

Kissimmee Prairie Preserve State Park and Okeechobee Battlefield State Park (Okeechobee County, Florida) Real Florida Guide

Note: Colored numbers correspond with numbers on the map.

Choose from the options below to plan your own day-long adventure or for a longer stay in the South Central Florida region. Savor the slow roads of five counties by taking the [Big Water Heritage Trail](#), a scenic auto tour route which links the assets around the great Lake Okeechobee, or choose from the options below to plan your adventures in Okeechobee County, Florida.

The area around Lake Okeechobee, provides escape from the hustle and bustle of metropolitan life. About 90 minutes from either coast, the area is a unique combination of historic attractions, fishing opportunities, natural areas and wildlife, and agriculture and rural ranchlands. Cattle ranching is the oldest industry in Okeechobee County and is home to many of Florida's traditional cattle ranching families. The "cracker cowboy" history is captured in the book, *A Land Remembered* by Patrick Smith who grew up on a ranch which is now Kissimmee Prairie Preserve State Park.

Day 1, Kissimmee Prairie Preserve State Park

[Kissimmee Prairie Preserve State Park](#) (1) is more than 54,000 acres of one of the largest remaining stretches of Florida dry prairie, home to the endangered Florida Grasshopper Sparrow, Crested Caracara, and Burrowing Owl. For overnight stays, the

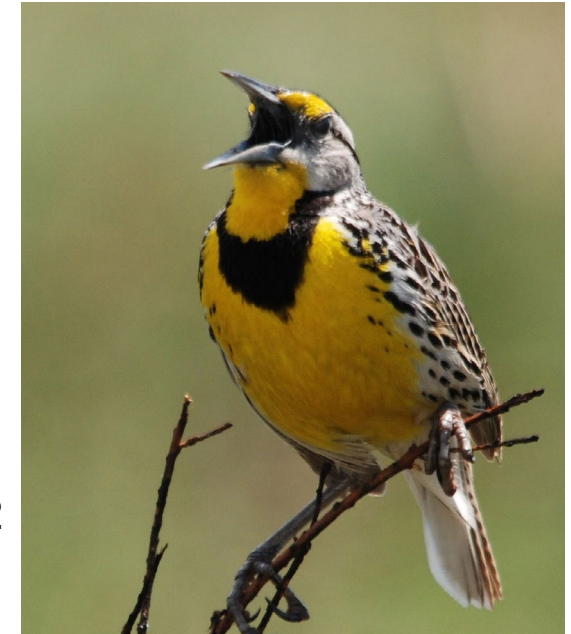




state park has two full facility campground loops; make reservations through [Reserve America](#). November through March, ranger-led prairie swamp-buggy tours allow visitors to see remote areas of the preserve. Kissimmee Prairie's remoteness makes it one of Florida's premier locations for stargazing. More than 100 miles of dirt roads allow hikers, bicyclists and equestrians to explore the park's prairies, wetlands, and shady hammocks. Stay at the state park a day, a weekend, or make it your home-

base for a longer stay in this unique region.

Long-distance hikers, moving from the northwest to southeast on sections of the [Florida National Scenic Trail \(FNST\)](#) can walk from the former site of the town of [KICCO](#) (what is now the [KICCO Wildlife Management Area](#)) (2) in Polk County across the Kissimmee River (west to east), at the S-65A Lock, and then on to the state park office and campground (14.2 miles). The FNST then extends southeast from the office out of the park thru [Starvation Slough to the Micco Landing Trailhead](#) (3) (20.2 miles), and continues south through a variety of publicly-owned lands to Lake Okeechobee.



Day 2, Oak Creek, No Name, and Starvation Slough

South of Kissimmee Prairie Preserve State Park, on the east side of the Kissimmee River, in Okeechobee County, are the [Oak Creek, No Name Slough and Starvation](#)



[Slough Management Units](#). They are comprised of more than 4,000 acres owned and managed by the South Florida Water Management District. Hike, bike or horseback ride the area or take a short paddle (bring your own canoe or kayak) from the [Oak Creek campsite area](#) (4).



Other options in the area: Hike the 3.3 miles in [Yates Marsh](#) (5) starting at the Platt's Bluff boat launch north to the trailhead at Lofton Road (6) (also part of the FNST), traversing pine flatwoods, open prairie, and palm hammocks. All are home to free-roaming cattle. A campsite in the oak hammock is available for use by applying for a [free special use license](#) from the water management district.

Historically, the Kissimmee River meandered over 103 miles from Lake Kissimmee to Lake Okeechobee within a one to two mile wide floodplain. The currently channelized river (C-38 Canal) is being filled in and restored and you can now canoe or kayak portions of the restored Kissimmee River. [Seaboard Marsh and Telex Marsh](#) are some of the most scenic stretches of the old river; their banks are lined with towering oaks and massive, moss drenched cypress. Bring your own boat and [launch](#) from any of several sites in Okeechobee or Highlands Counties. Make sure you plan your route to go downstream on the C-38 Canal so you do not have to fight the current.

Day 3, Okeechobee, Florida

After exploring Kissimmee Prairie Preserve State Park and surrounding area, continue your explorations by driving 40 minutes south to the town of Okeechobee, on the





northern-most shore of Lake Okeechobee. When visiting the [City of Okeechobee](#) (7), see the five murals: [Williams Family Cattle Drive](#) 1937 (206 N. Parrott Avenue), Railroad Arriving 1915 (S. Parrott Avenue at S. Park Street west side), [Okeechobee Telephone Company](#) (S. Parrott Avenue at S. Park Street east side), [Looking Back Through the Windows of Time](#) (NW 5th Avenue and Highway 70), and [Okeechobee Hardware Store](#).

Okeechobee also features the Cattleman's Rodeo Arena, Florida's largest Livestock



Market, historic court house, and [Okeechobee County Historical Society Museum and 1916 Schoolhouse](#) (1850 Highway 98N). To see this schoolhouse museum by appointment, call 863-763-4344. Don't miss the annual [Okeechobee Speckled Perch Festival](#) and Florida's Cow Town Rodeo (March).

Visit the [Okeechobee Battlefield Historic State Park](#) (8) on the third weekend in February for the annual Second Seminole War battle reenactment, and visit the Battle of Okeechobee Historic Marker. This was considered to be the largest battle of the war. Note: Currently, this state park is open to the public only on the reenactment weekend. Contact the park at 863-462-5360 for more information.

Hike, rollerblade, or bicycle the [Lake Okeechobee Scenic Trail \(LOST\)](#). Designated as part of the FNST, the LOST is a 110 mile trail encircling the lake on the 35 foot high Herbert Hoover Dike. More than half the trail is paved. The LOST is the perfect place



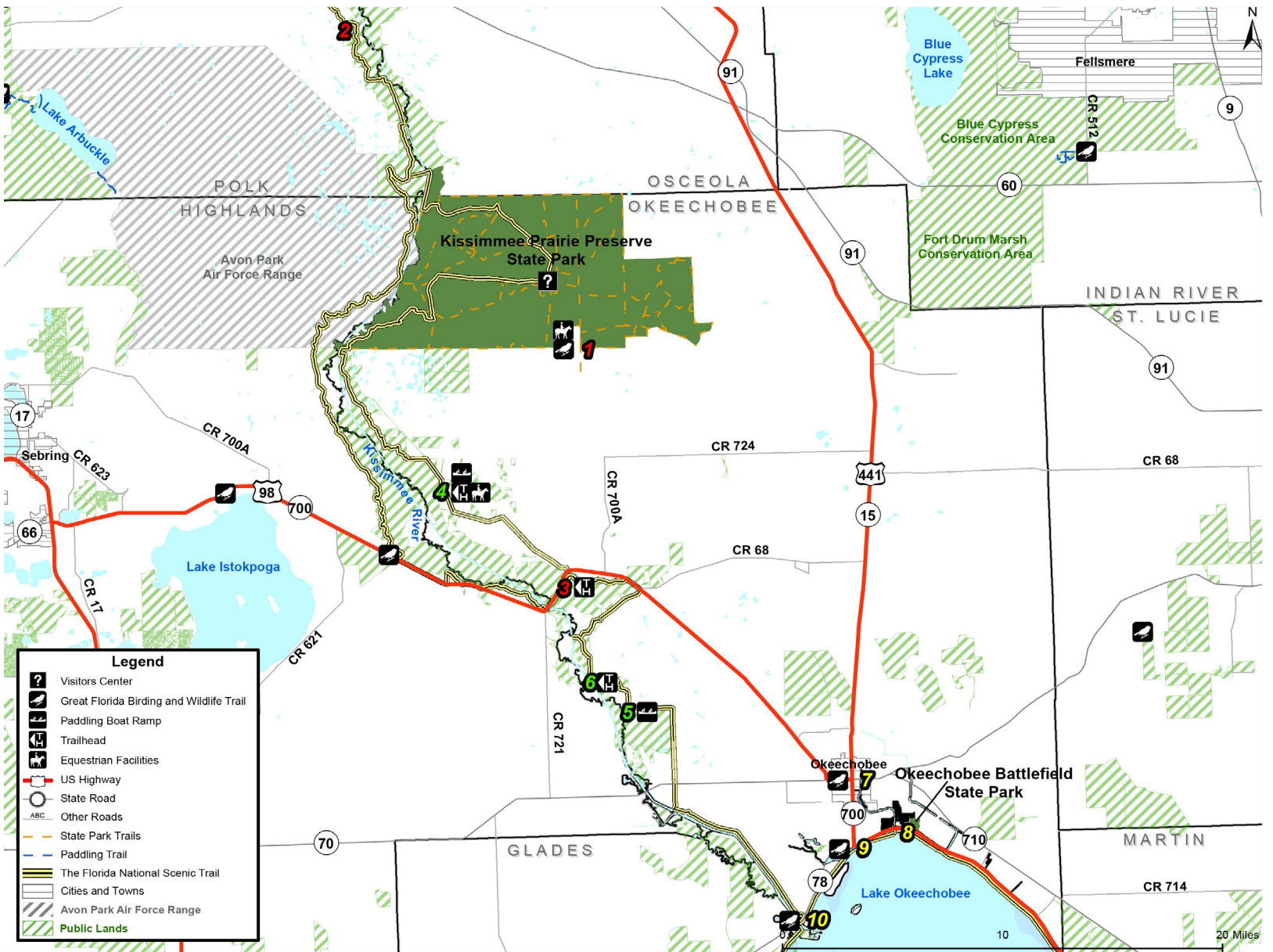
for bird lovers to observe American bald eagles, ospreys, egrets, ibis, gulls, terns, and skimmers. Access can be gained from many recreation areas located around the lake. In Okeechobee, [Jaycee Park \(9\)](#) has a 400 foot long fishing pier with a covered picnic pavilion at the end. Hike or bike four miles southwest to reach the [Okee-Tantie Recreation Area \(10\)](#) watching for limpkins and purple gallinules. Jaycee and Okee-Tantie are stops on the [Great Florida Birding & Wildlife Trail](#).

To long-distance hikers, [Okeechobee West](#) is 56.5 miles of the LOST trail starting at the town of Okeechobee, south through the towns of Lakeport and Moore Haven in Glades County, to the town of Clewiston in Hendry County. This mileage is divided into five segments, with panoramic views of prairie, marshland, cattle ranches, and sugar cane fields, and there are magnificent views of sunrises and sunsets over Lake Okeechobee.

Other options in the area: Other activities to choose from on Lake Okeechobee include world class large-mouth bass, crappie (also known as speckled perch) and bluegill fishing. Choose from many [guides](#) from around the lake.

Geocaching is a popular activity in many areas of Florida, including Okeechobee County. Hidden treasures are sought by participants using handheld GPS receivers. See the website www.geocaching.com for locations of local treasures all over the world, and for more information on the sport.





Legend

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| | Visitors Center |
| | Great Florida Birding and Wildlife Trail |
| | Paddling Boat Ramp |
| | Trailhead |
| | Equestrian Facilities |
| | US Highway |
| | State Road |
| | Other Roads |
| | State Park Trails |
| | Paddling Trail |
| | The Florida National Scenic Trail |
| | Cities and Towns |
| | Avon Park Air Force Range |
| | Public Lands |

20 Miles