



St. Sebastian River Preserve State Park

Real Florida Guide

Note: Colored numbers correspond with numbers on the map. **Red** = Introduction, **Green** = Day 1, **Blue** = Day 2, **Yellow** = Day 3, and **Purple** = Other Activities

[St. Sebastian River Preserve State Park \(1\)](#)

is 22,000 acres of open grassy longleaf pine forests, once commonplace throughout Florida and the southeast. The pine flatwoods also form a backdrop for other biological communities, including cypress domes, scrubby flatwoods, sandhills, and a beautiful strand swamp. These habitats are home to many native plants and animals, including over 50 protected species.



Day 1, Orientation & Accommodations

The park is divided into four quadrants, separated by the east-to-west C-54 Canal and north-to-south by Interstate 95. Each quadrant has its own network of trails. There are three public access points from land:

- **The main park entrance** is north of the City of Fellsmere on County Road (CR) 507, on the north side of the C-54 Canal. Here you will find a Visitor Center (2), the park office and the unpaved Buffer Preserve Road, which parallels the canal and provides

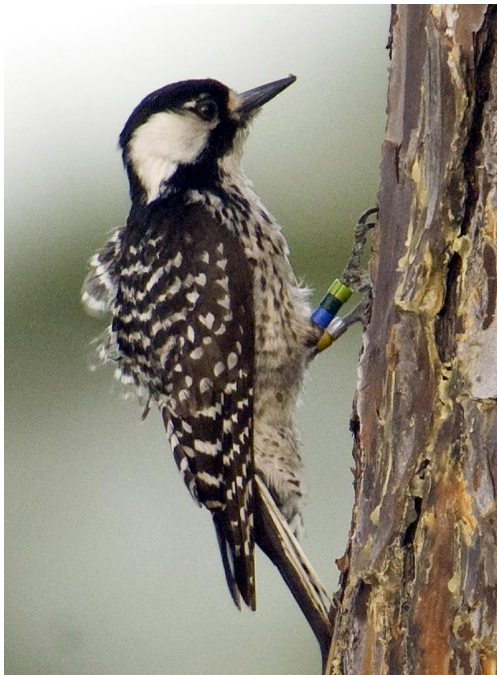


access to the **Northwest** and **Northeast quadrants**, as well as the main equestrian area and the manatee viewing platform. The Visitor Center has several cultural displays, including ancient artifacts and tools, as well as trail guides and event information. A ranger or volunteer is on duty Thursday-Sunday, 10:00am to 4:30pm to help you plan your visit.

- The **Southwest quadrant** is accessible from a parking lot one mile west of I-95, Exit 156, Fellsmere Road. Park off the highway in a fenced corral, designed to accommodate trailered horses.
- The entrance to the **Southeast quadrant** is 1.8 miles east of I-95, Exit 156, towards the City of Sebastian on WW Ranch Road.

Despite the preserve's sectioning by I-95, the state park is truly a wilderness experience. There are no fancy entrance gates, nor is there a groomed campground.

Primitive camping for hikers, equestrians and groups are available. For information or reservations call (321) 953-5004 or (321) 953-5005.



There is also a wooded and shady public campground near the preserve with excellent access to the St. Sebastian River. [Donald McDonald Park \(3\)](#) is operated by Indian River County. Call (772) 589-0087 for more information. No reservations are required and camping is first come first serve.

Day 2, Trails & Wildlife Viewing

The state park has 60 miles of trail suited for photographers, bird-watchers and nature enthusiasts to explore on foot,



mountain bike or horseback. Wildlife viewing includes birds, deer, coyote, bobcat, wild turkey, quail, eastern indigo snakes and gopher tortoises. The preserve's north and south sections are both sites on the [Great Florida Birding and Wildlife Trail](#). Choose from these trails for an adventure:

- **Yellow Trail (4)** – The preserve's Northeast quadrant has 19 miles of trails and two primitive campsites, Storytelling Camp and Pine Camp. This trail is at the far eastern end of the unpaved Buffer Preserve Drive along the C-54 Canal and is near the manatee observation deck. The deck is universally accessible. Manatees gather in the C-54 Canal from November through March. Alligators can also be seen in the canal as well as the St. Sebastian River. The equestrian center is located at one of the trailheads, making this a popular trail for horseback riding. This preserve section was once a ranch managed with the natural environment in mind, which enabled many rare and endangered of plant and animal species to survive.
- **Green Trail (5)** – The preserve's Northwest quadrant has 9 miles of trails, no camping, and probably the best bet for mountain bikers and hikers because equestrians are drawn eastward to the facilities serving the Yellow Trail. The Green Trail traverses five wildly beautiful communities of pine flatwoods, oak hammock, wet prairie, mixed wetland hardwoods and cypress. You'll see the remains of homesteads dating back to the 1800s, when citrus farming and cattle ranching flourished in the area. The trailhead is located behind the Visitors Center. There is also a 1.7-mile cutoff trail called the Bobcat Link and a .37 interpretive trail.
- **Blue Trail (6)** – The preserve's Southeast quadrant has 10 miles of hiking, mountain biking





and horse trails, which loops towards the river. There are three primitive campsites along the trail - Ranch Camp, Tree Frog Camp and Mullet Camp. Historic sites along the trail include the early 1900s Carlton House, the 1920s-era Hanshaw-Widner House (currently a privately occupied dwelling), 1897 Yates Homestead, Graves Brothers Tram Line (an elevated logging road), and Dinky Line (a 1910 railroad bed used to haul timber).

- **Red Trail (7)** – The preserve’s Southwest quadrant has 17 miles of trail for hiking, mountain biking and horseback riding, and a loop trail for birders. There is a 6-mile section to the Eagle Campsite, with a horse corral and fire pit. This section of the preserve harbors a large population of federally endangered Florida scrub jays. The



best viewing is along the 3-mile Scrub Jay Link. This trail cuts through open sandy prairie with scrubby flatwoods and oak scrub.

Day 3, Paddling

Canoeing, boating and fishing on the St. Sebastian River are popular activities. No launching of canoes or kayaks is permitted on the preserve, however. Launching is available nearby at Donald MacDonald Park or [Dale Wimbrow Park \(8\)](#), both located off Roseland Road in the City of Sebastian.

Kayak rentals and river tours are available from [About Kayaks](#) located directly across the street from Dale Wimbrow Park. For more information, call (772) 589-3469.

Day 4, Tours

In the preserve, guided hikes, wagon rides and Florida scrub jay encounters run from



October through May. Swamp tromps and group field trips are provided by request. Contact the preserve office (321) 953-5004 for more information.

The [Citizens for the St. Sebastian Preserve, Inc.](#) is a non-profit volunteer organizations providing financial and volunteer support for the state park. The organization hosts education and volunteer events for the public at the park. Check their website for events.

Other Activities

[North County Aquatic Center \(9\)](#) – Located adjacent to the park to the south is this Indian River County recreation and family-oriented facility. There is an Olympic size pool and zero entry activity pool, baseball fields, concession stands, pavilions and a playground.

[Mel Fisher's Treasures \(10\)](#) – The museum is a 15-mile drive from the preserve. Mel Fisher started his treasure hunting career in 1963 when the family move from California. He spent the next 7 years successfully salvaging the 1715 Fleet, treasure-laden ships which sank off the coastline. This is how the area got the name, "Florida's Treasure Coast." He went on to discover the *Nuestra Señora de Atocha* in 1985, the largest underwater treasure-find in history.

See also the Real Florida Guide for [Sebastian Inlet State Park \(11\)](#), about 25 miles east of the preserve.



