Wakulla County.

Description: This jewel of a park is a great place to get away for a few hours on a weekend or a weeklong vacation. Picnic facilities and a swimming area are located near the scenic point where the Ochlockonee and Dead Rivers intersect. Ochlockonee, which means "yellow waters," is a mix of brackish, tidal surge, and fresh water. Wild and deep, the river empties into the Gulf of Mexico. Trails allow visitors to explore the park and view the diverse wildlife including Red-Cockaded Woodpeckers, White Squirrels, and natural communities such as Pine flatwoods and Oak thickets. A boat ramp provides easy access to the river. Both freshwater and saltwater fish inhabit the waters around the park, including Largemouth Bass, Bream, Catfish and





Speckled Perch. For overnight visitors there are full-facility campsites with access to restrooms and showers. Youth group camping is also available.

Activities: Swimming, boating, hiking, biking, camping, picnicking, birding, wildlife viewing.

Facilities: Interpretive kiosks, picnic shelters, boat launch, canoe rentals, hiking trails.

Minimum time to allow: One hour.

Fee: Yes.

Hours: 8 a.m. until sundown, 365 days a year.

Contact: 850-962-2771; www.floridastateparks.org/ochlockoneeriver

Back on the Byway continue south on US 319 over the Ochlockonee River, leaving Wakulla County and entering St. James Island in Franklin County. At low tide, if you look carefully to your right, you can still see the remains of the **Old McIntyre Ferry** lying in state partially submerged against the southwest bank of the river.

McIntyre was a turn-of-the-century logging town and mid-way stop for the GF&A railroad line from Tallahassee to Carrabelle. You can still see the old trestle at the St. Joe Boat Ramp by turning right (west) on McIntyre Road (a dirt road).

At the first intersection with Rio Vista Road (CR 370), turn left and take a brief side trip, parallel to the river, to the Cow Creek Boat Ramp.

St. James Island, Cow Creek, White Squirrels, Breakaway Lodge, Camp Gordon Johnston

If you have a kayak or small boat, you can spend an interesting 45 minutes to a few hours exploring

Cow Creek, a beautiful stream that meanders past huge Cypress trees and banks lined with Wild Rice. Also drive slowly to see **White Squirrels** in yards and trees. White Squirrels were brought to Breakaway Lodge, now a private home on Rio Vista, by its original owner Fenton Jones in the 1950s from a small population protected by a farmer in Gadsen County, Florida. They are not albino but leucistic and the trait is dominant because 8 out of 10 squirrels at Breakaway are white. Since then they have

spread up and down the Ochlockonee River including the Ochlockonee River State Park. The White Squirrels at the Tallahassee Museum are also from this "family." The **Breakaway Lodge** was a hunting and fishing lodge built in 1938. Many famous personalities stayed there including Ted Williams, Cason Calloway, and Richard Boone.

In 1942 St. James Island was commandeered to serve as the amphibious landing training site for the invasion of Normandy. **Camp Gordon Johnston**, originally named Camp Carrabelle, was home to 30,000 military personnel, training an estimated 250,000 troops for the D-Day invasion. The camp stretched from Alligator Point to Carrabelle and included Lanark, St. Teresa, Dog Island, and St. George Island. It was the second largest military installation in Florida. By 1948 most

of the buildings had been demolished and the lands transferred back to private ownership. The former officers' family quarters are in the Lanark Village retirement community. Army Generals George Patton & Mark Clark stayed in the Breakaway Lodge and are reported to have planned the Normandy Invasion sitting on the Lodge's screen porch overlooking the Ochlockonee River.



Continue south from the Ochlockonee River State Park 6.2 miles on Sopchoppy Highway (US 319) past the Forest Service Fire Tower and pine plantations to the intersection with the Coastal Highway (US 98). Black Bear and other wildlife crossings are particularly frequent in this area, so please drive slowly and carefully. ■

Forest Trail West: Destinations

This section of the Forest Trail begins on SR 65 in Franklin County and continues 25 miles to the north, terminating at the Liberty County line. The Forest Trail West follows the Apalachicola River northward and is bordered by public

Forest Trail West

25 miles. Begin: Franklin County at the intersection of Coastal Highway (US 98) and SR 65. End: SR 65 at the Franklin/Liberty County line at the community of Sumatra.



lands — Tate's Hell State Forest, Apalachicola River Wildlife and Environmental Area, and the Apalachicola National Forest. For a side trip you are encouraged to continue on the **Apalachee Savannahs Scenic Byway** through the Apalachicola National Forest in Liberty County.

Tate's Hell State Forest

Description: Tate's Hell State Forest is one continuous tract of land comprising over 202,000 acres. Conquering this wet and seemingly unproductive area for timber production was the focus of the private timber industry from the 1950s to early 1990s. During the 1960s and 1970s the hydrology of the area was substantially altered in an attempt to establish extensive tracts of pine plantations and to enhance the production of pine timber. These alterations involved clearing of natural forests, construction of roads and associated ditches, followed by the planting of large dense stands of Slash Pine that

were fertilized with phosphorus and nitrogen. To protect Apalachicola Bay from the severe freshwater runoff that ensued, the state began repurchasing the majority of the property in 1994 and has continued to acquire additional lands. As a result Tate's Hell has now become one of the largest state forests in Florida.

Facilities: A network of unpaved forest roads to explore the area, including approximately 150 miles of new OHV/ATV trails, which are available for a fee. A concrete boat launch site is located at Cash Creek, with additional launch sites available at other locations throughout the forest.

Activities: Hiking, canoeing, boating, and fishing along 35 miles of beautiful rivers, streams, and creeks.

Fee: None for general access.

Contact: 850/ 697-3734; www.fl-dof.com/state_forests/tates_hell

Approximately 5.5 miles north of the intersection of US 98 and CR 65 you will notice a sign on the east side of the road for the **Ralph Kendrick Dwarf Cypress Boardwalk**.

Side Trip: Ralph Kendrick Dwarf Cypress Boardwalk, Tate's Hell State Forest

Location: To reach the Cypress Boardwalk parking lot follow signs along the graded dirt road for 4.75 miles.

Description: One of the most unique features of this area, the Dwarf Cypress — also known as Bonsai or Hat-Rack Cypress — are found throughout Tate's Hell, but nowhere more pronounced than in the area of this boardwalk. Many of the trees are more than 300 years old, but they grow to a height of only 6-15 feet. No one is exactly

sure what causes the cypress in this area to be dwarfed. The trees are not genetically different from other pond-cypress trees in the area, and seeds from these trees will grow to normal heights when planted on other sites. The soil in this area is very deep before hitting bedrock, but there is a layer of hard clay that may prevent the cypress roots from growing deeper. The soil here is also very low in nutrients, as evidenced by the many carnivorous plants in the area. This site is thought to have been flooded in the past, further reducing the ability of these trees to grow.

Facilities: Information kiosk with excellent interpretation of ecosystem, boardwalk, and observation tower.

Activities: Wildlife observation, photography.

Fee: No.

Contact: 850/ 697-3734; www.fl-dof.com/state_forests/tates_hell

As you drive north along SR 65 you will pass a series of creeks. One of the best ways to explore this land and water — immortalized in the film *Ulee's Gold*, which featured Tupelo honey - is by canoe or kayak. The scenery is breathtaking. You can birdwatch or fish for Large-Mouth Bass, Catfish, Striped Bass, and Bream. Hundreds of



miles of scenic natural waterways wind through pristine floodplain forests and intertidal marshes offering excellent opportunities for paddlers on the Apalachicola River and its tributaries. The best times to paddle are fall or spring when temperatures are pleasant and bugs are relatively few. April and October are great months to view



Swamp Lilies, Swamp Roses, and Asters. Call 850/488-5520 to request a free paddling map, or download it at www.wildflorida.org/nbr and click on "Paddling Maps."

The first creek you will pass is **Cash Creek** with a boat launch on the east side of the road. Get out your

cameras. The magnificent views in both directions from the bridge are well worth the entire drive. The next creeks in succession are **Whiskey George** (which has a handicapped accessible landing) and **Doyle Creek and Landing**.

A sign on the west side of the road will soon announce that you have entered the Apalachicola River Wildlife and Environmental Area, which is part of a vast ecosystem that begins hundreds of miles away in the Chattahoochee National Forest in Georgia. The 82,554-acre Apalachicola River WEA, which is administered by the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission, contains the largest expanse of floodplain forest in Florida. The floodplain forest of the lower Apalachicola River protects, feeds, and nurtures Apalachicola Bay, the site of Florida's most



productive oyster harvesting. This region is also considered one of the most important bird habitats in the southeastern United States: more than 280 species have been identified in the Apalachicola River WEA. The area lies on the eastern fringe of the Mississippi Flyway and hosts large numbers of birds from both the Midwest and the Atlantic seaboard during migratory periods.

Approximately 3.5 miles north of the turnoff to the Cypress Dome on SR 65 you will come to a sign on the left (west) side of the road marking the turn-off to the Sand Beach Recreation Area.

Sand Beach Recreation Area, Apalachicola River Wildlife and Environmental Area

Location: From SR 65 follow Sand Beach Road (a graded dirt road) for 2.7 miles to the small parking lot.

Description: Beautiful Cabbage Palm hammock with outstanding view of the Apalachicola River and floodplain forest.

Facilities: Information kiosk, picnic tables, nature trail, dock, and observation tower.

Activities: Wildlife observation, hiking, fishing, picnicking, boating, and a great place to watch sunsets.

Fee: No.

Contact: 488-5520; www.wildflorida.org/nbr

Back on SR 65, heading north on the Byway, you will pass **Graham Creek & Landing**. The train trestle and tracks along the roadway belong to the Apalachicola Northern Railroad. Some 16.6 miles from the starting point on Highway 65 the Byway enters the Apalachicola National Forest. In four miles you will come to a sign on the west side of the road (FR 129) marking the entrance to the **Fort Gadsden Historic Site**. FR 129 is a graded dirt road that passes through wet savannahs about one mile from the turnoff at SR 65. In spring,

these savannahs are in bloom. You can find Pitcher Plants, Orchids, and Sundews with great opportunities for close-up photography. But expect to get your feet wet!

Side Trip: Fort Gadsden Historic Site, Apalachicola National Forest

Location: Follow FR 129 for 3 miles west to the historic site.

Description: Called the "Hill of Good Views" by the Spanish and "Achackweithle" by Native Americans, this site on the eastern bank of the Apalachicola River — so tranquil in appearance today — was the focus of a series of international conflicts that literally determined the



destiny of nations. At various times Prospect Bluff hosted a Spanish settlement, a British Fort, a Negro Fort, and the U.S. Fort Scott and Fort Gadsden. Conflicts involved escaped Negro slaves; Creek, Choctaw, and Seminole Indians; British and American forces; and Confederate and Union troops. This site is a National Historic Landmark and is listed in the National



Register of Historic Places.

Facilities: Information kiosk with historic dioramas depicting early settlements and major battles, picnic tables, nature trail, shelter, restrooms.

Activities: Hiking, picnicking, wildlife observation, photography, fishing.

Minimum Time to Allow: 30 minutes.

Fee: Yes.

Hours: Day use only.
Contact: 850/643-2282; www.fs.fed.us/r8/florida/recreation/index_apa.shtml



There are two other distinctive Apalachicola National Forest facilities that you may wish to visit along this route. After returning to the Byway (SR 65), travel 2.5 miles north to FR 101, a graded dirt road. Both facilities may be accessed from this road. 101-B leads to **Hickory Landing** with camping, picnic

tables, restrooms, drinking water, boat landing, and fishing and hiking trails. 101-A leads to **Wright Lake** with camping, picnic tables, trailer space and dump station, restrooms, showers, fishing, swimming, hiking, and nature trails. Wright Lake is handicapped accessible and both facilities have entrance fees.

The Byway ends 2.5 miles to the north at the old town of **Sumatra**. Just before reaching the town, on the west side of the road, you will pass the Sumatra Cemetery, which has gravestones from the Civil War. If you have time, take this side trip to explore more of the Apalachicola National Forest and the Apalachee Savannahs Scenic Byway. In spring and fall the roadway is famous for its magnificent wildflowers

Side Trip: From Sumatra you have two choices: (1) you can continue north on CR 379 for 23.8 miles to experience more of the **Apalachee Savannahs Scenic Byway**; or (2) you can continue north on SR 65 about 32 miles to **Telogia**. Just below Telogia look for large areas of wildflowers. At Telogia you can return via the Apalachee Savannahs Scenic Byway by following SR 67 left (west) to the intersection with CR 379/SR 12 and turning left (south) into the Apalachicola National Forest. In either case following CR 379 south will bring you back to Sumatra. The savannahs are sub-

tropical grasslands scattered with Longleaf Pine trees and covered with drought-resistant undergrowth. They form an open landscape where Wiregrass covers the forest floor. Much of the soil is sandy and often wet. Wildflowers such as Orchids, Pitcher Plants, and Sundews flourish, making the savannahs some of the most botanically rich areas in the country. ■

Special Byway Features

Prescribed Fire

While traveling the Big Bend Scenic Byway you will notice that many pine trees have black trunks, indicating that fire has occurred in the area. What you might not know is that it was intentionally set. In fact this Byway — and the State of Florida — are national models for the use of prescribed fire as a management tool



for the Longleaf Pine and Wiregrass habitat that dominates the landscape. If you complete the survey on the last page of *The Guide*, you will receive an eight-minute DVD entitled *FireForests of the Big Bend Scenic Byway*, which illustrates the role of prescribed fire along the Byway and captures some of the area's scenic beauty.

The Ecology of Fire

Fire has played a major role in determining the distribution of plants across the South. Some plant communities such as cypress swamps survive for centuries between prolonged droughts that finally allow fires to enter. Other communities such as the once vast expanse of Longleaf Pine burn every few years. In fact some ecosystems, for example the Longleaf Pine/

Wiregrass association, require periodic fire for their very survival.

Wildland fire is neither innately destructive nor constructive; it simply

causes change. Whether this change is viewed as desirable or not depends upon its compatibility with one's objectives. Irrespective of man's

viewpoint, change is biologically necessary to maintain a healthy ecosystem. Resource managers have learned to manipulate

fire-caused changes in plant and animal communities to meet their needs and those of humankind in general, while at the same time preserving underlying natural processes and functions. They do this by varying the timing, frequency, and intensity of fire.

Prescribed Fire History

The use of fire in the forests of the United States has come full circle. Early settlers found Indians using fire in virgin pine stands and adopted the practice themselves to provide better access, improve hunting, and to get rid of brush and timber so they could farm. Annual burning to "freshen up" southern range became a custom. This practice, plus destructive wildfires after logging, left millions of acres of forest land in the South devoid of trees. The increasing wildfire problem, coupled with the need for a fire-free interval of several years to allow the pines to become reestablished, led many foresters to advocate the exclusion of all fire from the woods. Others, however, pointed out that fire had a crucial role in the management of Longleaf Pine. Fire has been used by professional foresters to reduce hazardous fuels since the turn of the century.

Present Use

Today prescribed fire is applied to roughly 80 million acres in the South each year — about half of which are burned to achieve forest management objectives and range and agricultural purposes. In many cases prescribed burning is the only practical choice. Few, if any, alternative treatments can compete from the standpoint of effectiveness

and cost. Chemical applications generally cost more than 10 times as much per acre as prescribed fire. Mechanical treatments such as disking, chopping, or raking are at least 20 times more expensive. Each of these three alternatives also has associated environmental costs, such as destruction of habitat and soil erosion, which must be kept in mind.

Prescribed fire is defined as fire applied in a knowledgeable manner to a specific land area under selected weather conditions to accomplish predetermined, well-defined management objectives. These include:

- *Reduce hazardous fuels*
- *Dispose of logging debris*
- *Prepare sites for seeding and planting*
- *Improve wildlife habitat*
- *Control disease*
- *Improve forage for grazing*
- *Enhance appearance*
- *Improve access*
- *Perpetuate fire-dependent species*



- *Recycle nutrients*
- *Manage endangered species*
- *Manage competing vegetation*

Impacts of Prescribed Burning

For every prescribed fire opportunity, there are tradeoffs that must be recognized and weighed before a decision is reached. Proper planning and execution are necessary to minimize any detrimental effects to air quality. Potential off-site impacts such as downstream water quality should be considered, as well as on-site impacts to soil and aesthetics. Public opinion is also a factor of concern because the general public is concerned about the deterioration of the environment. Smoke from prescribed fires, just as from wildfires, is highly visible, and the two are often indistinguishable to the untrained eye.

Hazardous Fuels

Forest fuels accumulate rapidly in pine stands along the Byway. In five to six years heavy “roughs” can build up, posing a serious threat from wildfire to all forest resources, and to nearby communities. Prescribed fire is the most practical way to reduce these dangerous

accumulations of combustible fuels. The appropriate interval between prescribed burns for fuel reduction varies according to the rate of fuel accumulation, past wildfire occurrence, values at risk, and the risk of a

wildfire. The time interval between fires can be as often as every year although a three- or four-year cycle is usually adequate after the initial fuel-reduction burn.

Wildlife Habitat

Prescribed fire is highly recommended for

wildlife habitat management where Loblolly, Shortleaf, Longleaf, or Slash Pine are the primary overstory species. Periodic fire tends to favor understory species that require a more open habitat. A mosaic of burned and unburned areas tends to maximize “edge effect,” which promotes a large and varied wildlife population. Wild Turkey, White-Tailed Deer, Dove, and Quail are game species that benefit from prescribed fire. Habitat of several endangered species, including the Florida Panther, Gopher Tortoise, Indigo Snake, and Red-Cockaded Woodpecker, is also enhanced by burning. Other benefits include stimulation of fruit and seed production; improvement of yield and quality of herbage, legumes, and browse; and creation of openings for feeding, travel, and dusting. Biological requirements such as nesting times of preferred wildlife species, vegetative condition of stands, and, most importantly, effects on understory stature and species composition must be taken into account.

Fire-Dependent Species

Many plants have structural adaptations, specialized tissues, or reproductive features that are enhanced in a fire-dominated environment, suggesting close association with fire over a very long period of time. Many endemics are only found the first one to two years after a fire. Changes in the “natural” fire pattern as a result of attempted fire exclusion have led to dramatic decreases in many of these fire-tolerant or fire-dependent species. Many picturesque flowers currently listed as threatened or endangered are benefited by fire.

The orange Prescribed Fire signs along the Byway thus should be understood as a reminder of the many ways in which the practice benefits the forest and wildlife, and

protects surrounding areas and residents from destructive wildfires.

Turpentine and Logging

Historically, one of the most important industries of the Florida Panhandle region spanned by the Big Bend Scenic Byway was turpentine.

As the first European settlers arrived in the middle Atlantic states and gradually moved south into Florida, they brought with them a keen appreciation of the value of turpentine and other pinesap products for naval stores — in an era still dependent on wooden sailing vessels — and for multiple other uses such as printing ink, wax thinner, polishes for leather and furniture, and laundry glosses. The settlers also discovered vast expanses of pine forests in the New World and quickly put two and



two together.

The industry was based on back-breaking hand labor in the forests to collect the precious pinesap, running drop by drop into tin cups from horizontal cuts in the tree bark. For about 36 weeks each year, workers made a new cut in the trees just above the cut of the previous week, gradually



forming a “face” on the side of the tree from 10-15 inches in width and up to about 16 inches in height. This “face” would be extended year by year, sometimes reaching a height

of 8-10 feet. As noted elsewhere in *The Guide*,

one of the few places where these “faces” or “catfaces” may still be seen is along Skipper Bay Road, just off US 98 north of Panacea.



About every third week, as judged by a “woods rider” employed by the turpentine company, the crew of workers made the rounds of

trees to do the hot and dirty work of gathering raw gum from the cups, collecting it in barrels, and transporting it — by horse, mule, or cattle teams — to a central turpentine still. There the raw gum was boiled in large vats or “stills” to produce the finished product to be shipped to market.

The workers who tapped the trees were generally poor, nomadic, and predominantly Black. They lived in makeshift commissary towns

operated by the landowners, who set up the stills, maintained the transportation systems through the forests to coastal towns and ports, bought and sold the meager supplies available to the workers, and in many cases printed their own currency. After the trees in one area had been tapped for several years, the company towns folded up and the entire operation moved on to another forest site. Some observers have suggested that the life of the average turpentine worker was only slightly removed from slavery.

Turpentine was intrinsically linked to logging. Once an area of trees had been tapped out for turpentine, the logging operations began. In the 1700s and early 1800s most lumber was produced by hand sawing from round logs. A two-man pit saw operation reportedly could produce about 100 board feet of lumber (one board foot is defined as 12” by 12” by 1”) per day. In the mid to late 1800s water and steam were employed to power circular and band saws. The crew of a large steam-operated mill could then produce as much as 100,000 board feet of lumber per day. Tram road systems were developed and steam-powered locomotives, skidders, carriages, and loaders gradually replaced hand labor to move the old-growth timber to mills. During this period clearcutting was the rule.

The conditions for the average timber industry worker probably were an improvement over those of laborers in the turpentine camps, but the constant demand to keep mill towns close to the forest resources meant that none could

look forward to a stable life. Twenty years was the average lifespan of a mill town, after which the rule was “dismantle, junk, and move on.”

The era of selective harvesting, scientific replanting of trees, and other sustainable forestry practices developed slowly, but today Florida’s \$8 billion forest-products industry has generally embraced the philosophy of sustainable forest production as a best business practice.

Tupelo Honey

Tupelo honey has long been known as

“Liquid Gold.” Before the world was introduced to cane sugar, honey was the predominant ingredient used for sweetening. In fact, to the ancients of Egypt and Greece, honey was such a prized commodity that it was used as a medium of exchange. If you saw the film *Ulee’s Gold*, you know that Tupelo honey is still a medium of exchange in northwest Florida, particularly along the Byway.

Van Morrison paid tribute to this rich delicacy in his 1971 song, “Tupelo Honey.”



*"You can take all the tea in China
Put it in a big brown bag for me
Sail right around the seven oceans*

Drop it straight into the deep blue sea

*She's as sweet as Tupelo honey
She's an angel of the first degree
She's as sweet as Tupelo honey
Just like honey from the bee"*



Tupelo honey is produced from the Tupelo Gum tree that grows profusely along rivers of northwest Florida.

Here in the river swamps this honey is produced in a unique fashion. Beehives are placed on elevated platforms along the river's edge from which, during April and May, the bees fan out through the surrounding Tupelo-blossom-laden swamps and return with their precious treasure. These river valleys of northwest Florida are the only place in the world where Tupelo honey is produced commercially.

Real Tupelo honey is light amber in color or light golden with a greenish cast. The flavor is delicious, distinctive, a choice table honey! Good white Tupelo, unmixed with other honeys, will not granulate. Due to the high levulose content and low dextrose ratio, diabetic patients have been permitted by their physicians to eat Tupelo honey. It is more expensive than ordinary honey because it costs more to produce. To gain access to the river locations where the honey is produced requires expensive labor and equipment. In order to get fine, unmixed Tupelo honey, colonies must be stripped of all stores just as the white Tupelo bloom begins. The bees must have clean combs in which to place the Tupelo honey. Then the new crop must be removed

quickly before it becomes mixed with additional honey sources. The timing of these operations is critical and years of experience are needed to produce a fine product that can be certified as authentic Tupelo honey. Tupelo honey can be purchased in some local stores and at stands along the Byway. Just watch for the signs!

Fishing

Opportunities for fishing abound along the Byway. There are several fully equipped marinas catering to boaters and fishermen. Charter boats and guides are readily available for offshore, bay, lake, or upriver fishing. Numerous sloughs and streams feed the rivers around this area, creating excellent Bass fishing sites. You will also find that Catfish as well as an endless variety of pan fish — Shellcrackers, Bluegills, and Stumpknockers — are just waiting for you to drop that bait. Spring and early summer are a fly fisherman's heaven. For saltwater anglers there are endless choices, both in the bays and offshore. Some popular inshore species are Spotted Sea Trout, Sheepshead, Flounder, and Redfish. Late fall and early winter is the best time to fish for Sea Trout although they bite all year long. Redfish can be found in some of the same places as Sea Trout. Your best bets are oyster bars at change of tide and the mouths of creeks with oyster bars leading into marshes. Tarpon are found near shore and in bays.

Fishing offshore near artificial and natural reefs you can catch Gag, Black, and Red Grouper. Go farther out to find Amberjack, Cobia, Wahoo, Dolphin, Red Snapper, King and Spanish Mackerel, and countless others.

If you don't have a boat and charters are not for you, try surf fishing along any Byway beach or bay for Flounder, Redfish, Pompano, and even Spanish Mackerel.



When fishing the seagrass flats:

- Do not operate your boat in areas that are too shallow for your equipment
- Use nautical charts and tide tables to plan your course
- Never cut through seagrass beds with a propeller. Watch your prop wash for mud or plant life which may indicate you are too shallow. Remember that prop scars take years to recover
- Pole or use a trolling motor when traveling across or fishing on the flats
- If you run aground, turn off your engine. Raise the motor and push or pole to deeper water, or wait for high tide to move your boat.
- Do not crowd another boat.
- Stirred-up sediments are harmful to sea life. Always keep at least 12 inches of water under your propeller.



Finally, in all cases, be aware of the legal catch limit in Florida and don't forget to file your float plan at a marina or with family or friends before heading out on the water.

Keystone Species: Gopher Tortoise

The Gopher Tortoise (*Gopherus polyphemus*) belongs to a group of land tortoises that originated in western North America nearly 60 million years ago. Gopher Tortoises, or "gophers" as they are commonly called, live in extensive subterranean burrows in dry upland habitats along the Byway. Their habitats include sandhills, xeric Oak hammocks, scrub, Pine flatwoods, dry prairies, and coastal dunes.

Tortoises can also live in man-made environments such as pastures, old fields, and grassy roadsides. To be suitable for Gopher

Tortoises the habitat must have well-drained sandy soils for digging burrows, herbaceous food plants, and open sunny areas for nesting and basking.

The life of a Gopher Tortoise revolves around a tunnel-like burrow that is excavated using its shovel-like front feet. Burrows can be up to 40 feet (12 meters) in length and 10 feet (3 meters) in depth. Each burrow has a single opening and the width of the burrow is approximately equal to the length of the tortoise, allowing the tortoise to turn around at any point within the burrow. Burrow width is a good indicator of the size and approximate age of the tortoise. Gopher Tortoise burrows are usually easy to spot in the landscape because of the characteristic mound of loose sand outside the burrow (called the “apron”) and the shape of the entrance.

Gopher Tortoise burrows remain at a fairly constant temperature and humidity level year-round, thus providing shelter during periods of extreme temperatures, drought, and fire. Tortoise burrows also afford refuge to more than 360 other animal species. The list includes the Indigo Snake, Pine Snake, Gopher Frog, Florida Mouse, Opossum, Armadillo, Burrowing Owl, Gopher Cricket, Scarab Beetle, and many others. Some, such as the Florida Mouse, cannot exist without the tortoise burrow.

Gopher Tortoises feed mainly on low-growing plants that require abundant sunlight. Although grasses and legumes make up the bulk of their diet, Gopher Tortoises eat a large variety of herbaceous plants including Gopher Apple, Pawpaw, Blackberries, Saw Palmetto berries, and other fruits.



Gopher Tortoises can live over 60 years. They grow relatively slowly and growth rates vary by geographic region. For example, along the Byway, female tortoises reach adulthood at 10 to 15 years of age, when the shell length is about nine inches (225-235 millimeters). Adult females are slightly larger than males. Mature male tortoises can usually be distinguished from females by a concave lower shell (plastron).

Gopher Tortoises typically breed from April to June but males may attempt to mate into the late summer or fall. During May and June female tortoises lay 3-15 eggs either in the sand mound in front of the burrow or in another nearby sunny place. The incubation period varies from 80 to 90 days in Florida. A mature female generally produces one clutch of eggs annually. Nest predation can be quite high and an individual female may produce a successful nest as infrequently as once in 10 years. Nest predators include Raccoons, Foxes, Skunks, Armadillos, and Fire Ants.

Hatchling Gopher Tortoises may use an adult burrow or dig a small burrow of their own. Young tortoises are vulnerable to predation until their shell hardens at about 6-7 years of age. Raccoons, Indigo Snakes, Black Bears, and Red-Tailed Hawks, among others, eat hatchlings and young tortoises. Forestry practices such as tree thinning and the use of prescribed fire are beneficial to tortoises. These practices open up the tree canopy and allow sunlight to reach the forest floor with

minimum soil disturbance, thus encouraging the growth of herbaceous grasses and other desirable food plants.



Keystone Species: Red-Cockaded Woodpecker

An endangered species, the Red-Cockaded Woodpecker (RCW) is about 8.5 inches long with a wingspan of about 14 inches. Its back is barred with black and white horizontal stripes. Best viewed in late afternoon in breeding season, the Red-Cockaded

Woodpecker's most distinguishing feature is a black cap and nape that encircle large white cheek patches. The male has a small red streak called a cockade (virtually impossible to see in the field) on each side of its black crown, hence its name. The bird feeds primarily on beetles, ants, roaches, caterpillars, wood-boring insects, spiders, and occasionally fruits and berries.

Red-Cockaded Woodpeckers are a territorial, nonmigratory, cooperative breeding species, frequently having the same mate for several years. The nesting season lasts from April through June. The breeding female lays three to four eggs in the breeding male's roost cavity. Group members incubate the small white eggs for 10 to 12 days. Once hatched the nestlings remain in the nest cavity for about 26 days. Upon fledging the young often remain with the parents, forming groups of up to nine members, but more typically three to four members. There is only one pair of breeding birds within each group and they normally raise only a single brood each year. The other group members, called helpers (usually males from the previous breeding season), help incubate the eggs and raise the young. Juvenile females generally leave the group before the next breeding season in search of solitary male groups.

Historically, this bird's range extended from Florida to New Jersey and Maryland, as far west as Texas and Oklahoma, and inland to Missouri, Kentucky, and Tennessee. Today it is estimated that there are only about 5,000 groups of Red-Cockaded Woodpeckers, or approximately 12,500 birds, from Florida to Virginia and west to southeast Oklahoma and eastern Texas, representing a mere one percent of the bird's original numbers.



The forests along the Byway are home to the largest population of RCWs in the United States. The Red-Cockaded Woodpecker makes its home in mature Pine forests. Longleaf

Pines (*Pinus palustris*) are most commonly preferred, but other species of southern pine are also acceptable. While other woodpeckers bore out cavities in dead trees where the wood is rotten and soft, the RCW is the only one that excavates cavities exclusively in living pine trees. The older pines favored by the Red-Cockaded Woodpecker often suffer from a fungus called red heart disease that attacks the center of the trunk, causing the inner wood, the heartwood, to become soft. Cavities generally take from 1 to 3 years to excavate.

The aggregate of cavity trees is called a cluster and may include one to 20 or more cavity trees on 3 to 60 acres. The average cluster is about 10 acres. Cavity trees that are being actively used have numerous small resin wells that exude sap. The birds keep the sap flowing apparently as a cavity defense mechanism against Rat Snakes and other predators. The size of a particular territory is related to both habitat



suitability and population density.

The Red-Cockaded Woodpecker is considered a "keystone species" because it plays a vital role in the intricate web of life of the southern pine forests. A number of other birds — such as Chickadees, Bluebirds, Titmice, and several other woodpecker species, including the Downy, Hairy, and Red-bellied Woodpecker — as well as small mammals — use the cavities excavated by RCWs. Larger woodpeckers may take over a Red-Cockaded Woodpecker cavity, sometimes enlarging the hole enough to allow Screech Owls, Wood Ducks, and even Raccoons to later move in. Flying Squirrels, several species of reptiles and amphibians, and insects, primarily bees and wasps, also will use Red-Cockaded Woodpecker cavities.

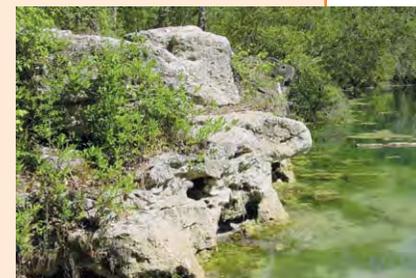
Karst Topography

The area of the Big Bend Scenic Byway is internationally known for its distinctive Karst geologic features. Starting from the Florida-Georgia state line and extending through several counties, the St. Marks Watershed is a dominant geographic, hydrological, and environmental feature of the Byway corridor. Covering 1,170 square miles, the Watershed serves as a drainage basin from north of Tallahassee to the St. Marks River and ultimately to Apalachee Bay.

On the north the area is characterized by hardwood and Cypress rivers and swamps as well as numerous small lakes. On the south the watershed is of global scientific interest for its Karst Topography, running throughout the Woodville Plain. A porous landform, pierced by conduits and channels extending through dissolved limestone, the plain is thinly

covered with low sand hills where water is quickly absorbed. Prominent Karst Topography features, created over millions of years, include sinkholes, sinkhole lakes, disappearing rivers, springs, and underground caverns, which are often filled with water.

Along the Byway corridor these notable features are represented by Wakulla Springs, Shepard's Spring, Cherokee Sink, Leon Sinks, and Natural Bridge, among others. Wakulla Springs is an excellent example of a first-magnitude spring, pouring forth an average of 2,900 gallons of water per second from a vent 140 feet deep. In an ongoing scientific research effort, one of the most advanced in the world, divers have mapped at least 16 caves extending from Wakulla Springs, some with caverns 45 feet high and 120 feet wide, and some 1,800 feet long.



History at a Glance

Prehistory

Evidence of human presence in the area goes back to the Paleoindian Period (15,000 - 8,000 BC) and continues through the Archaic Period (8,000 - 5,000 BC). The earliest people were probably nomadic, moving with the seasons. Eventually people settled and started to farm and trade with neighboring groups. The first Spanish explorers in the region encountered members of the Apalachee tribe, a powerful group that farmed territory along the coastal section of the Byway. Spanish accounts describe an Apalachee town near the coast called Aute. Archaeologists have found ceramics on the south bank of the Wakulla River 1/2 mile east of Wakulla Springs

Lodge, suggesting this was the site of Aute. Included in the find were a few shards of Spanish olive jars very similar to those found in de Soto's campsite in Tallahassee.

1528 - A band of gold-seekers led by Panfilo de Narvaez came north from Tampa Bay in 1528 and were probably the first Europeans to see the land and islands of the Big Bend Scenic Byway. Hernando de Soto followed the footsteps of Narvaez, arriving in 1539 and spending the winter in the Apalachee town of Iniachica, which is now part of Tallahassee.

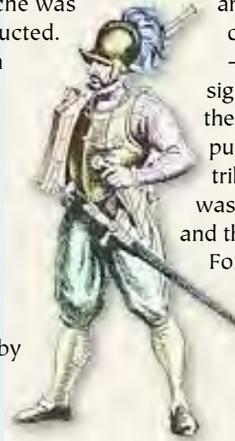
1633 - Franciscan Friars named St. Vincent Island while visiting Apalachee tribes.

1656 - Mission San Luis de Apalache was established as the western capital of the Spanish Mission system in La Florida.



1679 - The first Fort San Marcos de Apalache was constructed.

The juncture of the St. Marks and Wakulla rivers is now the site of a state park and a boat ramp, but it has one of the longest recorded histories of any place in Florida. St. Marks may be third oldest settlement in North America. In 1679 the Spanish started building the site's first fort, using logs painted with lime to look like stone, but pirates weren't fooled by the camouflage. They looted and burned it a few years later. Later forts were occupied by Spanish, British, Spanish again, then (for five weeks) by a force seeking to establish



“The Nation of Muskogee,” and Spanish yet again, before the fort was taken over by Andrew Jackson in 1818. It was passed back to the Spanish one more time before U.S. troops occupied it in 1821. In 1861 it was occupied briefly by the Confederate Army and named Fort Ward. It became part of the United States at the end of the war.

1705 - The first known European settlement in Franklin County was a fort built by the Spanish at the mouth of the Apalachicola River.

1750 - Creeks and Seminoles, offshoots of the Creek Nation, entered the area and inhabited St. Vincent Island.

1763 - The English acquired Florida from Spain through the Treaty of Paris in 1763. England returned Florida to Spain after the American Revolution.

1804 - Fort Prospect Bluff was built on the Apalachicola River by Major Edward Nichols (the site of present-day Fort Gadsden). After Major Nichols left the fort, the reinforced troops at the fort began harassing settlers along the Georgia border. In 1818 the fort was destroyed by a gunboat's well-placed shot into the fort's magazine. That same year Panton, Leslie and Company — traders who did a lot of business with Native Americans — persuaded Creeks and Seminoles to sign over some 1.5 million acres between the Apalachicola and Wakulla Rivers, purportedly to pay off debts incurred by the tribes in the traders' stores. The business was renamed John Forbes and Company and the deal has gone down in history as the Forbes Purchase. In 1819 an American named Colin Mitchell bought the whole thing for \$110,000. Mitchell sold it off in pieces to pay his debts.

1821 - The United States acquired Florida from Spain under the terms of

the Adams-Onis treaty. It was ultimately decided that this treaty did not include the approximately 1.5 million acres of the area claimed by John Forbes and Company as a result of an agreement between the company and Spain to settle debts in the early 1800s.

1827 - The town of Magnolia was founded. The four Hamlin brothers from Augusta, Maine, established the port of Magnolia, where Florida cotton was traded for New England iron goods. Magnolia was built on the west side of the St. Marks River about two miles north of the present-day US 98 bridge at Newport. For a while the town prospered, boasting a customs house, four warehouses, a post office, and a bank, but by 1838 the venture had faded and the town was abandoned. All that remains of Magnolia is a small cemetery where the youngest Hamlin is buried. In the 1830s Daniel Ladd, a nephew of the Hamlin brothers, helped establish the town of Newport on the St. Marks River. It became an economic center with as many as 1,500 inhabitants, a dozen large stores, warehouses, wharves, and stills. Newport became the county seat in 1844. In 1846 the Wakulla Hotel was built next to a sulfur spring and marketed as a health resort for the medicinal quality of the mineral water. The town was seriously damaged during the Civil War. Once Florida's second largest city,



Newport had fewer than 30 residents by 1872. Newport revived for a few years during World War II, when PT boats were built near there.

1828 - The U.S. Congress appropriated \$6,000 for construction of a lighthouse at St. Marks. Despite several false starts, budget increases, and a claim that the contractor had done substandard work, the lighthouse was completed in 1831 and its whale-oil lamp was lit for the first time. By 1842 the structure had to be torn down because its foundation was being undercut by erosion. The lamp was taken apart and then reassembled in a new tower, only to be removed again during the Civil War to prevent its use by Union forces blockading the port of St. Marks. The tower was later rebuilt and the navigational light returned to service after the war. It has served mariners ever since.

1831 - Considered the founding of Apalachicola. By the 1820s a settlement had grown up around the mouth of the Apalachicola River due to the presence of Charles Jenkins, the district's Customs Collector. It was known as Cottonton in 1824 and then incorporated as West Point in



1827. The settlement was given the historical name Apalachicola in 1831. The town suffered major fires in 1833 and 1837. Between 1828 and

1861, 64 steamboats listed Apalachicola as their home port and over twice that number were active on the river system. Over 80% were side-wheelers because they were more powerful and had greater maneuverability.

1832 - Franklin County was created and Apalachicola declared the county seat. Formed from parts of then Gadsden and Washington Counties, the county was named for Benjamin Franklin. Chattahoochee, the first town on the river, was 106 river miles north of Apalachicola. Several warehouses there were owned by Apalachicola merchants. Apalachicola's economic growth depended on southwest Georgia and the Chattahoochee River valley. As Indians were removed from those areas, settlers planted crops such as cotton and Apalachicola became their port of shipment.

1833 - A lighthouse standing 65 feet tall was built at West Pass. The lighthouse was moved to Cape St. George in December 1848 but was destroyed by a hurricane in 1851. That lighthouse was rebuilt in 1852 at a location farther inland (now on Little St. George Island).

1835 - The Apalachicola Land Company was organized. The U.S. Supreme Court ruled that the land in the Forbes Purchase was private. The now land-owning parties involved organized the Apalachicola Land Company. Because of the uncertainties surrounding land titles and taxes in the areas encompassing the Forbes Purchase, which included Apalachicola, many business investors looked to St. Joseph as a safer place to invest money and develop businesses. The lands of the Forbes Purchase, which extended from the Apalachicola River into Wakulla County, were regarded as poor since they were not suitable for agriculture and had no minerals. Over the next few decades the Apalachicola Land Company had to give up much of its land to pay county taxes.

1836 - St. Joseph was incorporated. The citizens of St. Joseph wanted the city to become the county seat of what was then Franklin County. However, by the summer of 1841, St. Joseph was deserted due to hurricanes in the late 1830s and a yellow fever epidemic early in 1841. In 1836 the Apalachicola Land Company dredged Apalachicola Harbor. The federal government also appropriated money in the 1830s to remove obstructions from the Apalachicola River and to deepen the channel in the Bay and St. George Sound.

1837 - The Tallahassee-St. Marks Railroad was completed. The Tallahassee-St. Marks Railroad was chartered in 1834 and in operation by 1836, placing it among the first railroads in Florida. It was operated by mule and later converted for use by steam engines. The line was extended to Port Leon in 1839, but the town was destroyed by a hurricane in 1843. The railroad remained in operation for 147 years. In 1984 its railbed became the Tallahassee-St. Marks Historic Railroad State Trail.

1838 - Port Leon was founded, following the demise of Magnolia. The site was about 3 miles south of the present town of St. Marks in what is now the St. Marks National Wildlife Refuge. Territorial Governor Richard Call extended the Tallahassee-St. Marks rail line to Port Leon in 1839. Port Leon became the county seat of Wakulla but was destroyed by a hurricane and storm surge on March 11, 1843, and its residents moved upriver to Newport.

1839 - Fort Braden was established as a military outpost during the Second Seminole War.

1830-40 - Episcopalians, Methodists, Baptists,

and Catholics organized churches in Apalachicola. The Trinity Episcopal Church at 6th Avenue and Avenue D was built in New York. It was cut into pieces sailed around the Florida Keys before being erected on its present site in 1836.

1843 - Wakulla County was established.

1845 - Dr. John L. Crawford arrived in Wakulla County. A Georgia native, he practiced medicine and farmed for many years. Dr. Crawford was elected to the Florida House of Representatives and Senate, and he served as Florida's Secretary of State for 20 years. (His son succeeded him and served for 29 years.) In 1866 the county seat was moved from Newport to Crawfordville, which was named in his honor. Dr. Crawford is buried in the Old City Cemetery in Tallahassee.



1840-59 - The citizens of Apalachicola suffered from repeated damaging hurricanes in 1842, 1844, 1850, 1851, and 1856. The town also battled major fires in 1842 and 1857. Apalachicola had a number of banks as well as a local library association chartered in 1840. Apalachicola became the third largest port on the Gulf Coast after New Orleans and Mobile. Oysters begin to be harvested for commercial purposes. John Gorrie (inventor of the ice machine that was a forerunner of air conditioning) and Alvin W. Chapman (botanist) were two residents of Apalachicola with international reputations. Apalachicola had private schools in the 1840s. The Apalachicola Academy opened in 1848.

1851 - Construction of the Plank Road started. The Georgia and Florida Plank Road Company planned Plank Road to connect Newport with southern Georgia. It got only as far as Leon County, however.

1860 - Franklin County by now had four "common schools." Robert Floyd purchased St. Vincent Island in 1858 from the Apalachicola Land Company.

Pre-Civil War - On the eve of the Civil War, Apalachicola was the sixth largest town in Florida with 1,906 residents. The city of Apalachicola grew rapidly because of its location at the mouth of the river. In 1860 the city's Chamber of Commerce declared: "We do more business than each and every portion of the State put together." But while Apalachicola received 80% of the cotton produced in its river drainage in



1850, that figure had declined to 43% by the end of the decade. In the South the economy was expanding with competition from Columbus, from the railroad, and new textile mills. The economy of Apalachicola and Franklin County was not diversified. For example, there were only three farmers in the 1860 census and there was no industrial economy at all. The fishing industry had great potential but there was no export market at the time, only local.

Civil War (1861-65) -

Florida's Civil War Militia was established on February 14, 1861 and the Confederate Congress's Army on March 6, 1861. The Union imposed a blockade on the area from St. George Island to St. Marks Lighthouse. Despite the blockade some vessels did enter and leave without Union interception. Governor Milton called Apalachicola the first line of defense for the interior of Florida and wanted more Confederate troops and supplies in 1862 since state troops were to be dissolved by March 10, 1862. When the troops left, many of the town's residents went into Georgia and Alabama.



During the Civil War the entire coastal area of the Florida Panhandle was a zone of engagement between Union and Confederate forces over four basic issues: shipping access, salt production, arms manufacture, and mullet fishing, all of which were of fundamental importance to the South. The Union blockade was aimed to halt, confiscate, or destroy shipments of cotton, turpentine, lumber, and other products to undercut the South's economy. Today it is difficult to appreciate the critical importance of salt as a food preservative in an era when there was no refrigeration and hundreds of thousands of troops to be fed. But

Confederate saltworks along the St. Marks River, in Dickerson and Ochlockonee Bays, at Shell Point, and elsewhere in Wakulla County were prime military targets. In 1864 a Union raiding party, supported by shelling from the USS Tahoma, attacked and destroyed “seven miles” of saltworks on the St. Marks River as well as at Goose Creek and Shell Point. The destruction included “455 salt kettles, 95 sheet-iron boilers, and 268 brick furnaces,” comprising an estimated loss of \$2 million to the South (salt sold for \$12.50 a bushel at that time). A foundry and machine shop at Newport, manufacturing shot and shell, was a major target for Union forces but evaded attack because the Federals overestimated the number of Confederate forces there and did not land troops. Mullet fishing, long a traditional source of food and barter in the Panhandle, also is easy to undervalue today as a military resource. But the sizes of mullet runs at area seineyards were impressive. One eyewitness reported mullet being caught at Shell Point in such quantities that “40 barrels were brought in with one pull of the seine.” It is not surprising that Union forces frequently raided these valuable fisheries, including an attack in October 1864 on a seineyard and fishery on Mashas Island that reportedly destroyed fish houses, dwellings, salt kettles, a large seine, and several fishing vessels.

1865 - Battle of Natural Bridge. In March 1865 Union forces tried to capture Tallahassee by attacking from the south. To get to Tallahassee the troops had to cross the St. Marks River at the “natural bridge” where the river disappears underground. Warned about the attack, a small Confederate force was mustered



from the citizenry of Tallahassee and prevented Union forces from crossing the bridge despite three attempts. The Battle of Natural Bridge is re-enacted every year at the site.

Post-Civil War (1865-70)

- In this period development in Apalachicola was limited by few and inadequate roads, dwindling water transportation for commerce, and a total lack of railroads. Some attributed the difficulties to an unimproved port and a lack of consistent channel depth. But others believed a bigger problem was the completion of the Atlantic and Gulf Railroad to Bainbridge, Georgia. This railroad connected the heart of the Apalachicola-Flint-Chattahoochee River basin directly to Savannah, Georgia, diverting cotton that otherwise would have been bound for shipment from Apalachicola. In 1868 George Hatch bought St. Vincent Island at an auction for \$3,000. Hatch's grave is the only marked grave on the island.

1868 - After the Civil War the town of St. Marks resumed its flourishing trade, but in 1868 the business portion of the town was destroyed by fire. Six large warehouses, a wharf, several ice houses, and a steam cotton press were destroyed and never rebuilt.

1870s - Beginning in 1873 hurricanes and freezing weather destroyed warehouses and local citrus trees around Apalachicola and the town began a gradual decline in prosperity. A fire at the courthouse destroyed many of Franklin County's land records, including any source title for St. George Island. With no farming or industrial economy, the lumber industry was revived in 1870. One of the first was the Pennsylvania Tie Company, which made railroad ties from cypress logs. Demand for timber revived the drive to make Apalachicola a deep-water port. Beginning in 1882 money was spent to deepen East Pass and develop a deeper



and wider channel entrance from the Bay into Apalachicola's wharves. A good harbor entrance from the Gulf still did not exist through West Pass. From the late 1870s until the 1900s James N. Coombs was one of the most important men in the lumber industry and one of the wealthiest men in the Apalachicola area.

1875 - St. Teresa was founded on St. James Island by Dr. Phavious Byrd. Also in 1875 a farmer by the name of Cebe Tate,

armed only with a shotgun and accompanied by his hunting dogs, journeyed into the swamp in search of a panther that was killing his livestock. Although there are several versions of this story, the most common one describes Tate as being lost in the swamp for seven days and nights, bitten by a snake, and drinking from the murky waters to curb his thirst. Finally he came to a clearing near Carrabelle, living only long enough to murmur the words, “My name is Cebe Tate, and I just came from Hell!” Ever since the area has been known as Tate's Hell, a legendary and forbidden swamp.

Late 1870s - An intensive effort to harvest the oyster beds in Apalachicola Bay began. Among the prominent oystering companies were John C. Messina and Company, Yent and Alexander, John Miller, and Joseph Segras.

1880 - Franklin County's population was 1,791, but still below the 1860 population of 1,904. There was no sewer system or street lights and few people had wagons or buggies.

1881 - Horace H. Humphries bought one-third of St. George Island for \$21,000.

1885 - John G. Ruge and his brother established

the Ruge Brothers Canning Company. They became Florida's first successful commercial oyster packers by using pasteurization. C.L. Storrs and R.F. Fowler operated a sawmill at the site of present-day Carrabelle. By 1890 the town was the center of a growing naval stores industry, with many turpentine stills located between the Storrs-Fowler sawmill and Apalachicola.

1893 -The town of Carrabelle was incorporated and construction on the Georgia, Florida, and Alabama Railroad began. The settlement of Carrabelle actually began in 1855. The mouth of the Carrabelle River had excellent fishing, so hunters and fishermen used the river's east bank for their outings. By 1855 a few decided to make their residence permanent. Oliver Kelley was the man chiefly responsible for Carrabelle's growth. Kelley moved to the area in the late 1870s and recognized its potential for a harbor. In 1877 Kelley bought 1,920 acres of land near there. His niece was Carrie Hall, and she was considered the "belle" of the local community, so Kelley named the new town Rio Carrabelle. Carrabelle became a center for lumber and the emerging seafood industry, reaching a population of 923 in 1900.



1894 - The Wakulla County Courthouse was completed. The county's original courthouse was destroyed by an arsonist in 1892 and its replacement — a wooden three-story building finished in 1894 — still stands. Cattle, pigs, and goats populated the square on which the building stood and a litter of pigs was born under the steps of the building in 1940. When the current courthouse was completed shortly after World War II, the original courthouse was moved on wooden rollers 500 feet to the south. The old courthouse now houses the Wakulla County Chamber of Commerce and is included in the

National Register of Historic Places as the only wooden courthouse in the state still standing.

1894-95 - The towns of Sopchoppy and Panacea were founded. Like many Florida place names of Native American origin, the original meaning of "Sopchoppy" is not known for certain. The most popular interpretation is "dark water river" but some believe it comes from Creek words meaning

"long" and "twisted," and others think it's a corruption of another Creek word for "Red Oak." (Although not terribly long, the Sopchoppy

River is both twisted and dark.) The town was surveyed in 1895 for the Georgia, Florida, and Alabama Railroad. John Calhoun, the surveyor, is said to be the founder of Sopchoppy. By 1910 Sopchoppy was the largest incorporated town in the county, serving the settlements of Greenough, Ashmore, Smith Creek, Sanborn, and Buckhorn. In 1895 W.C. Tully founded Panacea, named for the healing properties of its mineral springs, estimated to number up to 20. He also built the Panacea Mineral Springs Hotel, which held 125 guests. It was burned to the ground in the 1920s. Another large hotel was the Bay View Inn on Dickerson Bay. The Inn was torn down in the 1950s. Panacea prospered during World War II thanks to U.S. Army Camp Gordon Johnston located in neighboring Franklin County.

1895 - The Crooked River Lighthouse, originally authorized in 1889, was completed. This was also the height of the sponge industry in Apalachicola. The local sponge trade was the third largest in the state in 1895. Apalachicola had two sponge



warehouses and approximately 100 men employed in this industry.

1898 - Eastpoint was established as an experimental colony by the Brown family. They were one of a group of families from Nebraska who set up a cooperative colony with all profits being shared. They were engaged in farming, seafood, lumber, and manufacturing.

1900 - Fire destroyed the Apalachicola business district. On May 25, 1900, a fire broke out in a kitchen in Apalachicola. Spreading quickly, the fire burned 71 buildings, including almost all of the business section of Apalachicola. Many of these businesses could not rebuild. Some believe it was this fire that forced a change in the industry focus in Apalachicola from lumbering to oysters, shrimping, and associated seafood processing. Today Franklin County's economy continues to be heavily dependent on those same industries, although second homes and vacation rentals are playing increasingly important roles in the County's economy as well.



1900 - 1910 - Electricity came to Apalachicola.

The Central and Franklin Hotels were opened in 1907. The Franklin Hotel was renamed as the Gibson Inn in 1923 after being purchased by Annie Gibson Hayes and Mary Ellen Gibson, and is still in operation today. There was a large increase in timber traffic, rising from \$2 million in 1898 to over \$13 million by 1903, a 700% increase. In 1903 the Apalachicola Northern Railroad was chartered and the first train steamed into Apalachicola on April 30, 1907. The Lanark Village area was promoted by the Georgia, Florida, and Alabama Railroad as a fashionable resort for Georgians. A number bought lots by

1905. By the early 20th century the oyster was an important part of the county's economy. In 1908 Dr. Ray Pierce purchased St. Vincent Island and invested \$60,000 to import Old World game animals, including Sambar Deer. The island remained in his estate after his death in 1914 until 1948.

**1910 -
1917** - The first movie theater in



Apalachicola, the Dreamland, opened. The St. George Island Company was formed by George W. Saxon from Tallahassee. He was a successful businessman/banker who believed in the possibilities of Franklin County. He founded the Capital City Bank in 1895 in Tallahassee and established a Capital City Bank branch in Apalachicola as well. A bayside wharf was built and in 1911 a small hotel called the Club House was built on St. George Island. Some lots on the island sold for \$250 but very few cottages were built at this time. Seeing little progress, Saxon decided to sell St. George Island in 1916. In April 1913 the Dixie Theatre opened. Apalachicola established the city commission form of government in 1914. The fishing and oystering industries ranked second in Franklin only to lumbering, and the county was the state's leading producer of oysters. The winter Mardi Gras of 1915 marked the first appearance of King Retsyo for Oyster Day as well as the first airplane takeoff and landing in Apalachicola's history. In January 1917 William L. Popham, a Baptist preacher, lecturer, and author, first appeared

in Apalachicola to preach at a local Methodist church. He dominated events at St. George Island and Apalachicola through the 1930s. Popham started several organizations to promote real estate and oysters in Franklin County and is one of the most controversial men in Franklin County history.

1915 - The Wakulla Beach community, also known as East Goose Creek, was founded. It was widely known as a goose and duck hunters' paradise. Henry N. Walker, Sr., owner and operator of the *Wakulla Times* and a prominent merchant, rancher and politician who served four terms as state senator, was the developer. A series of three hotels were built there beginning in 1915. It is said to have been Florida's first subdivision, although it never attracted residents in any number. Senator Walker's son George R. Walker managed the family's Wakulla Beach business interests for years, including commercial mullet fishing, which employed many workers from the nearby Hyde Park community.

1920-30 - By the 1920s shrimpers had shifted their primary base of operation in Florida from Fernandina Beach to Franklin County and Apalachicola. The industry was founded by a Sicilian immigrant around 1900. On October 1, 1920, William Popham established the Oyster Growers' Co-Operative Association to plant, harvest, handle, and process oysters. He quickly sold 1000 shares in the business and tied the future of the association to acquiring St. George Island. By the late summer of 1921 the association was capitalized at \$425,000 and Popham bought the Island for a total of \$27,224.50. In 1920 beef cattle grown on St. Vincent Island were sold to Apalachicola markets. In November 1923 Popham was elected mayor of Apalachicola. In 1924 Popham and his associates were indicted on eight counts of mail fraud and convicted on January 21, 1925. He was paroled after serving less than two years of his four-year sentence. From 1927-30 the

seafood industry remained the primary industry in Franklin County. Apalachicola had 16 seafood and packing plants operating at full force. In 1930 the Intracoastal Waterways were opened.

1925 - Wakulla Springs, together with 270 acres of land, was purchased by Jacksonville real estate developer George T. Christie for \$14,000. Christie promoted it as a tourist attraction with glass-bottom boats, a diving tower, and a large pier. In August 1930 Christie's employees found mastodon bones in the spring run and he called in the Florida Geological Survey to help excavate them. A nearly complete skeleton was assembled, the first ever recovered in Florida, and is now on display in the Museum of Florida History in Tallahassee.



1930-40 - In November 1935 a bridge was opened, connecting St. George Island with the mainland. The bridge was 6.5 miles long. In 1935 an extreme drought in the Apalachicola River basin created a shortage of fresh water flow into the bay. The increased salinity decimated several big oyster bars. By 1937 only six seafood processing plants remained in operation in Apalachicola. Ownership of St. George Island passed to William H. Wilson, the brother-in-law of W.C. Hodges, a state senator. In 1940 the first oyster lease was granted on St. Vincent. The Pierce Estate sold its first pine saw timber. St. Joe Lumber Company built a temporary bridge to St. Vincent Island for timber removal.

1934 - Wakulla Springs was bought by Edward Ball, brother-in-law of Alfred I. du Pont. The purchase price is not known. Ball eventually owned almost 4,000 acres around the springs

and along the Wakulla River. He built the Wakulla Springs Lodge, which opened in 1937, and constructed a bulkhead and a white sand beach at the springs. The lodge, which is listed on the National Register of Historic Places, cost more than \$75,000 and incorporates Spanish-Moorish



as well as Art Deco motifs. The extensive cypress ceiling of the main lobby of the Lodge is covered with hand-painted murals, reportedly the work of a German immigrant, John Piplack, who worked locally as house painter and gardener. The lodge is now owned by the State of Florida and operated as part of Wakulla Springs State Park.

World War II - The response of Apalachicola residents to the war was overwhelming. Franklin County was one of three counties in the United States whose volunteer enlistments exceeded its quota in the first two drafts. Camp Gordon Johnston, originally named Camp Carrabelle, was established in Franklin County and was home to 30,000 military personnel, training an estimated 250,000 troops for the D-Day invasion of Normandy. The camp stretched from Alligator Point to Carrabelle and included Lanark, St. Teresa, Dog Island, and St. George Island. It was the second largest military installation in Florida. By 1948 most of the buildings had been demolished and the lands transferred back to private ownership. The former officers' family quarters are in the Lanark Village Retirement Community. In 1942 the U.S. Government took control of St. George Island for the duration of the war, using it for gunnery

practice and amphibious warfare.

Post-World War II - Florida's first livestock fencing law was enacted in 1949. Prior to this time the "open range" rule allowed cattle and other livestock to roam free throughout the state. According to local stories, it was not uncommon to see cows grazing in the Wakulla River and even, in the winter when forage was scarce, diving under water to feed on river grass. Also in 1949 the GF&A Railroad was abandoned, and in 1993 work began to convert the old railbed to a bicycle and hiking trail.

The Loomis brothers bought St. Vincent Island for \$140,000 and imported Zebras, Elands, Black Bucks, Ring-Necked Pheasants, Asian jungle fowl, Bobwhite Quail and Semi-Wild Turkey. In 1968 St. Vincent was purchased by The Nature Conservancy for \$2.2 million. The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service repaid The Conservancy with money from Duck Stamp sales and established the St. Vincent National Wildlife Refuge.

The western third of St. George, called Little St. George, was divided by a passage (New Inlet or West Gap) maintained by hurricanes. In 1957 the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers made it permanent with Bob Sikes Cut, about three miles east of New Inlet. From 1970 on, the area of St. George Island and Apalachicola became the focus of a struggle between those wanting to preserve the area in its natural state (e.g., environmentalists and people associated with the seafood industry) and those wanting to provide more human amenities in the area (e.g., developers and owners of travel-related



businesses such as restaurants and motels).

On February 16, 2004, the Bryant Patton (St. George Island) Bridge was completed and opened. The new bridge is the third longest in Florida and the longest in North Florida.

2002-05 - Research is continuing on the source of Wakulla Springs' waters. Using dyes to trace the path of underground water flows, scientists have mapped the connections between sinkholes, disappearing streams, and the Springs in an effort to establish the source of increasing nitrate pollution of the once pristine waters. Divers from the Woodville Karst Plain Project have explored and mapped miles of the caverns and conduits that bring water to the spring.

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Visitor's Questionnaire

Please complete this brief survey to assist in future planning for the Scenic Byway. As a token of our appreciation we would like to send you, in return, a free 8-minute DVD entitled *FireForests of the Big Bend Scenic Byway*. A great memento of your visit, this video captures much of the beauty and history of the Byway and explains the crucial role of prescribed fire for habitat preservation. Even if you do not wish to have the DVD, we would still greatly value your responses to these questions. The completed questionnaire should be mailed to: **Wakulla Welcome Center, 1493 Coastal Highway, Panacea, FL 32346**. Thank you!

How long was your visit? _____. Was this a repeat trip? ____ Yes ____ No. How many people were with you? _____ .

What ages were they? ____ 1 mo.-5 yrs. ____ 6-12 yrs. ____ 13-21 yrs. ____ 22-35 yrs. ____ 36-45 yrs. ____ 46-60 yrs. ____ 60-80 yrs. ____ 81 and older

Which city/cities did you stay in? _____ .

What facilities did you stay in? _____ .

Did you find *The Guide* helpful? ____ Yes ____ No How could it be improved? _____ .

Did you see anything on the Byway that wasn't in *The Guide*, but you think should be? _____ .

Did you visit the Coastal Trail? ____ Yes ____ No Did you visit the Forest Trail? ____ Yes ____ No

What did you do on your visit (fishing, birding, swimming, hiking, etc.)? _____ .

Did you use an outfitter or guide on your trip? ____ Yes ____ No What services did they provide? _____ .

What did you like most about the Byway? _____ .

What improvements to the Byway would you like to see? _____ .

Did you have any unique experiences on the Byway that you would like to share (such as seeing a bear)? _____ .

_____ .

How did you find out about the Byway? _____ .

What are your most favorite sites on the Byway and why? _____ .

_____ .

What are your least favorite sites on the Byway and why? _____ .

_____ .

_____ .



Which part of the Byway was the most scenic? _____ .

How was the service at the places you stopped? ___ Excellent ___ Good ___ Poor. Were people friendly and helpful? _____ Yes ___ No

Were the sites clean? ___ Yes ___ No Were the signs, maps, information clear? _____ .

How would you rate the food in restaurants? ___ Excellent ___ Very Good ___ Average ___ Poor

Did you buy anything on the Byway? ___ Yes ___ No If yes, what? _____ .

Please estimate how much money you spent traveling the Byway. I/We spent approximately _____ dollars on my/our Byway visit.

Would you recommend the Byway to others? ___ Yes ___ No

Other comments? _____

Thank You!

Please send ___ do not send ___ the DVD *FireForests of the Big Bend Scenic Byway*.

Name _____ Address _____

City _____ State _____ Country _____

Zip _____ Phone _____ Email _____





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