

## Southwest Florida

# Lake Manatee State Park

*A lakeside retreat*

## Real Fun in the Real Florida

Lake Manatee State Park extends along three miles of the south shore of Lake Manatee, a reservoir serving water needs for Manatee and Sarasota counties. Picnicking, camping, swimming, boating and fishing are offered here. There are multi-use trails for hiking, horseback riding and bicycling.

This 549-acre park offers a rich mixture of nature-based experiences and activities, a quiet respite from the bustle of Gulf Coast urban life. There are **60 campsites** for tents and recreational vehicles; all have water and electricity. Restrooms and a dump station are provided. There is a **picnic area**, with a children's **playground** and showers, near the lakeshore offering easy access to a **swimming** beach.

The park's best adventure can be found on the waters of Lake Manatee, a 2,400-acre reservoir considered one of the best **fishing** spots in the region. Sunshine bass, speckled perch, bluegill and crappie can be found in most parts of the lake, while catfish and largemouth bass tend to favor deeper waters.

There is a **boat ramp** and launching dock and ample parking spaces for boat trailers. Low docks line both sides of the boat ramp and are an excellent spot to catch a glimpse of the egrets, herons and alligators that live near the marshy edges of the lake. Only boat motors up to 20 horsepower are allowed.

Visitors can enjoy **hiking, horseback riding** and **bicycling** on 6.5 miles of multi-use trails. **Canoeing** and **kayaking** are also popular activities with five miles of paddling trails.

## **History & Nature**

The picnic area is near a forest of sand pines, a Florida tree restricted to locales where patches of white, well-drained sand occur. The sand pine forest, together with its associated vegetation,

forms a natural community called scrub. In October, look for the lavender-flowered shrub, garberia, which blooms profusely in the scrub community. Another extremely rare plant of the scrub is the Florida goldenaster, a very localized Florida species.

Elsewhere in the park, pine flatwoods dominate the scene. To preserve the flatwoods in an unaltered state, the park staff periodically burns this natural community under controlled conditions to prevent the encroachment of broad-leaved trees. A few, small, isolated hardwood forests may be found in the park.

The most conspicuous wildlife species is the gopher tortoise which is often seen during the day. Once common in sandy soils throughout the Southeast, this burrowing reptile is losing habitat to urban development. Its burrows are used by other species such as the rarely seen gopher frog which emerges at night, and does not often move far from the burrow except when females search for standing water to lay eggs. The indigo snake, which may reach a length of nine feet, is sometimes seen. Other animals observed in the park include cottontail and marsh rabbits, cotton rats, deer and gray foxes. Ospreys and bald eagles are occasionally sighted feeding in the lake.

## **Directions**

Take exit 220 off of I-75. Lake Manatee State Park is located 9 miles east of I-75 on State Road 64 in Bradenton, Florida.

## **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.
- 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.
- Fireworks and hunting are prohibited.

- Alcoholic beverage consumption is allowed in designated areas only.
- Become a volunteer. Inquire at the ranger station.
- For camping information, contact Reserve America at (800) 326-3521 or (866) I CAMP FL or TDD (888) 433-0287 or visit [ReserveAmerica.com](http://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  
Department of Environmental Protection  
Division of Recreation and Parks  
**Lake Manatee State Park**  
20007 State Road 64  
Bradenton, FL 34212

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(941) 741-3028

[FloridaStateParks.org](http://FloridaStateParks.org)