



## White Springs Real Florida Guide

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

Local historians believe that Native Americans regarded White Sulphur Springs along the Suwannee River as sacred and a neutral zone, much like the pipestone quarries for Native American medicine pipes in southwestern Minnesota. It is believed that a member of any tribe could bathe in the healing waters along the Suwannee without fear of being attacked.

White Sulphur Springs was the first Florida mineral spring to be commercialized, initially featured as Jackson Springs in 1831. A log cabin spring house was built followed by a concrete and coquina structure in 1903.

The spring attraction gave rise to the town and by the 1880s, visitors could choose from 500 hotel and boarding house rooms. Today, White Springs is a highly pic-



turesque and historic village on the high banks of a famous waterway. Visitors can easily delve into the rich history of the region or explore numerous recreation opportunities.

Choose from the options below to plan your own day-long adventure or make White Springs a comfortable home base for a three-day stay or longer. A good starting point is the Nature and Heritage Tourism Center in downtown White Springs, adjacent to the restored White Sulphur





Springs Springhouse and Stephen Foster Folk Culture Center State Park. Several [annual events](#) are held in the area, such as the three-day Florida Folk Festival over Memorial Day weekend.

**Overnight Lodging and Camping Options:** [Stephen Foster Folk Culture Center State Park](#) offers a full-facility campground, group camping, and five riverside rental cabins. Outside of the park, there are numerous [area amenities](#) to choose from including private campgrounds, cottage rentals, motels and a bed-and-breakfasts, and restaurants and eateries.

**Day One, Choose from the following:**

Familiarize yourself with White Springs (1) by taking the White Springs Historic Walking Tour. A top feature is the 40-room Telford Hotel, built in 1903 from Georgia brick and river rock. Maps can be picked up at the tourism center or the town hall.

Bike or hike the 8-mile [Foster's Hammock Loop Trail](#) in Stephen Foster Folk Culture Center State Park (2), traversing high river bluffs and limestone outcroppings. There is also the four-mile [Carter Camp Trail](#) in the park, a multi-use path for hikers, mountain bikers and equestrians that features limestone outcroppings and limestone formations.

Explore the state park's museum that depicts eight dioramas of Stephen Foster songs and features historic

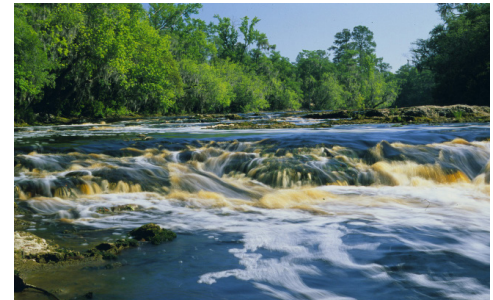




pianos and Stephen Foster’s desk where he penned some of his famous songs such as “Way Down Upon the Suwannee River”, originally known as “Old Folks at Home”. After your museum visit, stroll through the 200-foot tall Stephen Foster Carillon Tower where the 97-bell carillon plays bell concerts daily. In Craft Square, you can witness demonstrations of a variety of folk arts, such as blacksmithing and quilting. And make sure to visit the restored White Sulphur Spring house on the edge of the park boundary and imagine the many people who came to the waters for healing and pain relief.

**Day Two**, Choose from the following:

Explore [Big Shoals Public Lands \(3\)](#) with its towering river banks, outstanding vistas, and Florida’s only Class III whitewater rapids. The property, managed by three state agencies, also features more than 28 miles of wooded trails for hikers, mountain bikers and equestrians. The trail system includes the paved Woodpecker Trail for hiking and biking.



Paddle the famous Suwannee River with a canoe or kayak. [American Canoe Adventures](#) is located in White Springs across from the tourism center and there are [other outfitters](#) located along the river. Keep in mind that the Big Shoals rapids are at their peak when the [water level at White Springs](#) is between 59 and 61 feet above mean sea level. Beginners should portage the rapids on a trail along the east bank and the rapids will likely require portaging when water levels are below 55 feet at [White Springs](#). A [detailed map](#) shows launches and mileage information. Here are some Suwannee River trip options (outfitters may provide more):

- 1 hour trip from the U.S. 41 Bridge (4) to Stephen Foster State Park, 3 miles. Great



for beginners.

- 3-4 hour trip from Big Shoals State Park (Old Godwin Bridge Road (5)—SE 94<sup>th</sup> St) to the U.S. 41 Bridge, 6 miles. Run the rapids at Big Shoals and Little Shoals or portage depending on experience and conditions.
- Overnight trip from the U.S. 41 Bridge, staying at the Woods Ferry River Camp (6) (13 miles) and paddling 10 miles the next day to the Spirit of the Suwannee Music Park Ramp (7).

[The Suwannee River Wilderness Trail](#) begins at the U.S. 41 Bridge at White Springs and continues 170 miles to the Gulf of Mexico. The trail offers free river camps and a phone reservation system (800-868-9914). Each camp features screened sleeping platforms with electricity and ceiling fans, restrooms and showers, and primitive campsites, helping to make the Suwannee a premier overnight paddling destination.



**Day Three**, Choose from the following:

Hike part of the Florida National Scenic Trail, a 1,300-mile footpath extending from the Big Cypress Swamp to Fort Pickens near Pensacola. The trail runs right through the town of White Springs and Stephen Foster Folk Culture Center State Park and runs along the high banks of the Suwannee River for another 30 miles. [Local outfitters](#) can help arrange for shuttles.

Explore the [Camp Branch Tract](#) (8), especially the highly scenic half-mile loop trail along a blue-blazed trail along Camp Branch (Trailhead: N30.3779 W82.8788).



This stream rushes through a slot canyon and disappears underground. This is a primitive recreation area managed by the Suwannee River Water Management District. From the tourism center, travel west on CR 25A about 8 miles, turn left past the Camp Branch road sign onto an unnamed road; follow road approximately 1 mile to parking area. From the parking lot, hike the road 1.5 miles to the Florida Trail Camp Branch Loop.



Explore the [Falling Creek Falls \(9\)](#) (N30.2579 W82.6686). Unique for Florida, the creek roars over a 10-foot waterfall during normal water levels and then flows through a deep ravine before going underground. From the tourism center, travel south on U.S. 41 for about 9 miles and turn left onto NW Falling Creek Road. Travel one mile. The Falling Creek Falls Park is on the right before crossing the creek. An elevated boardwalk leads to the falls. This is a jointly managed area between the Northwest Florida Water Management Area and Columbia County.

### Other Activities

Fishing is a popular activity in the region with numerous lakes and rivers. There are five types of bass in the Suwannee River, seven types of catfish and numerous bream species. Contact the tourism center and/or Rooster's Outfitters at 10315 SE 141 Boulevard (first left after crossing Swift Creek going south on CR 25A) for current fishing information and local guide contacts. Visit Suwannee Hardware at 16660 Spring St. (US 41) for hunting and fishing licenses.

Bike touring along the scenic back roads around White Springs is highly popular. There are also numerous mountain bike trails other than those listed, many



of which have been developed by the non-profit [Suwannee Bicycle Association](#), headquartered in White Springs. Access their website for single track trail information and suggested road routes. The group also provides online status reports for area bike trails and they organize numerous cycling events throughout the year.

Take a dip in [Suwannee Springs \(10\)](#) (N30.3940 W82.9339), another sulfur springs along the Suwannee that was once the site of an historic resort. Part of the old stone spring house still remains. From White Springs, travel north on U.S. 41. After about 7 miles, turn left onto CR 132 and travel another 7 miles. Turn left onto U.S. 129 and just after crossing the Suwannee River, turn left onto 40<sup>th</sup> Street. Travel east .5 mile; the entrance is on the left.

Explore other public lands in the region managed by the [Suwannee River Water Management District](#).

Geocaching! There are numerous [geocaching sites](#) in the region around White Springs. Geocaching has been described as a high tech scavenger hunt using a hand-held global positioning system (GPS) device.



