

Northwest Florida

# Wakulla Springs Lodge and State Park

*Strange and Mysterious Waters*

## Real Fun in the Real Florida

Wakulla Springs State Park is a 6,000-acre wildlife sanctuary quietly hidden in Spanish moss-draped Florida woodlands, 30 minutes from Tallahassee. The heart of the park is the world famous Wakulla Springs. Cool water flows from the majestic springs to create the Wakulla River, one of the last pristine rivers in Florida.

One of Wakulla Springs' main attractions is the **boat tours** that operate 365 days a year, depending on the weather. The three-mile **River Tour** is a forty-minute cruise on the river to see alligators, native birds, turtles and other wildlife up close. When water conditions permit, **glass bottom boats** drift over the bowl of the Wakulla Spring, providing breathtaking views of **mastodon bones**, limestone formations and playful schools of freshwater fish. "Henry, the Pole-vaulting Fish" treats tour guests with his antics on

this thirty minute trip over one of the world's largest and deepest freshwater springs. It is a haven for local youths who love the exhilarating rush of a leap from the spring **observation tower** to **swim** in the 69-degree fahrenheit water.

The **nature trails** begin west of the historic Wakulla Springs Lodge. Each trail takes visitors on a **walking tour** to discover a different aspect of the Wakulla Springs forest ecosystem. A **multiuse trail** is on the north side of the park. Trail maps are available at the office.

The **Wakulla Springs Lodge** is a 1937 vision of quiet elegance, and provides a retreat from the modern world. Twenty-seven guest rooms are furnished with period furniture and private bathrooms. The dining room overlooking the spring provides **elegantly prepared food** for breakfast, lunch and dinner. Gift items and light lunches are offered at the snack bar with its intricately painted 10-foot ceiling.

**A Word About Alligators** – The Wakulla River is home to a remarkable variety of wildlife, including alligators. These animals reside in an area protected from human intrusion and may be dangerous. *Swim in the designated area only.*

## **History and Nature**

Humans have occupied Wakulla Springs for nearly 15,000 years. Many sources cite Wakulla as meaning “river of the crying bird” or “strange and mysterious waters.” Archaeological evidence shows intermittent habitation from Paleo-Indian times through the time of European contact in 1513. Later periods are also represented, particularly the Spanish Mission, Creek and Seminole.

Edward Ball purchased the property in 1934 and developed it as an attraction that focused on the preservation of wildlife and the surrounding habitat. The Wakulla Springs Lodge, completed in 1937, is an excellent example of Mediterranean Revival architecture.

The park is listed on the National Register of Historic Places and is designated as a National Natural Landmark.

## **Park Guidelines**

- Hours are 8 a.m. until sunset, 365 days a year.

- An entrance fee is required. Additional user fees may apply.
- All plants, animals and park property are protected. Collection, destruction or disturbance is prohibited.
- Pets are permitted in designated areas only. Pets must be kept on a leash no longer than 6 feet and well behaved at all times.
- Fishing, boating and fires are not allowed in the park. Fireworks and hunting are prohibited in all Florida state parks.
- Alcoholic beverage consumption is allowed in designated areas only.
- Become a volunteer. Inquire at the ranger station.
- Recreational scuba diving is permitted in designated areas; not in the main spring.
- Florida's state parks are committed to providing equal access to all facilities and programs. Should you need assistance to enable your participation, please contact the ranger station.

## Contact Information

Florida State Parks  
Florida Department of Environmental Protection  
Division of Recreation and Parks  
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