

Northwest Florida

# Florida Caverns State Park

*Underground Florida*

## Real Fun in the Real Florida

Florida Caverns State Park is a 1,300-acre sanctuary bordering both banks of the springfed Chipola River. The park's primary attraction is its spectacular cave tour. Many visitors simply enjoy the abundant beauty of the spring and summer wildflowers throughout the park and the refreshing appeal of the Blue Hole Spring swimming and recreation area.

**Guided cave tours**, offered daily except on Christmas and Thanksgiving, provide an exciting opportunity to view **cave formations** such as stalactites, stalagmites, draperies, flowstone, soda straws, columns and rimstone pools. Visitors can learn about the geology, wildlife, and history of this cave system. The park offers visitors two networks of **nature trails**. The short, scenic Visitor Center Trail winds its way through towering

hardwoods and **limestone bluffs** above the river floodplain. The **Upper Chipola trails** offer 6 miles of exploration for **hikers, bicyclists** and **horseback riders** in the woodlands along the sparkling Chipola River.

The historic **visitor center** features an extensive display of maps, exhibits, historic artifacts and a video tour of the Florida Cavern. Downstairs, the park's concession is the staging area for guided cave tours and offers refreshments, souvenirs, trail maps and other information about park facilities. The park also offers **swimming, fishing, picnicking, camping** and **canoe rentals**. Stables and equestrian camping facilities are available for visitors who bring their horses.

## **History & Nature**

The park's caves have a long and interesting geologic history starting approximately 38 million years ago. Sea levels were much higher then today. The southeastern coastal plain of the United States was submerged. Shells, coral and sediments gradually accumulated on the sea floor. As sea levels fell, these materials hardened into limestone. Over the last million years, acidic groundwater dissolved crevices just below the

surface creating cave passages large enough to walk through.

Dazzling stalactites, stalagmites, flowstone and other fragile cave-drip formations were created over tens of thousands of years by a similar dissolving process by naturally acidic rainwater. The park's bluffs, caves and springs are called *karst terrain*. Blind cave crayfish, cave salamanders, three species of cave roosting bats live in these caves.

Florida Caverns State Park has ten distinct natural communities: *upland glade, upland hardwood forest, upland mixed forest, floodplain forest, floodplain swamp, alluvial stream, spring run stream, aquatic cave, and terrestrial cave*. Some of these communities are greatly influenced by their elevation above the Chipola River. The floodplain forest is characterized by bald cypress, tupelo, swamp chestnut oak, lizard's tail and spider lilies. Just above the floodplain is one of the best examples of an upland hardwood forest in the state. Visitors can walk among huge spruce pine, white ash, Florida elm, southern magnolia, American beech, black walnut and needle palms.

## **Directions**

Florida Caverns park is located three miles north of Marianna on State Road 166.

## **Park Guidelines**

- Hours are 8 a.m. until sunset, 365 days a year.
- An entrance fee is required.
- 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, swimming and fires are allowed in designated areas only. A Florida fishing license may be required.
- Caves other than the Florida Cavern tour cave are closed to the public, except under scientific research permits.
- For camping information, contact Reserve America at (800) 326-3521 or (866) I CAMP FL

or TDD (888) 433-0287 or visit  
ReserveAmerica.com.

- 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  
**Florida Caverns State Park**  
3345 Caverns Road  
Marianna, Florida 32446  
(850) 482-9598  
FloridaStateParks.org