

Southwest Florida

Fakahatchee Strand Preserve State Park

The world's largest cypress/royal palm forest

Real Fun in the Real Florida

Fakahatchee Strand Preserve State Park encompasses much of Florida's most spectacular swamp. More native orchid species grow in this 75,000-acre wilderness than in any other place on the continent. Visitors can experience Fakahatchee by hiking one of its numerous trails, strolling along a boardwalk or bicycling or bird-watching on the 11-mile park road.

The emphasis at Fakahatchee Strand Preserve State Park is on the preservation of its natural character. In keeping with this goal, facilities and activities are limited. The park is a wilderness to enjoy and explore.

Adventurous visitors can participate in a **guided swamp walk** and wade into the Fakahatchee Strand to see its tropical ferns and bromeliads. Those who don't want to get their feet wet can

hike along one of the many remnant logging tram roads which are high, dry and open year-round. The East and West Main Tram are excellent **hiking** choices. The less adventuresome can take a leisurely drive through the wilderness along Janes Scenic Drive.

To spend an enjoyable morning or afternoon at the park, visit the Big Cypress Bend Boardwalk on U.S. 41, seven miles west of State Road 29. The **boardwalk** is approximately 2,500 feet long and ends at a swamp pond where a variety of plants and wildlife may be observed.

History & Nature

The Fakahatchee Strand is a forested swamp about 20 miles long and five miles wide where the underlying limestone has dissolved to form a shallow, seasonally-flooded depression with a canopy characterized by bald cypress, red maple and royal palm trees. Within Fakahatchee Strand, deeper channels called sloughs provide a protective environment for tropical plants that cannot survive South Florida's extreme temperatures. The deeper sloughs flow through layers of organic soils where smaller trees form a rain forest-like mid canopy, sometimes laden with

epiphytes, including bromeliads and orchids. The southern portion of the Preserve is composed of salt marshes and mangroves which border Fakahatchee Bay. During the rainy season, fresh water flows southward into the Gulf of Mexico, gradually mixing with the salt water of the Ten Thousand Islands, creating conditions for a highly productive estuarine ecosystem.

The park's wildlife is as diverse as its flora. Imperiled species such as the American crocodile and the West Indian manatee dwell in the mangrove lined waterways to the south, while wood storks, bald eagles, Florida black bears, Everglades mink and Florida panthers make their home elsewhere in the park.

Human activity at the Fakahatchee Strand has been documented as far back as 2,500 years ago. Archaeologists have noted several sites indicating pre-Columbian Indian activities. From 1944-1954, a timber company harvested cypress from the Fakahatchee Strand. Approximately 192 miles of tram roads, built to haul cypress logs from the swamp, are overgrown with forest vegetation. Several are kept clear for access and hiking.

Directions

To Park Entrance: Take I-75 to exit 80/State Road 29. Go 15 miles south. Take a right on Janes Scenic Drive. **To Big Cypress Bend Boardwalk:** Take I-75 to exit 80/State Road 29. Travel south for 18 miles to U.S. 41. Turn right and go seven miles.

Park Guidelines

- Hours of operation are 8 a.m. until sunset, 365 days a year.
- No entrance fee is required.
- All plants, animals and park property are protected.
- The collection, destruction or disturbance of plants, animals or park property is prohibited.
- Pets are permitted in designated areas only.
- Pets must be kept on a hand held leash no longer than 6 feet and well behaved at all times.

- Fireworks and hunting are prohibited.
- The use of ATV's and other off road vehicles is prohibited.
- Become a volunteer. Inquire at the ranger station.
- Become a volunteer and/or join Friends of Fakahatchee State Preserve. For information, visit www.friendsoffakahatchee.org or check with park staff.
- 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
Department of Environmental Protection
Division of Recreation and Parks
Fakahatchee Strand Preserve State Park

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