



# Biking

## GUIDE

*Visit Natural*  
**NORTH FLORIDA**

2016 Edition

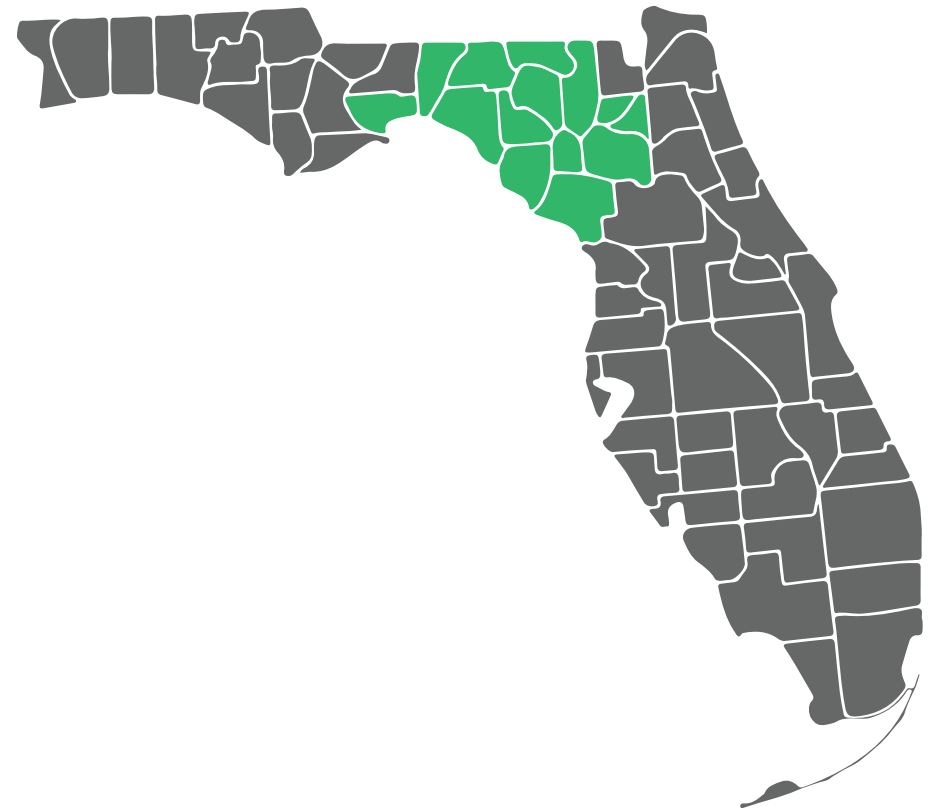
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# VISIT NATURAL NORTH FLORIDA



# INTRODUCTION

## Where is Natural North Florida?

Natural North Florida is the northern part of the state between Tallahassee and Jacksonville, but includes neither. Rather, it is the area in-between. Its largest city, Gainesville, is home of the University of Florida. The region consists of 13 counties encompassing approximately 9,000 square miles/23,300 square kilometers and includes the towns of Monticello (the Florida Monticello) and Sopchoppy (yes, Sopchoppy!) to the west, Cedar Key to the south, Starke to the east, and Jennings to the north. We are located approximately 75 miles/120 kilometers west of Jacksonville and approximately 50 miles/80 kilometers east of Tallahassee. Tampa and Orlando are approximately 100 miles/160 kilometers to the south while Atlanta, Georgia is approximately 300 miles/480 kilometers to the north. More information about Natural North Florida can be found at [www.vnnf.org](http://www.vnnf.org).

## Bicycling in Natural North Florida

Bicycling has been popular in Natural North Florida for many years. The climate allows for year-round bicycling and flat topography makes for easy bicycling and fast times. The popularity of bicycling in the area is evidenced by the existence of three bicycle clubs, the **Gainesville Cycling Club** (<http://gccla.org/>), the **Suwannee Bicycle Association** ([www.suwanneebike.org](http://www.suwanneebike.org)), and the **Capital City Cyclists** (<http://cccyclists.org/>), the **Tallahassee Mountain Bike Association** (<http://tmba.bike/>). Also based in Gainesville is the **Florida Bicycle Association** (<http://floridabicycle.org/>), which organizes rides throughout the state. Gainesville, Florida regularly appears in lists of the top bicycle-friendly cities in the nation (see <http://bit.ly/1HUaUiU>). Additionally, the region has several grade-separated bicycle trails.

Therefore, Visit Natural North Florida has developed this series of bicycle routes to acquaint visitors with bicycling opportunities within the region. In developing the routes, Visit Natural North Florida consulted with local bicycle riders, Bike Florida, local bicycle clubs, and local governments.

## Integration with the Ride with GPS Cell Phone App

You can join the club at <http://bit.ly/2c00Del>. In order to join the club and download the app, it is necessary to become a member of [www.RideWithGPS.com](http://www.RideWithGPS.com). The organization has a free membership category which allows you to join the club, download the cell phone app, and download club routes to the cell phone app or to a GPS device.

It may be possible to view the routes on the cell phone app without joining Ride With GPS. However, we recommend joining the club so that you can download maps to your cell phone and/or bicycle GPS device. Otherwise, should cell phone coverage be lost while riding, the route map appearing on your screen may be lost as well!

## The Routes

The guide contains 28 routes, 26 of which are designed to be completed in a single day. However, many of the single-day routes can be divided into two-day trips with overnight camping/lodging options available. In addition to the single-day routes, the guide contains two multi-day routes: Florida's Big Bend Coastal Route and the Grand North Florida Tour. These two routes are generally comprised from the single-day routes which have been stitched together to form a single, continuous multi-day route.

The two multi-day routes are not segmented by day. Rather, given significant differences in the abilities of riders, it is left up to them to determine how many miles can be ridden in a day and to plan overnight stays accordingly.

The routes are available through the Visit Natural North Florida website. Please visit us at [www.vnnf.org/bikeguide](http://www.vnnf.org/bikeguide). The website provides maps, elevations, cue sheets and descriptions. It also provides an opportunity to download a pdf copy of this guide, to leave comments, and to rate the routes.

These routes represent the region's most interesting attractions and the best available routes to reach them. The featured attractions are the best of what Visit Natural North Florida has to offer. They feature interesting scenery, springs and rivers, state parks, state forests, national wildlife refuges, small towns as well as lodging/camping opportunities. Some of the routes are grade-separated trails. However, most are rideable road shoulders on paved roadways where riders should expect automobiles and truck traffic. They avoid the busiest roads and minimize the use of limerock/dirt roads, but a few sections busy roads and limerock/dirt roads are used as they represent the best, or sometimes only, route available. Generally, the route descriptions note the presence of unpaved roads and recommend work-arounds or alternative routes for those who wish to avoid them. For families with children, it is best to stick with the grade-separated trails featured in this guide.

Most of the routes average between 50 to 60 miles in length. Users can start at different points than those suggested, or only ride that portion of a route as desired. Some of the routes provide suggested side trips. Such side trips can always be ignored to compensate for time and distance limitations.

Cell phone coverage can be spotty to non-existent in rural areas, particularly along the coast when away from U.S. Highway 98. We suggest printing the maps, cue sheets and route descriptions and taking them with on your ride. If relying on GPS devices or cell phones, battery charging devices are recommended to keep such devices from running out of battery before running out of route!

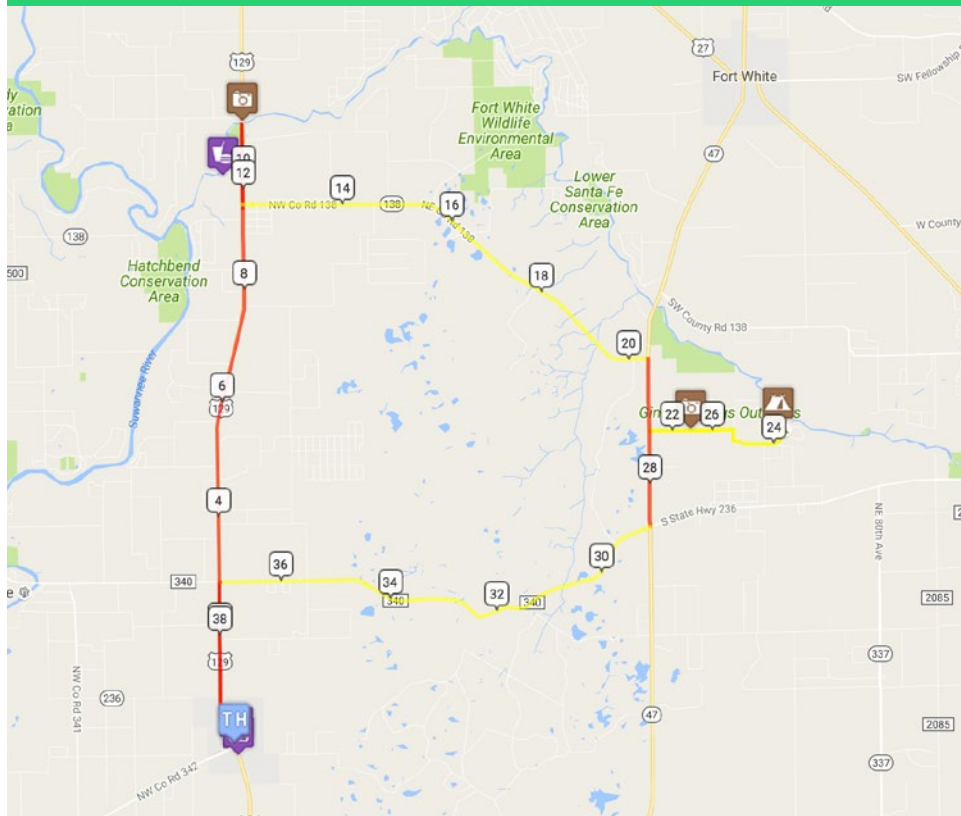
The route segments are classified as to whether they are a grade-separated multi-use path (in blue), a paved road (red), or a limerock/dirt road (light green). Curiously, the different route segment colors do not appear on maps viewed on the cell phone app (only red is visible). This important piece of information is another good reason for printing route maps from either the Visit Natural North Florida website or from the Visit Natural North Florida Bicycle Club account on Ride With GPS.

## Disclaimer

The Original Florida Tourism Task Force (dba Visit Natural North Florida) and the North Central Florida Regional Planning Council do not warrant the safety of the routes on this map for use by bicyclists. Bicyclists should use these routes only if they have the adequate skill level as bicyclists, and bicyclists must make that determination. All the roads shown are used by automobiles and trucks, and bicyclists assume the risks for their own safety when using the roads and/or routes indicated on this map. The Original Florida Tourism Task Force, the local governments in which these bicycle routes are located and the North Central Florida Regional Planning Council are not responsible for any damages whatsoever from its use.

# BELL LOOP

BELL, FL



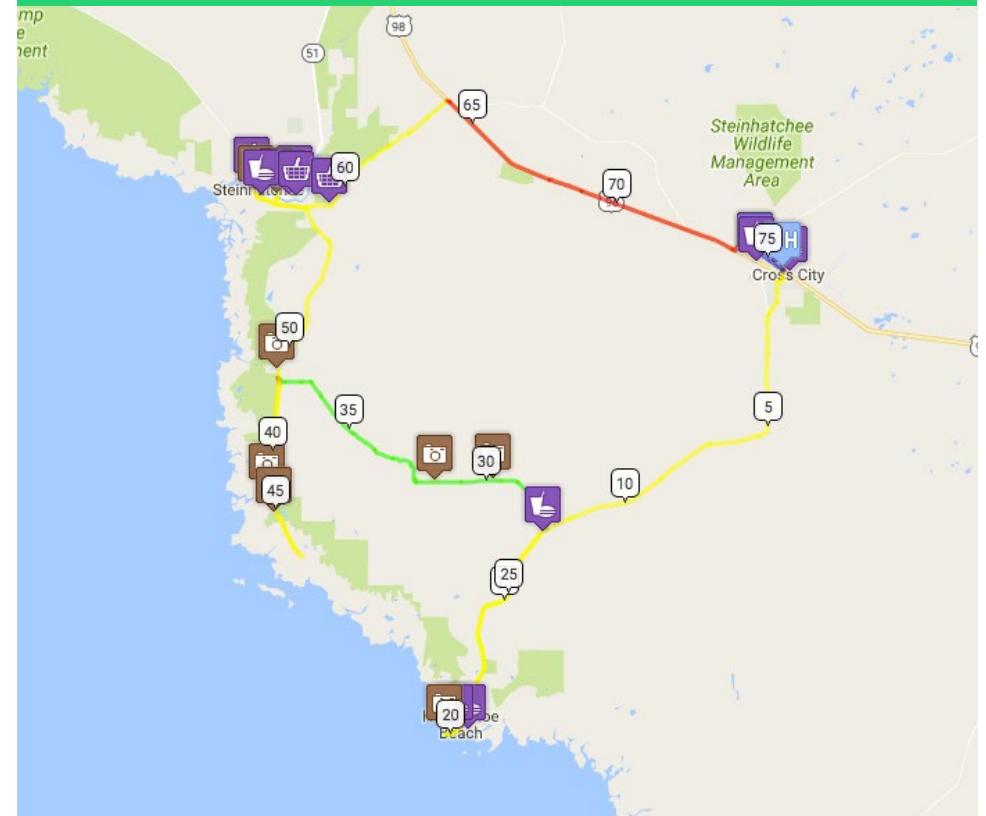
## Overview

**Distance**  
39.9 Miles

A quick tour of Gilchrist County. The rider will experience Waccasassa Flats - the wildlife-rich lakes and wetlands that span the entire length of Gilchrist County - in addition to open farmlands, forest, a few gentle rollers and the Santa Fe River. The route also provides a side trip to Ginnie Springs. In Bell, chow down on great BBQ with a varied menu at Akins, and burgers made the old-fashioned way at Burger Spot. Paved route.

# BOWLEGS MAINLINE LOOP

CROSS CITY, FL



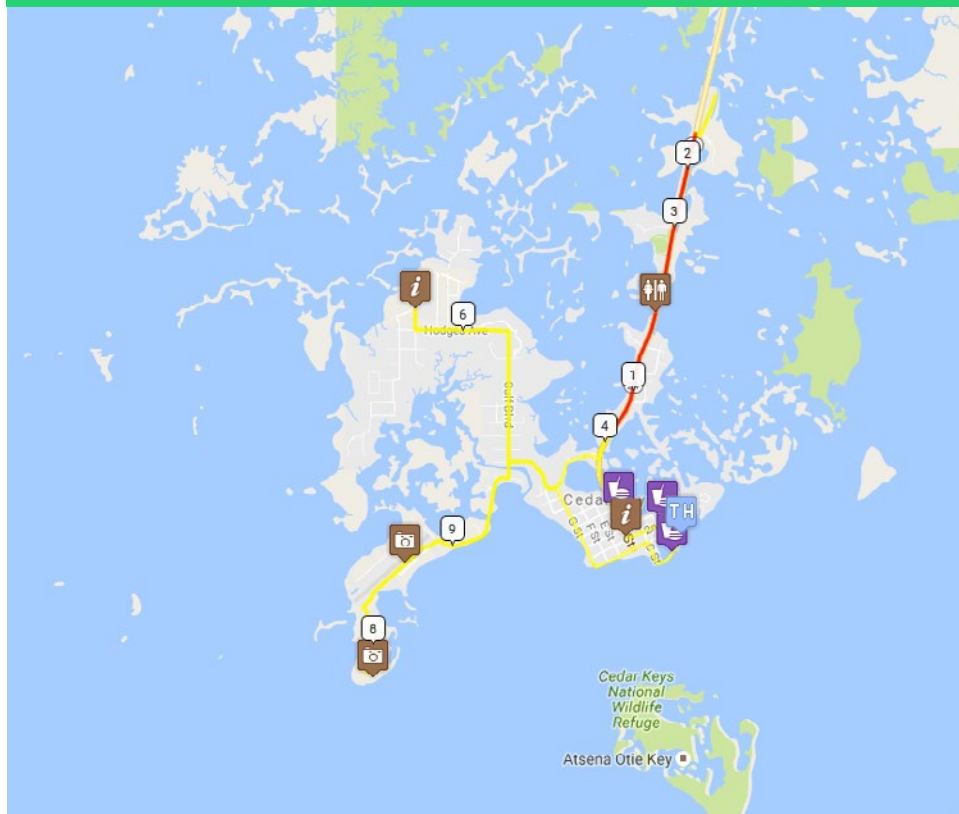
## Overview

**Distance**  
75.6 Miles

This route features Horseshoe Beach, home to a small town with restaurants and beautiful views - stop for a bite to eat at The Shrimp Boat restaurant or a cold drink at Horseshoe Beach Marina. Enjoy coastal marshes and saltwater wetlands along Dixie County Road 361, the scenic Steinatchee River, and Cross City's restaurants before or after completing the loop. Several convenience stores offer food and restrooms. Spotty cell coverage; some sections unpaved.

# CEDAR KEY

CEDAR KEY, FL



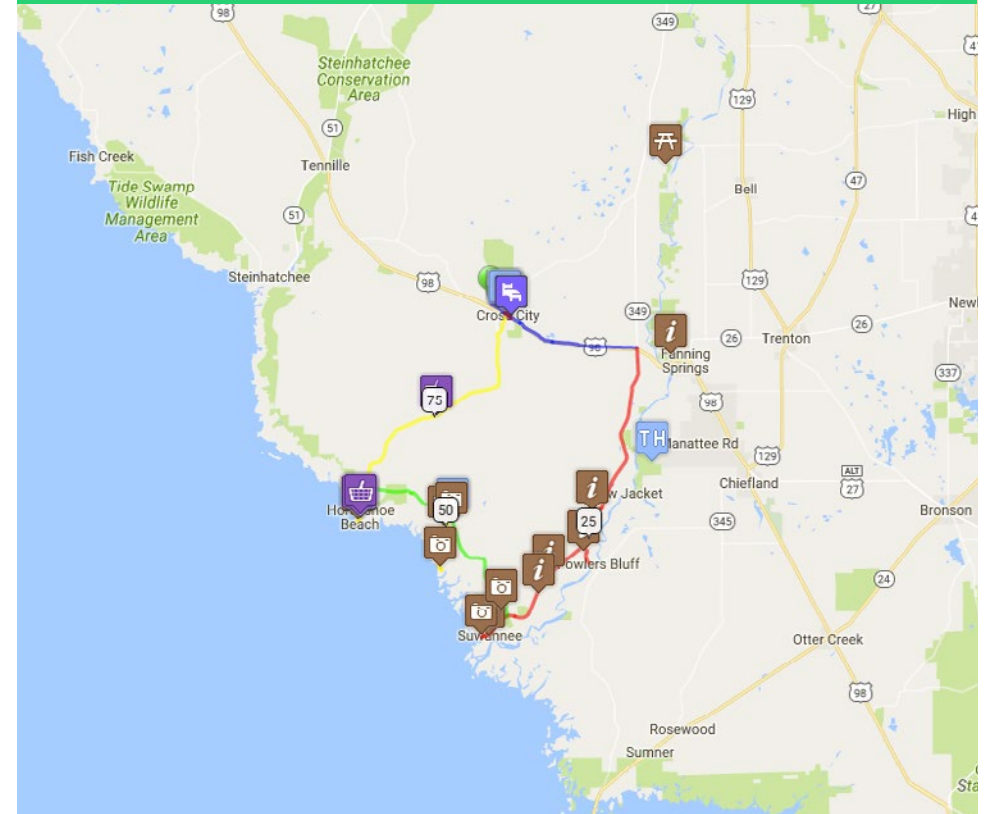
## Overview

This route made BikeFlorida.net's Top Ten! Although a specific route isn't necessary to enjoy Cedar Key, this paved route includes beautiful scenic viewpoints (Piney Point and the Levy County Fishing Pier). The town of Cedar Key offers additional points of interest including a museum and historical home depicting life in the early 1900s, a canoe launch point, trails for wildlife viewing, a cafe, a seafood restaurant, a local art gallery, and artisan shops for jewelry, gifts, and handmade goods.

**Distance**  
10.7 Miles

# CROSS CITY MAINLINE LOOP

CROSS CITY, FL



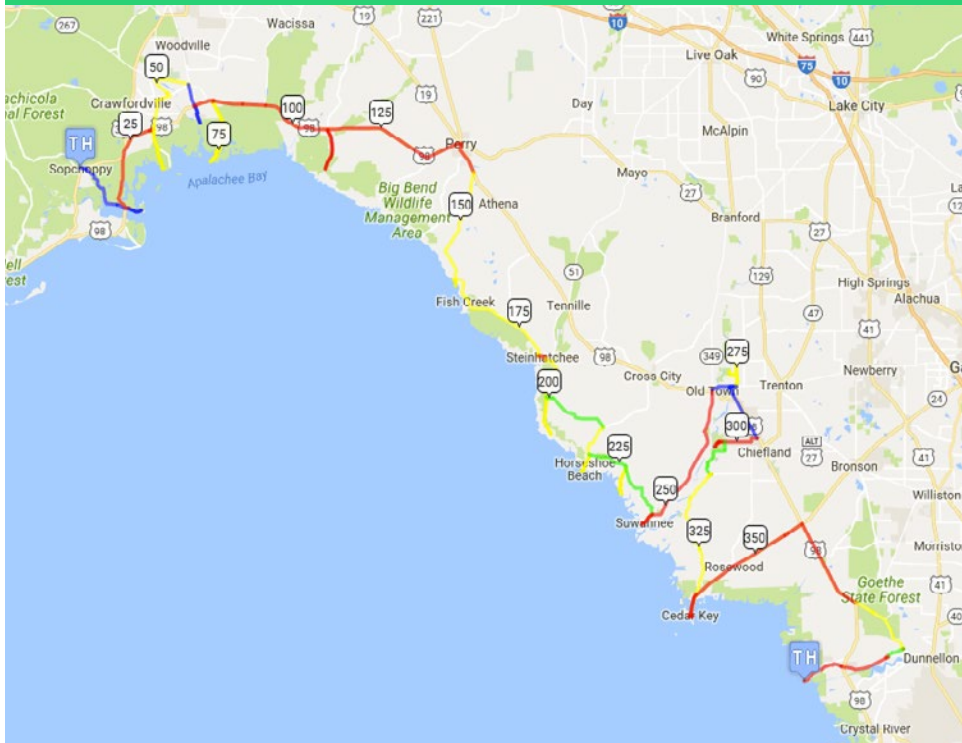
## Overview

This route travels to the Lower Suwannee National Wildlife Refuge, the community of Suwannee, Horseshoe Beach, and then returns to Cross City. There are several points where riders can select off-road loops, notably Weeks Landing (fun for wide tires)! Scenic viewpoint Fishbone Creek features swallow-tail kites and beautiful oaks. Horseshoe Beach offers food, lodging, and Gulf views. Spotty cell coverage; some sections unpaved.

**Distance**  
84.5 Miles

# FLORIDA'S BIG BEND COASTAL TOUR

## NORTH CENTRAL FLORIDA



## Overview

Florida's Big Bend Coastal Tour introduces bicyclists to the unique character of the longest undeveloped coastline in the lower 48 states. It is composed of coastal county bicycle routes developed by Visit Natural North Florida, stitched together to form a single, continuous route. The Big Bend Coastal Tour includes numerous natural points of interest and charming coastal communities as it weaves between the scenic coastline and U.S. 98. Many out-and-back segments are outlined, but can be skipped by rider's preference, allowing customization of the route's length.

**Distance**  
398.5 Miles



One of the first stops is Wakulla Springs, which is among one of the world's largest freshwater springs, where visitors can enjoy the scenery with a guided boat tour. Next, riders will pass through St. Marks National Wildlife Refuge to the iconic St. Marks Lighthouse at the Gulf of Mexico; then ride onward to 3,377 acre Econfina River State Park, where wildlife and bird sightings abound, and 14.8 miles of wooded trails lead to panoramic views of coastal Florida, lush islands and coastal marsh.

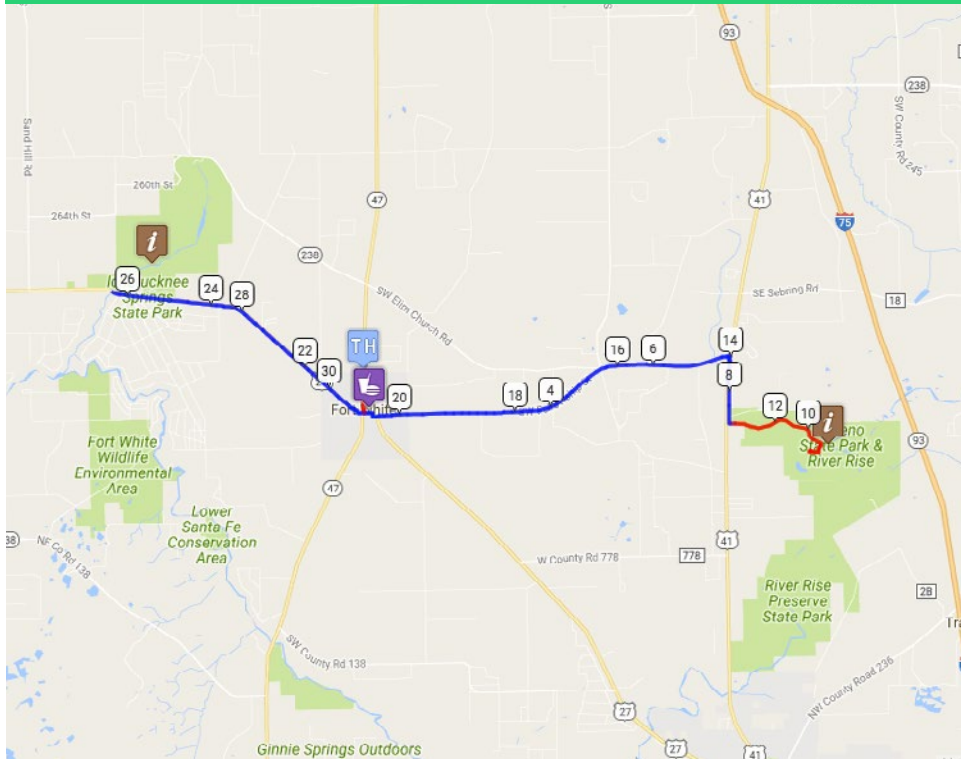
The resurging communities of Perry and Steinhatchee are up next on the route, where riders can enjoy a rest stop and various places to eat. Riders will marvel at their view of the beautiful Suwannee River and explore the 53,000+/- acre Lower Suwannee National Wildlife Refuge. Manatee, Fanning, and Hart Springs offer aquatic fun, natural beauty, and camping opportunities as the route proceeds inland through Old Town and Chiefland. Then it's back out to Cedar Keys, a charming coastal town with excellent seafood.

Near the end, the route passes through scenic Goethe State Forest; soon after riders will note a State Road called the Follow That Dream Parkway, named after an Elvis Presley movie filmed in the area. The route concludes at the terminus of State Road 40 at the Gulf of Mexico.

Many alterations are available for riders to customize the route to their needs. Cell reception is spotty; some dirt/limerock sections; some sections subject to closure during wet conditions.

# FLORIDA'S ICHETUCKNEE-O'LENE STATE TRAIL

FORT WHITE, FL



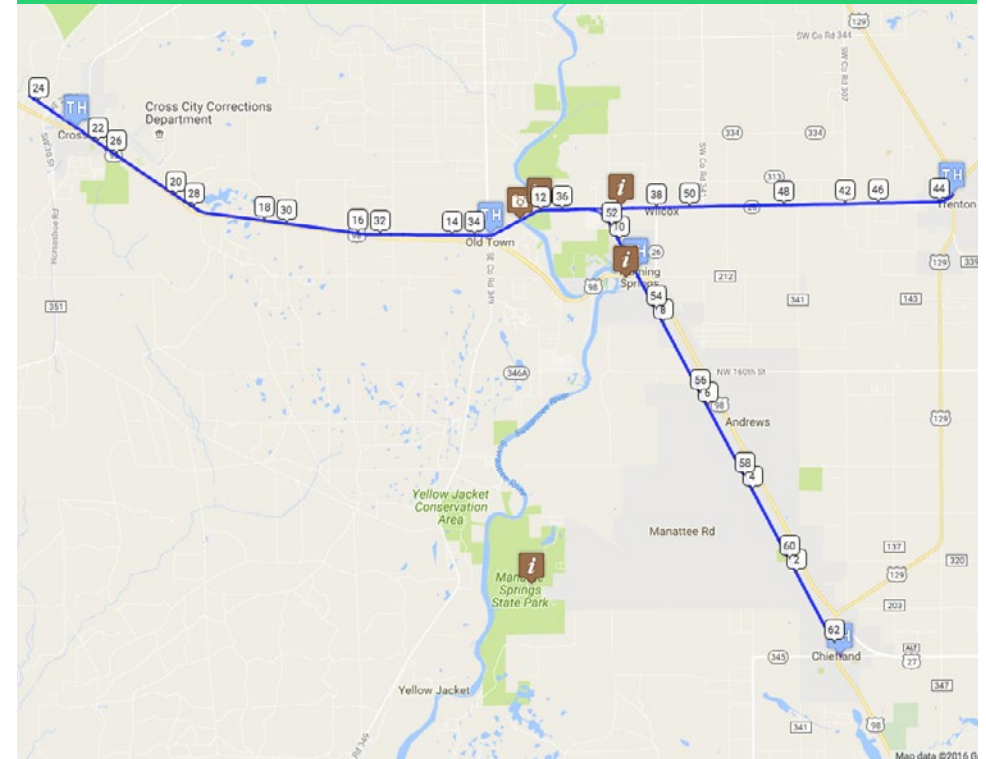
## Overview

**Distance**  
31.5 Miles

This paved grade-separated trail has the distinction of being one of the few bicycle trails connecting two state parks! The first, Ichetucknee Springs State Park, is a crystal-clear, spring-fed river and popular tubing destination. O'Leno State Park features a sink which drains the Santa Fe River, which then flows under the Natural Bridge (frequented by early settlers avoiding ferryman fees), and re-emerges 3 miles later. Camping is available at O'Leno.

# FLORIDA'S NATURE COAST STATE TRAIL

CHIEFLAND, FL



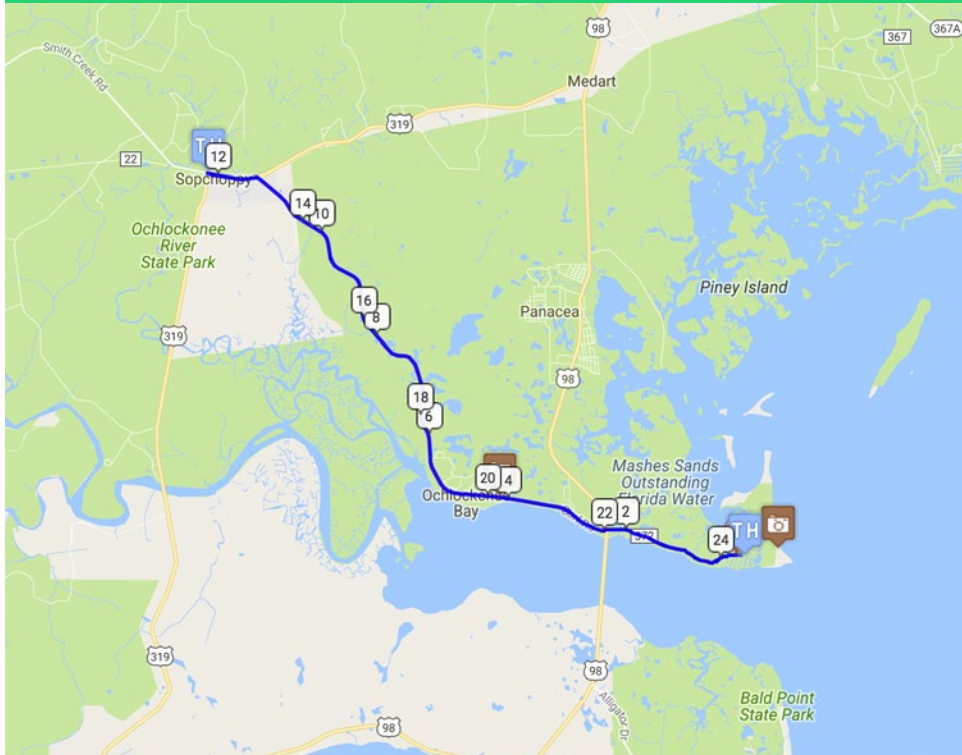
## Overview

**Distance**  
62.3 Miles

This grade-separated paved trail begins in Chiefland and visits several North Florida towns. Central to the route is Fanning Springs, home to local restaurants where riders can stop for a bite. Riders will cross the Suwannee River on the Nature Coast Trail Trestle Bridge and enjoy a panoramic view on their way to Cross City. After exploring the restaurants and various rest stops, riders depart to Trenton and finally back to Chiefland.

# FLORIDA'S OCHLOCKONEE BAY TRAIL

SOPCHOPPY, FL



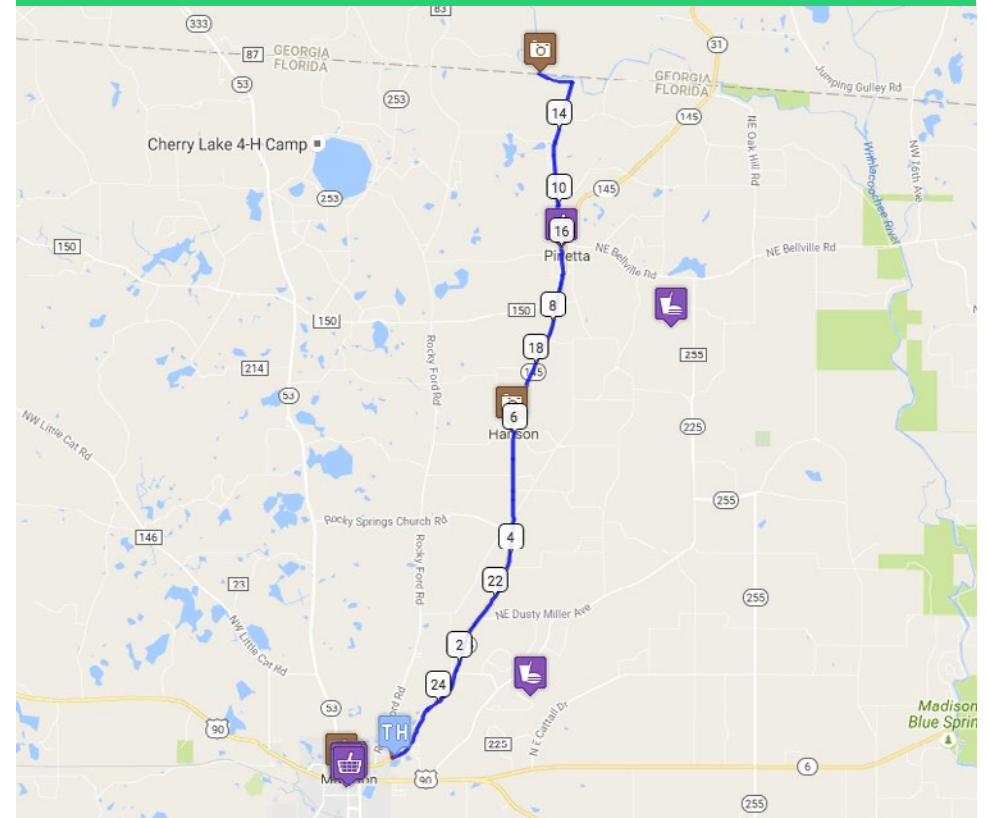
## Overview

**Distance**  
24.5 Miles

This 24.3-mile out-and-back takes the paved Ochlockonee Bay Bike Trail from Mashes Sands County, located close to the remote coastal community of Panacea, to the small rural town of Sopchoppy's historic train depot. The trail meanders through the St. Marks National Wildlife Refuge and provides views of Ochockonee Bay, wild marshes, tidal creeks, native wildlife and vegetation as well as lots of wide-open sky. Public facilities are available at Mashes Sands Park, U.S. 98 and Sopchoppy.

# FOUR FREEDOMS TRAIL

MADISON, FL



## Overview

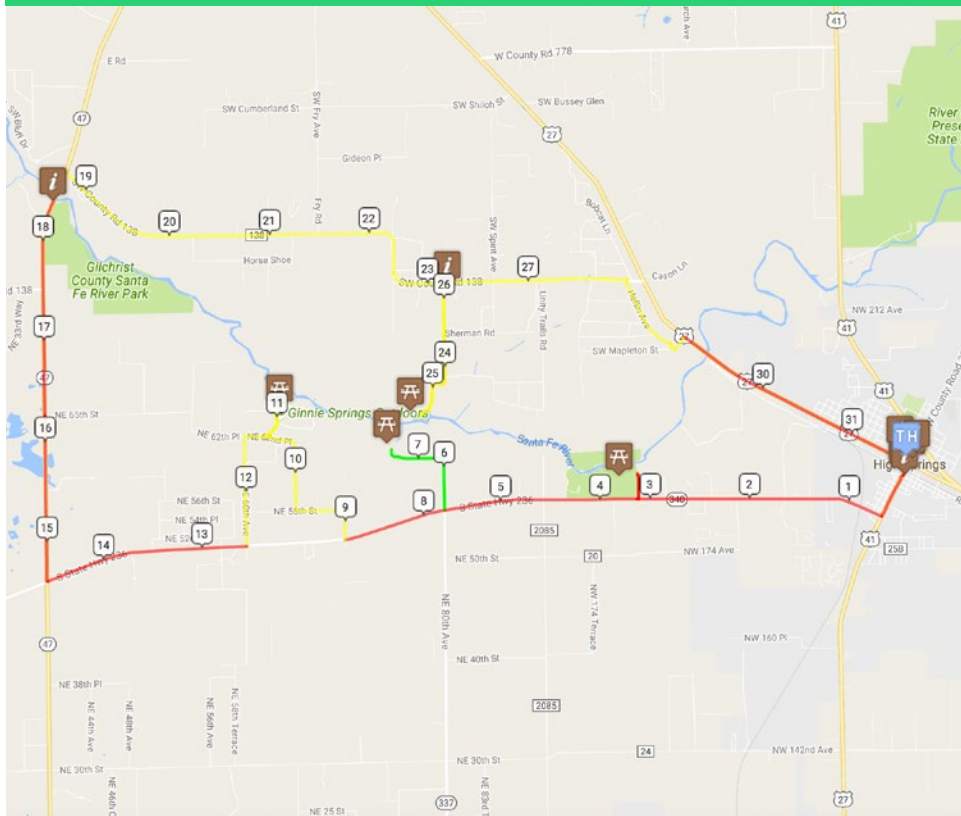
**Distance**  
25.2 Miles

This pleasant, shady grade-separated paved trail extends north from the Madison city limits to the picturesque Withlacoochee River at the Florida-Georgia border. Generally paralleling the highway, it passes through the small towns of Hansen and Pinetta. Madison's lovely historic downtown with restaurants, a museum, and antique stores is worth a look. There are covered rest areas at several points. Note: some debris & bumps are present on this route.



# FOUR SPRINGS LOOP

HIGH SPRINGS, FL



## Overview

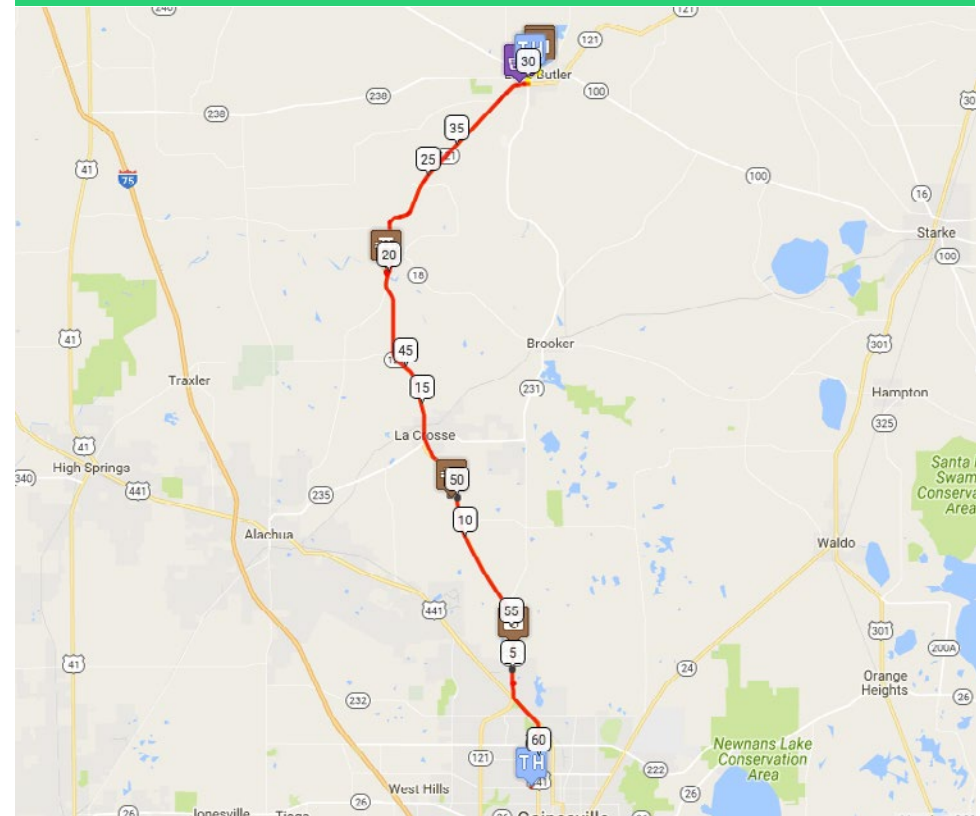
**Distance**

31.9 Miles

This route visits four beautiful springs along the Santa Fe River, which offer fun and scenic rest stops. Poe Springs County Park features a picnic area and playground. Camping is permitted at Blue Spring, which also offers a boardwalk along the spring run. Next is Ginie Springs, one of the clearest springs in Florida. On the other side of the river is Rum Island Spring, with walkways to overlook its spring and unique island. Some springs charge for entry.

# GAINESVILLE TO LAKE BUTLER

GAINESVILLE, FL



## Overview

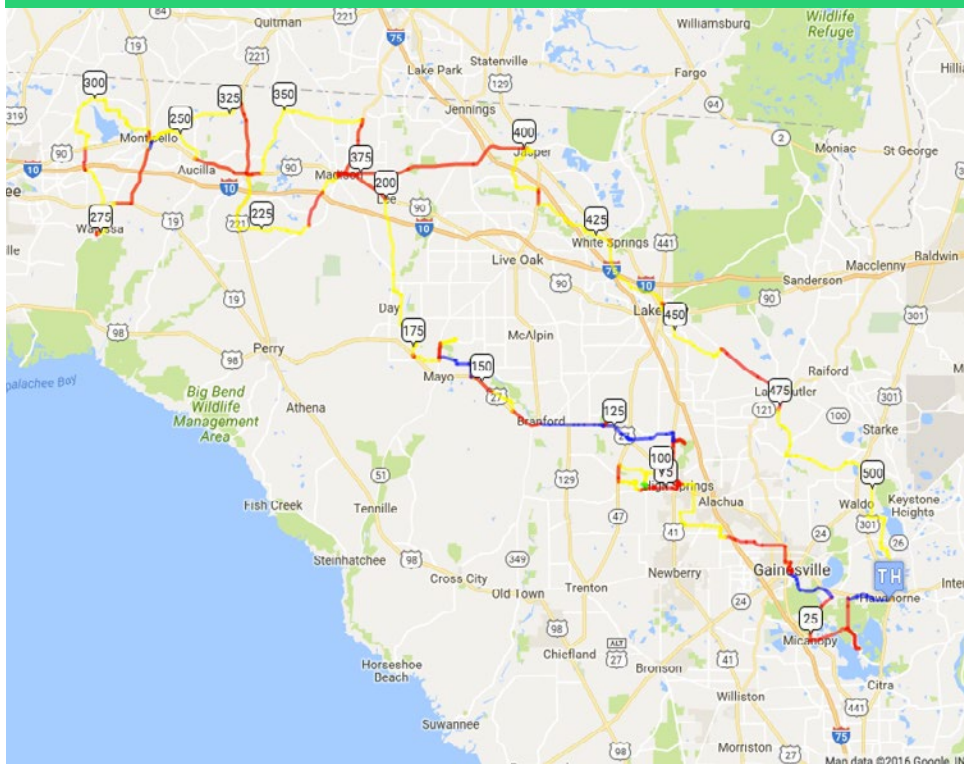
**Distance**

61.3 Miles

Popular with local cyclists, this route is smooth and fast with very few turns or stops. Notable spots along the way include Florida's largest live oak tree at Cella Oak Park, nature trail and fishing pier at Chastain-Seay Park, and Worthington Springs (no longer flowing, but still worth a look). At the route's end in the city of Lake Butler, riders can visit the picturesque lake on the northern side of town, and explore quiet, bike-friendly streets.

# GRAND NORTH FLORIDA TOUR

## NORTH CENTRAL FLORIDA



## Overview

### Distance

519.9 Miles

The Grand North Florida Tour is a 520-mile loop route connecting the springs, parks, rivers, and towns of north central Florida. From the Hawthorne trailhead of the Gainesville-Hawthorne State Trail, the tour proceeds to Gainesville, home of the University of Florida, which has many excellent restaurants and a few local craft breweries.

Leaving Gainesville, the tour heads to High Springs and four large springs: Poe Springs, Blue Springs, Ginnie Springs, and Rum Island Spring, all of which are located along the Santa Fe River. The route returns to High Springs which has nice restaurants and antiques shops.



From High Springs the tour proceeds past O'Leno State Park; Fort White; Ichetucknee Springs State Park, a crystal-clear spring-fed river; and Branford. From Branford the route crosses the Suwannee River to a series of four springs: Troy Spring, State Park, Convict Spring, Wes Skiles Peacock Springs State Park, and Lafayette Blue Springs State Park. The tour then heads to Madison, which has an attractive downtown, good restaurants, an impressive number of antique stores, and a B&B.

From Madison, the tour continues to Monticello featuring its historic downtown, canopied roads, rolling hills and Wacissa Springs. Monticello has several local restaurants, shops, and B&Bs.

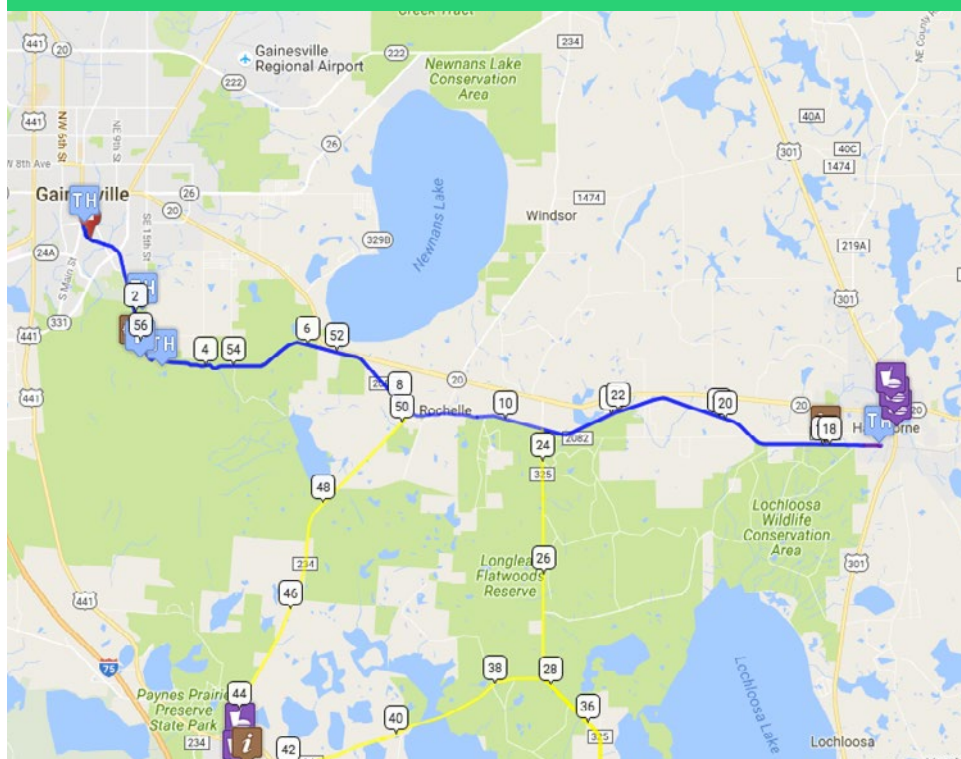
The route then heads to Madison and Madison Blue Spring State Park. The spring was recently recognized as the top swimming hole in the country by USA Today. From here the tour proceeds to Jasper and White Springs. White Springs is home to the Stephen Foster Folk Culture Center State Park, a few good restaurants, and convenience stores.

From White Springs, the tour continues to downtown Lake City, which has several nice restaurants. The tour then heads to Alligator Lake and on to the city of Lake Butler, following the shoreline of the picturesque namesake lake.

From Lake Butler the tour pushes through the small towns of Brooker and Hampton. From Hampton, the tour heads south along local roads past Santa Fe Lake. Riders follow busy U.S. 301 for the final 2.5 miles before reaching the terminus of the Grand North Florida Tour.

# GAINESVILLE-HAWTHORNE STATE TRAIL

GAINESVILLE, FL



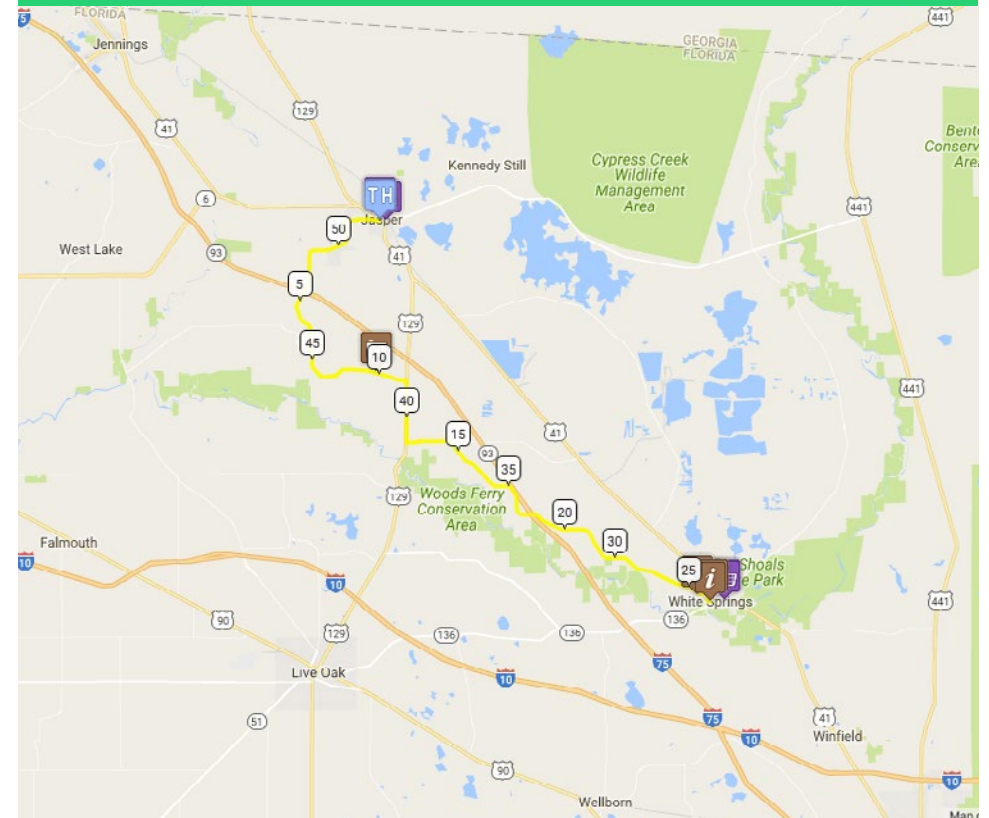
## Overview

**Distance**  
58.9 Miles

Recognized among BikeFlorida.net's Top Ten trails, this paved grade-separated trail passes through many scenic, natural areas like Paynes Prairie Preserve State Park and the Lochloosa Wildlife Conservation Area. Side trips to Micanopy (named one of the 12 cutest small towns in America by the Huffington Post) and Cross Creek (home of historic Marjorie Kinnan Rawlings Historic State Park and Golden Spoon award-winning The Yearling Restaurant) are easy to incorporate. Note: these side trips are on paved roads with no paved shoulder.

# JASPER TO WHITE SPRINGS

JASPER, FL



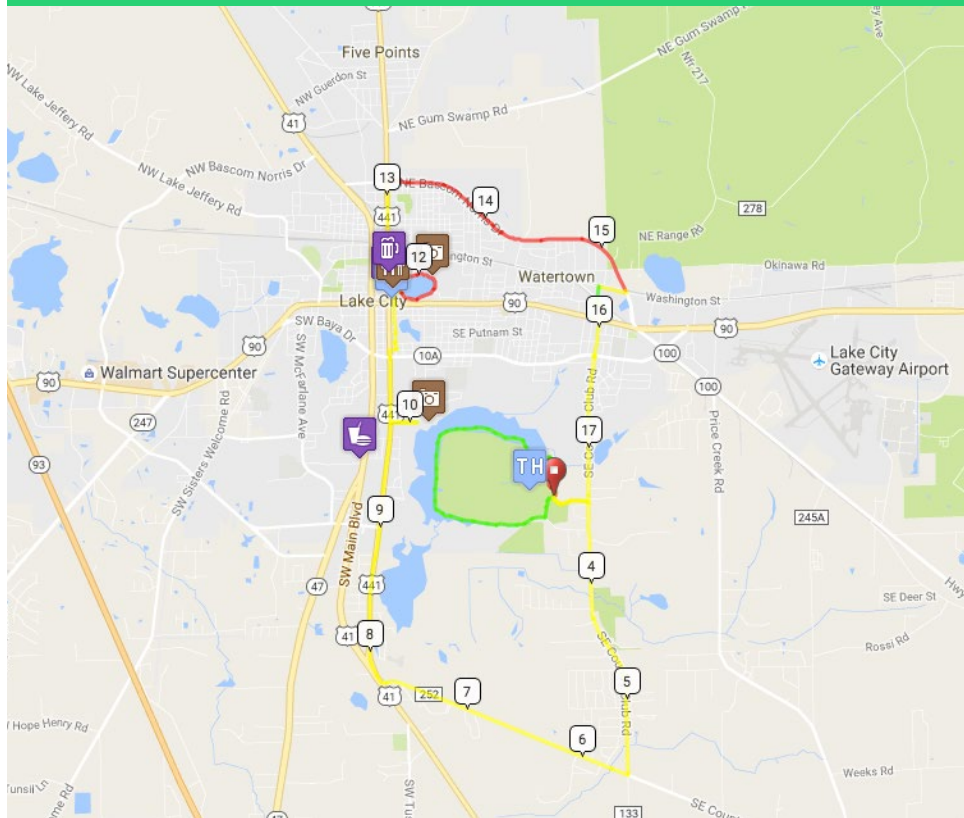
## Overview

**Distance**  
52.2 Miles

This route, created by Jeanne Hargrave of the Suwannee Bicycle Association, features scenic, fun rolling hills along a country road. It crosses several creeks branching from the Suwannee River and visits the small town of White Springs. Jasper, the start and finish of the route, is the largest town in Hamilton County, with good locally-owned restaurants including Crossroads Market & Grill as well as H&F Restaurant.

# LAKE CITY - LAKES LOOP

LAKE CITY, FL



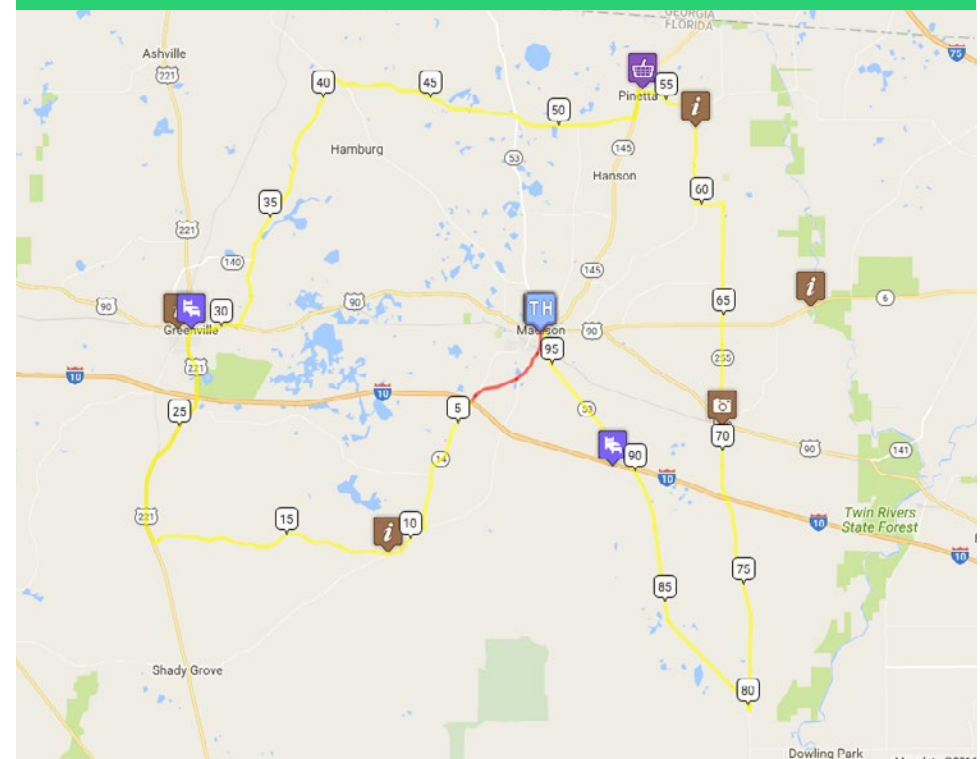
## Overview

**Distance**  
17.7 Miles

This mostly paved, urban route is best suited to recreational bicyclists. It begins at Alligator Lake Recreation Area, which offers additional dirt trails with wildlife viewing along the lake before beginning the Loop. The route passes Isabella Lake, loops around Lake DeSoto, and goes by some nice places to eat in downtown Lake City. Benches along the lake are great stopping points for views of the lake and town. Some unpaved sections.

# MADISON COUNTY 100-MILE LOOP

MADISON, FL



## Overview

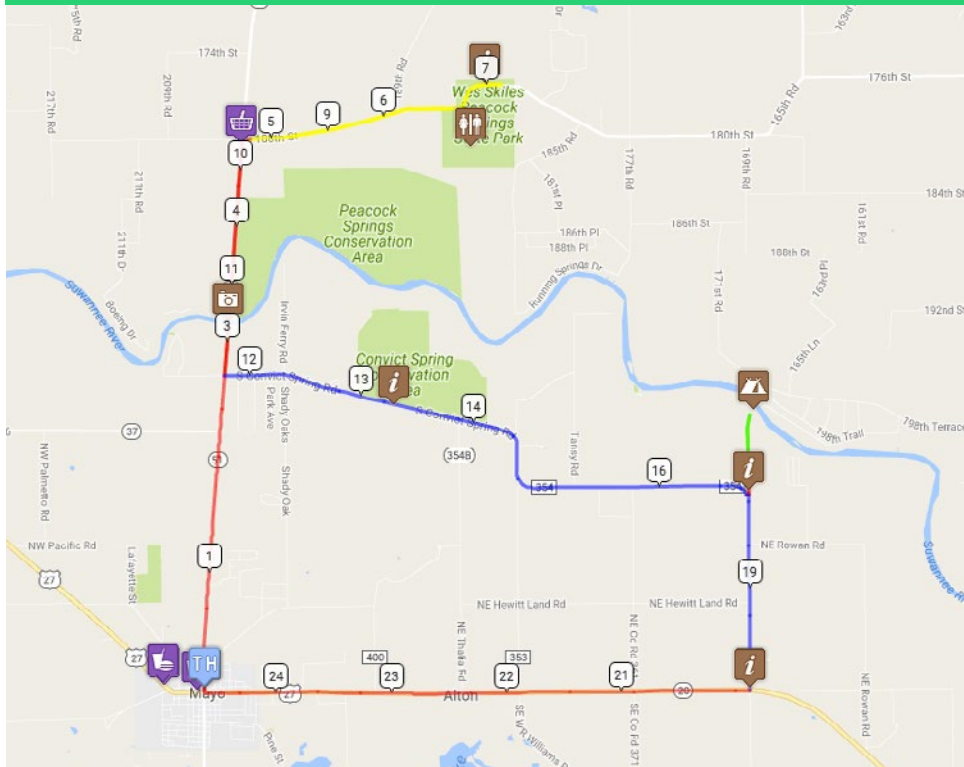
**Distance**  
96.5 Miles

Biking groups visit each year to ride "The Loop" for its beautiful and varied landscapes! Riders will be challenged by moderate hills and a few "toughies." Soak up the small town atmosphere of Pinetta and Lee, and enjoy flat sections bordered by trees, farms and blue sky. The route starts and finishes in historic downtown Madison, where restaurants, a museum, and antique shops await exploration.

# MAYO LOOP

## PEACOCK SPRINGS STATE PARK & CONVICT SPRINGS

### MAYO, FL



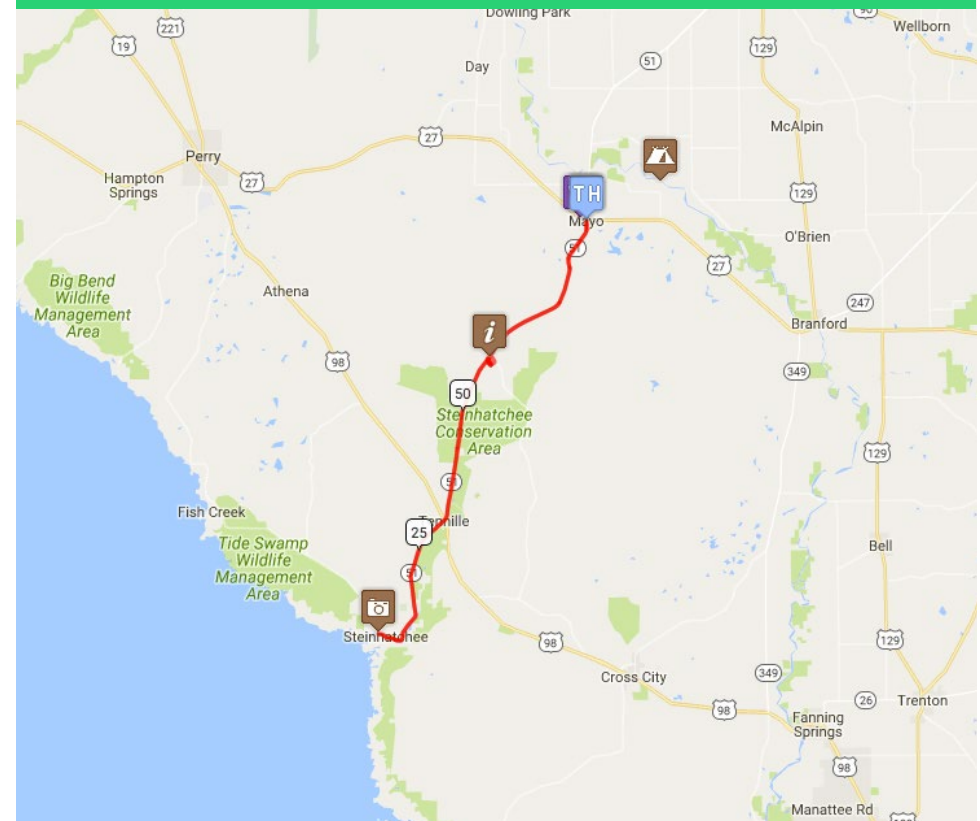
**Distance**  
24.7 Miles

## Overview

This paved route begins and ends in Mayo, which features several worthwhile restaurants for riders to enjoy post-loop! The route includes approximately eight miles of paved grade-separated trail. Highlights include a scenic crossing of the Suwannee River and the Peacock Springs Conservation Area. Wes Skiles Peacock Springs State Park is home to two large springs, one of which is a great swimming hole. It also features an award-winning educational nature trail. A side trip is possible to Convict Spring for camping, kayaking, swimming or fishing.

# MAYO TO R.O. RANCH

## MAYO, FL



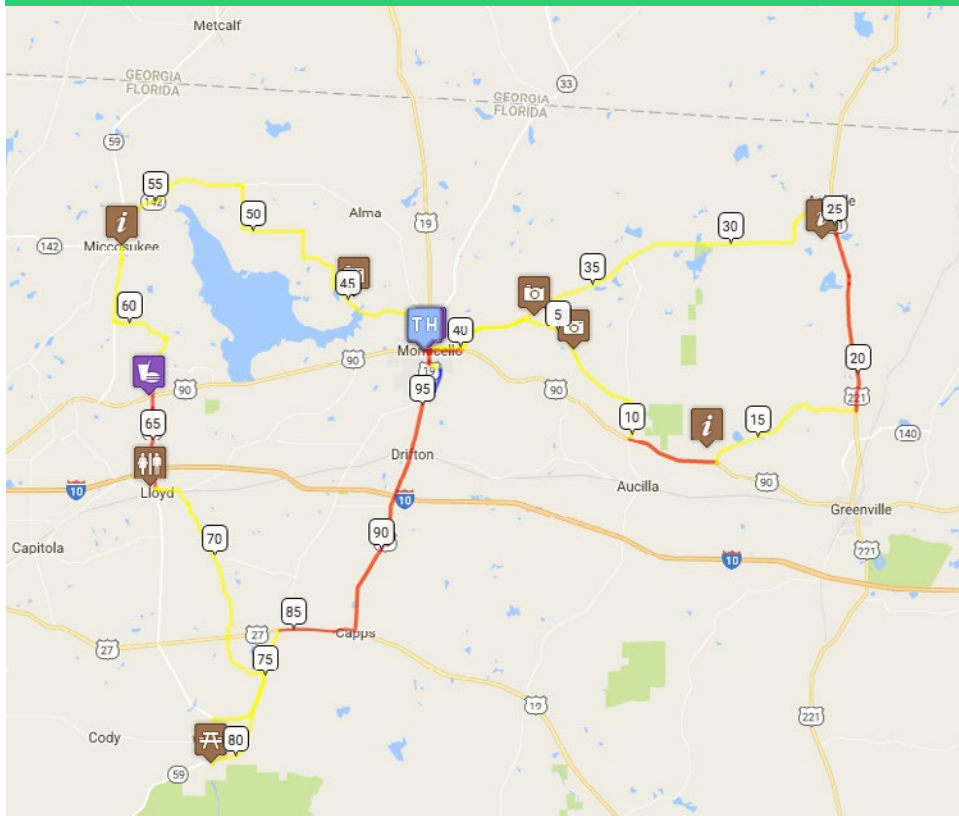
**Distance**  
24 Miles/67 Miles

## Overview

This is a fast 24-mile out-and-back ride down State Road 51 to the R.O. Ranch Equestrian Park. There are no turns, traffic signals or stop signs from Mayo to the ranch. State Road 51 has a four-foot paved shoulder in both directions along the entire route and has relatively light traffic for a state road. R.O. Ranch replicates the Florida "cracker" style ranches of the 1920s. Although intended primarily for equestrians, bicyclists also can explore its dirt trails and facilities. An optional route extension to the Gulf Coast fishing village of Steinhatree increases the distance to 67 miles when returning to the Mayo trailhead.

# MONTICELLO CENTURY LOOP

MONTICELLO, FL



## Overview

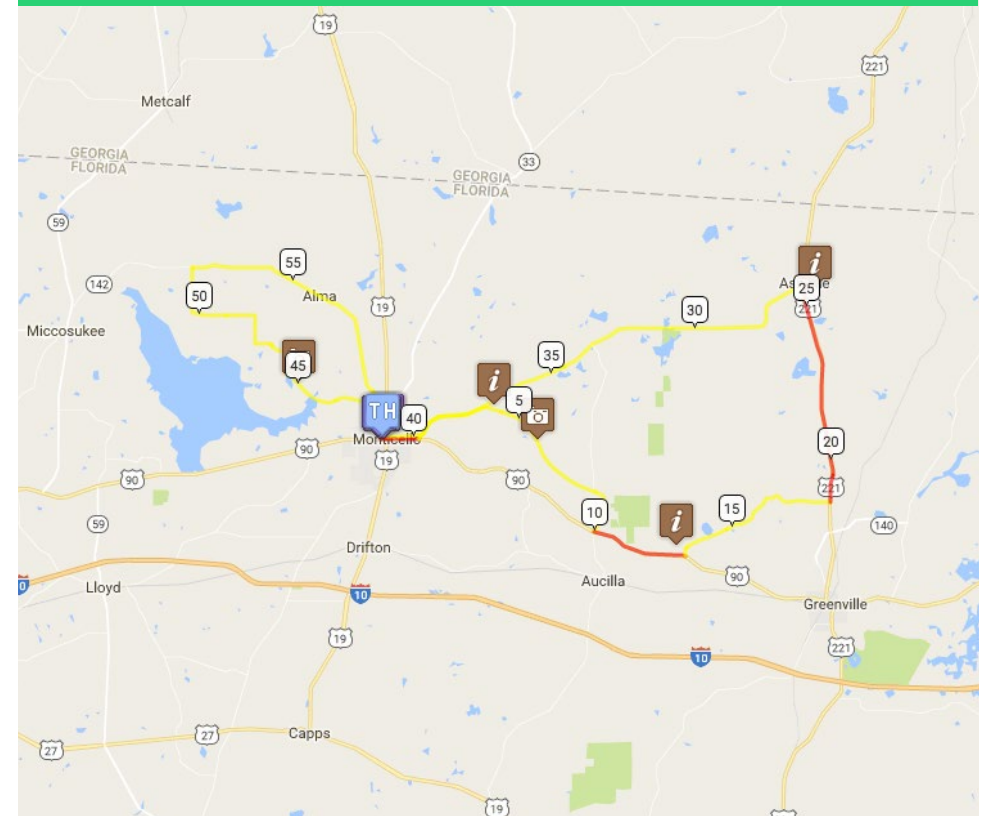
One of the featured routes at the 2016 Monticello Bike Fest! This route features historic downtown Monticello, canopied roads, rolling hills and Wacissa Springs. It includes parts of the Adventure Cycling Association Southern Tier Route and passes the Upper Aucilla Conservation Area. Monticello is home to several local restaurants and shops, such as thrift and antique stores, so the area is worth exploring. Local restaurants include Tupelo's Bakery and the Brick House Eatery.

**Distance**

97.7 Miles

# MONTICELLO 60-MILE LOOP

MONTICELLO, FL



## Overview

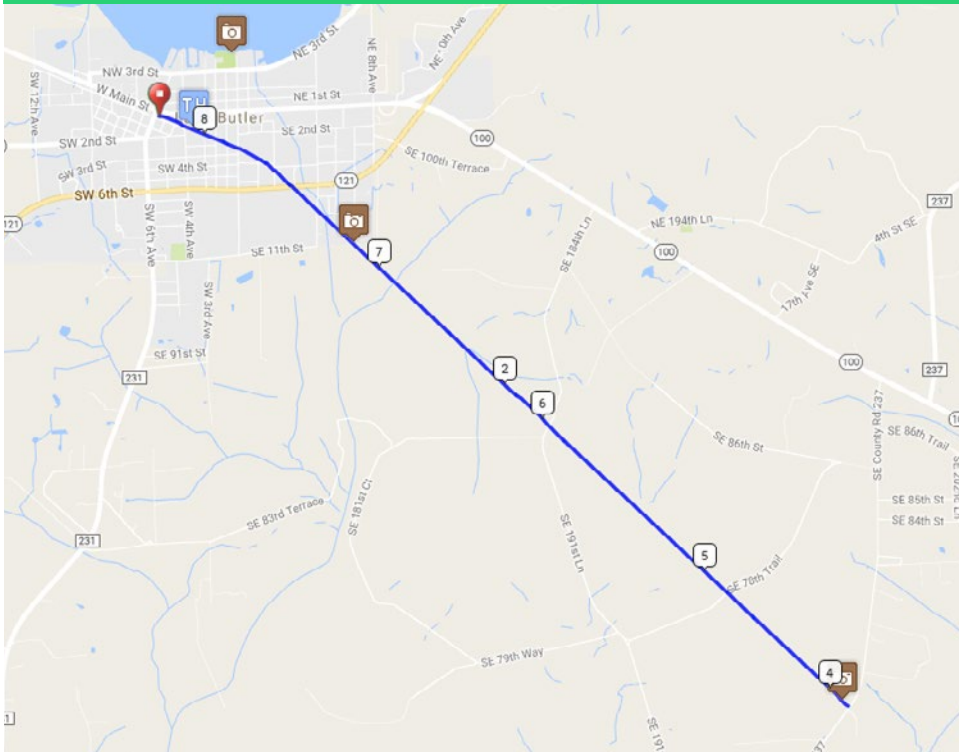
This loop cuts out the second half of the figure-eight from the Monticello Century Loop for a shorter ride. The route features scenic, canopied roads, Lake Miccosukee, rolling hills, Wacissa Springs. It passes through rolling country roads where riders can view open fields and farms. Then, riders return to Monticello, home to several local restaurants as well as thrift and antique stores.

**Distance**

61.5 Miles

# PALATKA-LAKE BUTLER STATE TRAIL

LAKE BUTLER, FL



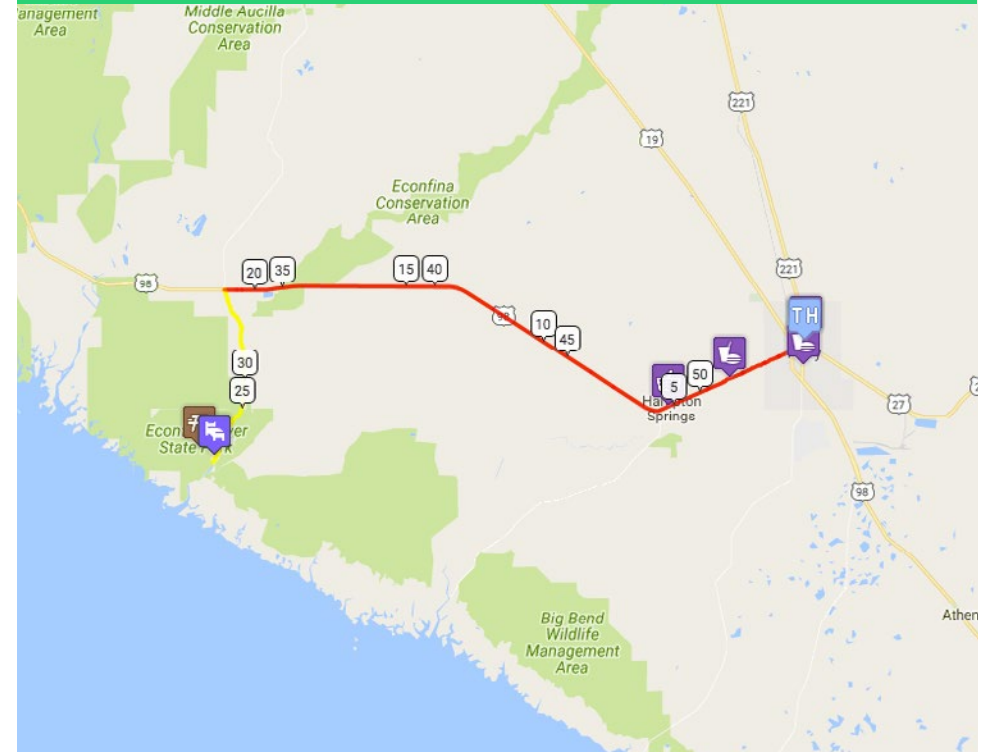
## Overview

This quick, secluded and scenic grade-separated trail consists of a four-mile paved portion of the Palatka-Lake Butler State Trail. Riders can park or make a quick stop at one of the convenience stores in Lake Butler before beginning their ride near the Union Depot at the Lake Butler Trailhead. The lake is nearby for those who wish to explore the area or ride around town.

**Distance**  
8.2 Miles

# PERRY TO ECONFINA STATE PARK

PERRY, FL



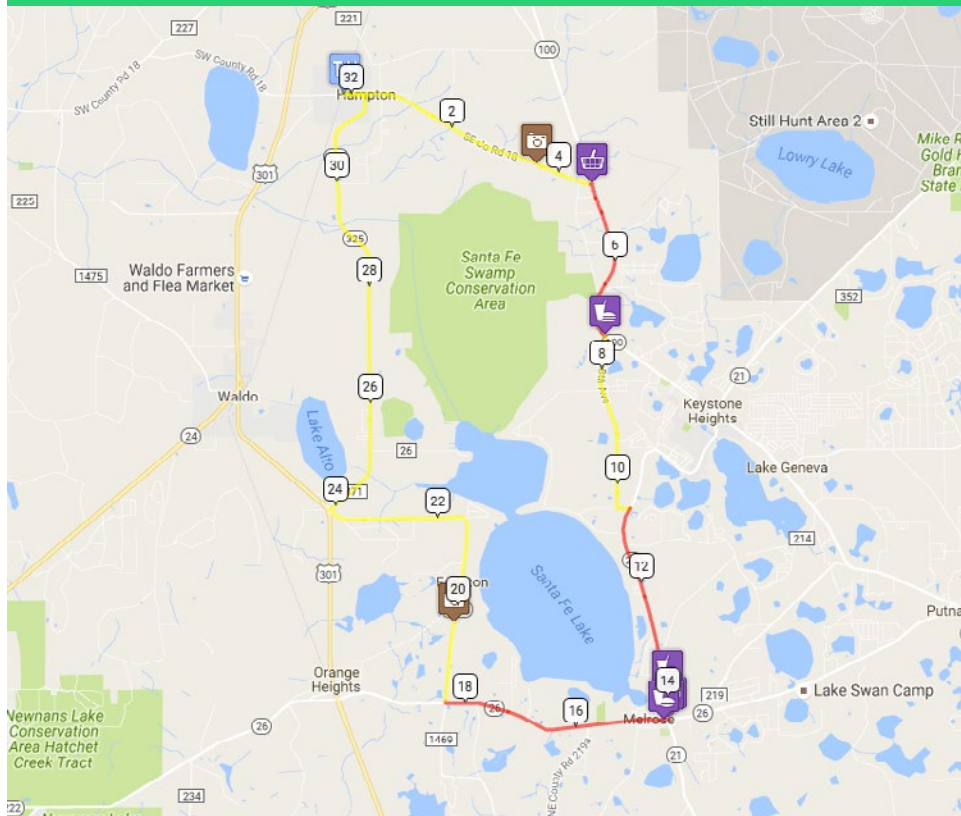
## Overview

This route begins in resurgent downtown Perry, with a variety of restaurants and shops, and sets off along a stretch of secluded road. At the Gulf, riders will arrive at 3,377 acre Econfina River State Park, which offers wildlife and bird sightings, and features 14.8 miles of wooded trails leading to panoramic views of coastal Florida, lush islands, and sand dunes. Some sections have no paved shoulders.

**Distance**  
53.8 Miles

# SANTA FE LAKE LOOP

STARKE, FL



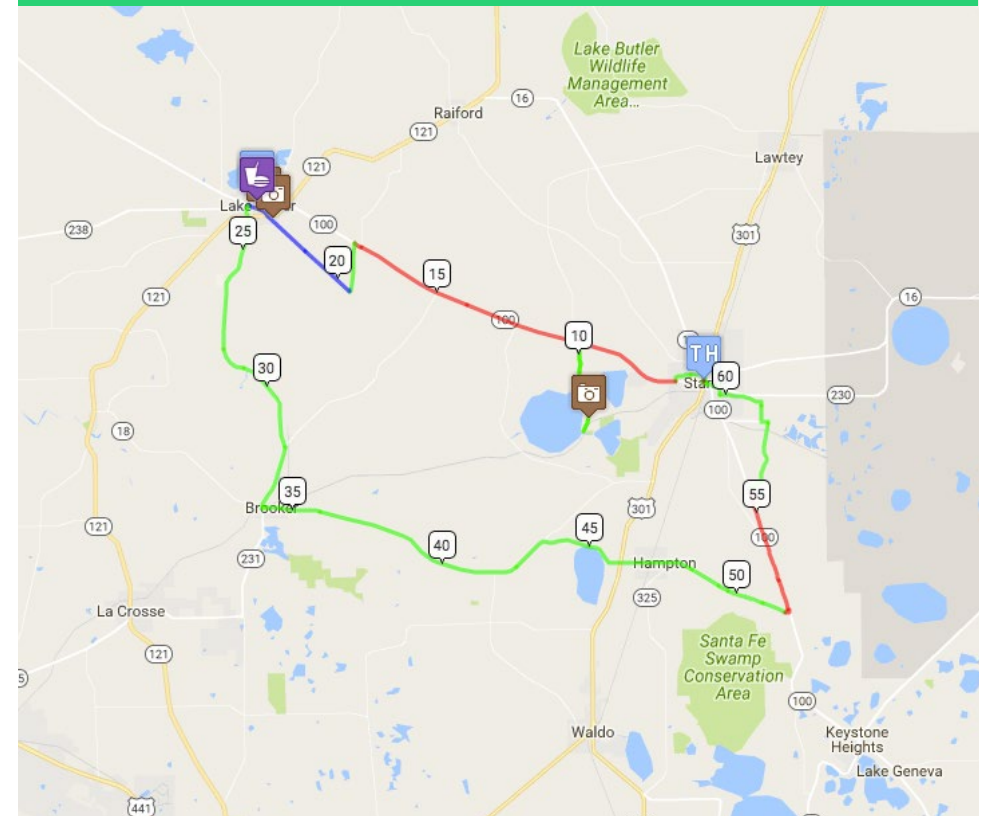
## Overview

From Hampton, riders will pass by the tip of the Santa Fe Swamp Conservation Area, then wind around Santa Fe Lake and the Melrose community (a good rest stop, offering a handful of restaurants and convenience stores). The route loops back up through Earleton, then back up the other side of the Santa Fe Swamp Conservation Area to finish in Hampton. An optional side-trip through Keystone Heights offers extra miles through another small Florida town.

**Distance**  
32.1 Miles

# STARKE - LAKE BUTLER LOOP

STARKE, FL



## Overview

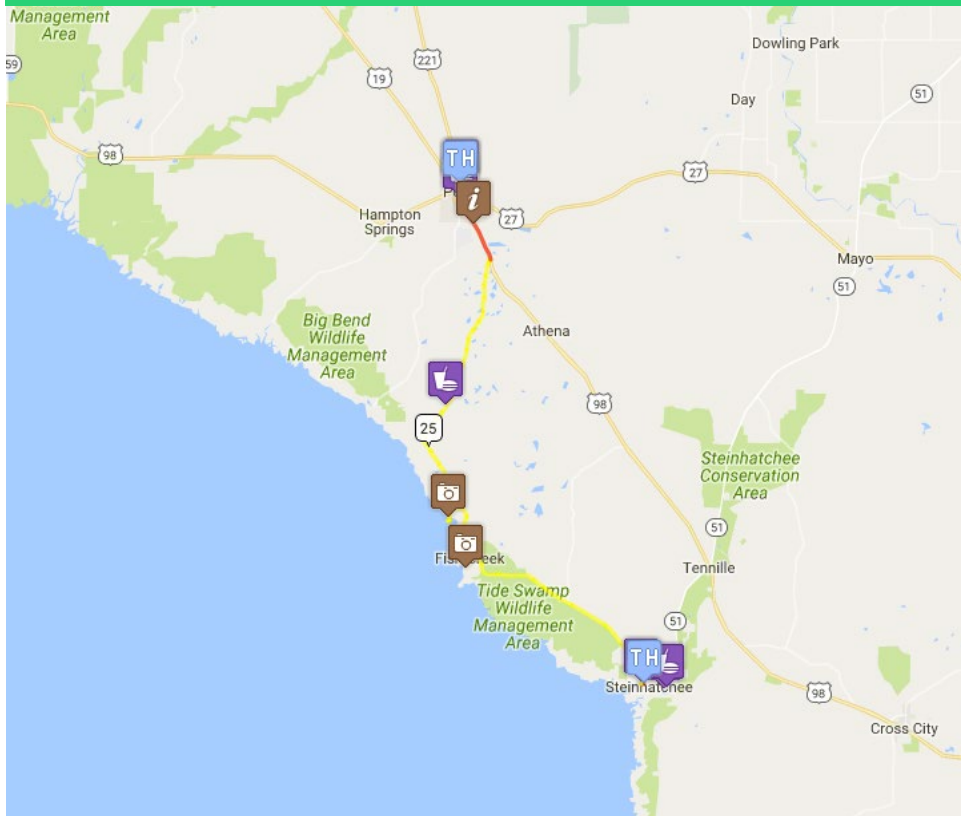
This route starts in downtown Starke and heads west on State Road 100 to begin its loop, eventually passing through the towns of Brooker and Hampton. There is an optional side trip to the boat canal connecting Lake Sampson and Lake Rowell, with a pristine cypress-lined shoreline. Interesting local establishments in downtown Starke include the Downtown Grill, the Call Street Cafe, and Tony & Al's Deli.

**Distance**  
61 Miles



# STEINHATCHEE TO PERRY

STEINHATCHEE, FL



## Overview

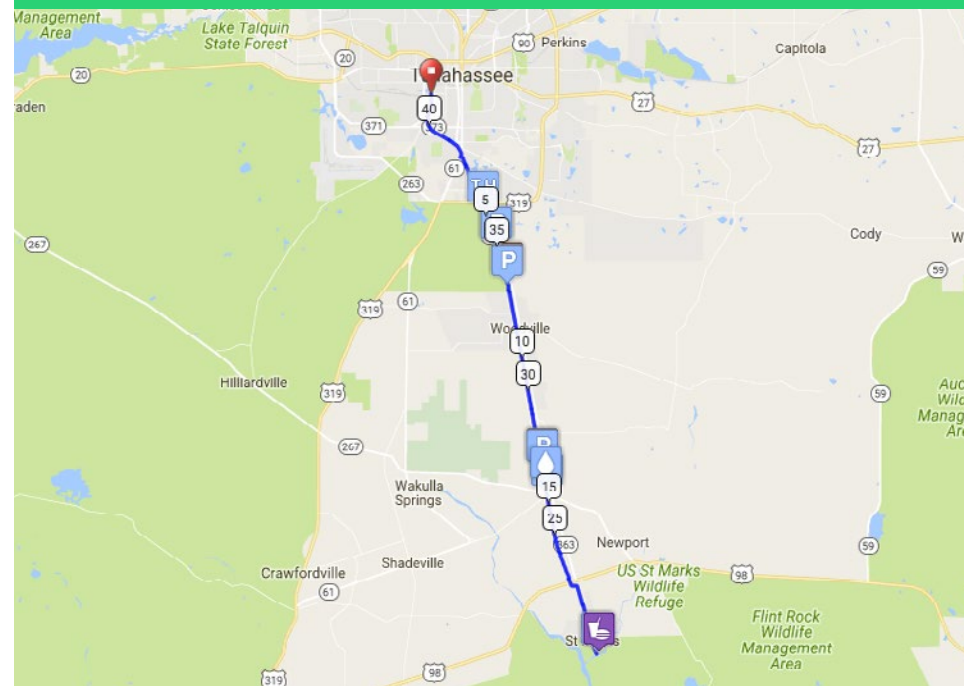
**Distance**

42.8 Miles

This is a scenic, paved ride starting at the Gulf coastal fishing village of Steinhatchee and following the Big Bend coastline. Riders will pass parts of the Big Bend Wildlife Management Area, where they may spot some local wildlife, and Keaton Beach, a small but nice public beach with picnic area, pier and park. Steinhatchee has several good seafood restaurants including Roy's and Fiddler's. Most of route lacks paved shoulders.

# TALLAHASSEE - ST. MARKS HISTORIC RAILROAD STATE TRAIL

ST. MARKS, FL



## Overview

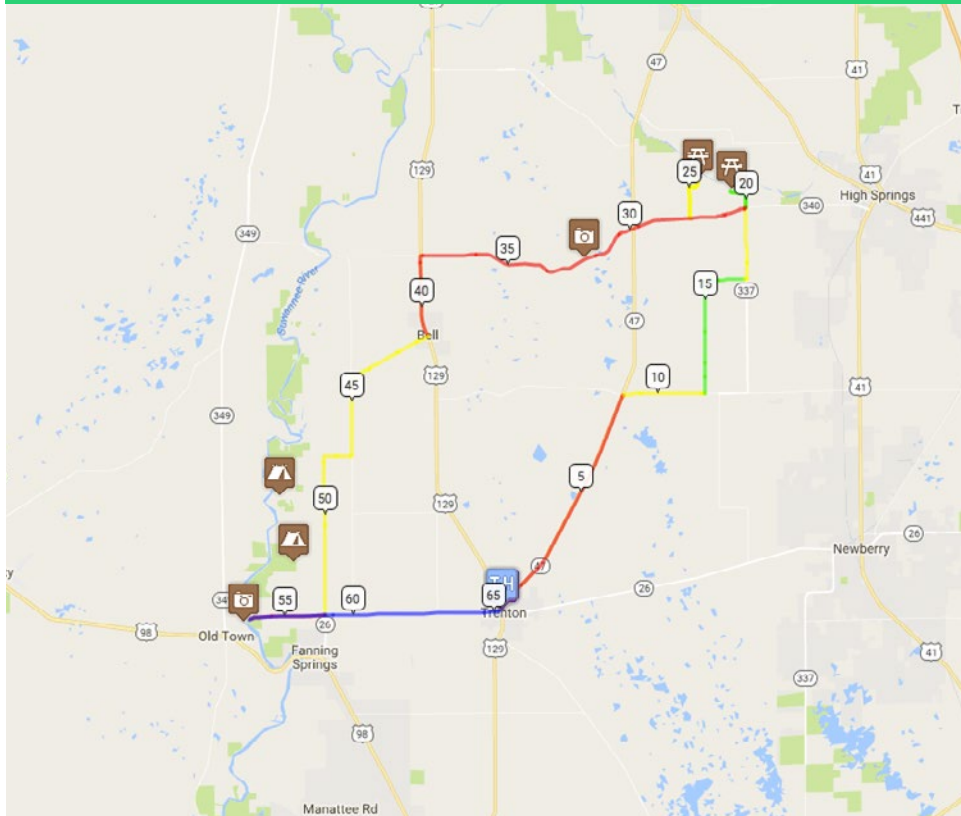
**Distance**

41.1 Miles

This shady, paved grade-separated trail from Florida's capital city to the coastal community of St. Marks traces a historic railroad corridor used to carry cotton to the coast in the early 1900s. At the southern terminus of the trail, the coastal city of St. Marks welcomes trail users to enjoy seafood dining, fishing and entertainment, and to learn about the history of the area at San Marcos de Apalache Historic State Park.

# TRENTON LOOP

TRENTON, FL



## Overview

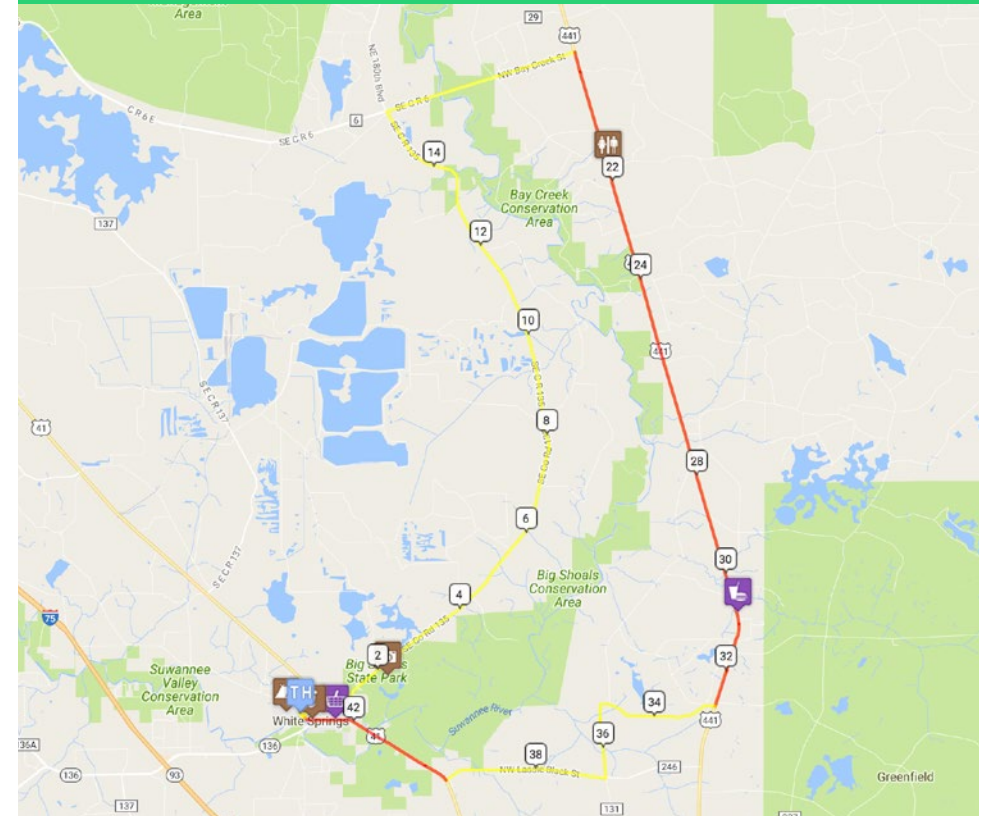
The best of Gilchrist County by bike! Riders will see the wetlands and lakes of Waccasassa Flats, marvel at the scenic and clear Blue Springs and Ginnie Springs on the Santa Fe River, take a dip in Hart and Otter Springs on the Suwannee River, visit sections of the Nature Coast State Trail, and explore downtown Trenton on this journey. Portions of the route are unpaved; some springs charge for entry.

**Distance**

65.5 Miles

# WOODPECKER LOOP

WHITE SPRINGS, FL



## Overview

Named for the historic term for Hamilton County Road 135 and U.S. 41, this is a favorite route for serious bicyclists as it is flat and fast with few stoppings. Riders may visit the Stephen Foster Folk Culture Center State Park, a riverfront park offering camping, hiking, canoeing, and a museum. Riders can also visit Big Shoals State Park and the Bay Creek Conservation Area, both of which surround the Suwannee River. Its starting and ending point, White Springs, is an attractive small town worth visiting and is home to the Suwannee Bicycle Association.

**Distance**

43.1 Miles



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