

Southwest Florida

Little Manatee River State Park

More than just a river

Real Fun in the Real Florida

Named for the river that flows through it, Little Manatee River State Park is a peaceful park, comprising 2,418 acres, located less than 30 minutes from Tampa. The park offers picnicking, camping, hiking and equestrian trails. The river is suitable for kayaking, canoeing and fishing. (46 words)

Visitors can enjoy a variety of activities. The striking beauty of the river is best appreciated by **kayak** or **canoe**. Visitors also **fish** along the banks of the river or from canoes or kayaks for bass, bream and catfish.

Thirty, full-facility campsites are nestled in a forest of sand pines. A **youth/group campground** accommodates up to 20 people. **Picnic** tables, **pavilions** and **grills** are situated near the river.

Pavilions can be reserved for a fee. Unreserved pavilions are available on a first-come, first-served basis.

Equestrians can enjoy twelve miles of riding trails. **Equestrian campsites**, with optional covered stalls, are also available to rent. Riders must furnish their own horses and proof of a negative Coggins test.

A 6.5-mile **hiking** trail winds through diverse natural scenery north of the river. A **primitive campsite** located along this trail must be reserved. All hikers must register at the park ranger station.

History & Nature

The Little Manatee River originates east of Fort Lonesome in southeastern Hillsborough County and empties into Cockroach Bay. It is fed by several streams along its length. The river channel is well defined, occasionally having steep, sandy banks. The river is referred to as a blackwater stream because of its dark, tea-like color caused by the organic debris in the water. Just west of the park the river divides into several streams as it enters

the tidal lowlands near Cockroach Bay. There the water becomes saline, and the sandy banks give way to marshes. The tidal influence reaches into the park, often causing water-level fluctuations to be quite noticeable.

The steep ground next to Cypress Creek, which enters the park from the north, gives evidence of the early days of phosphate mining, during which pebble phosphate was dredged from stream and river bottoms. The dredged material, now overgrown with trees, rises high above the creek.

Purchased in 1974 to provide additional outdoor recreational opportunities in the Tampa Bay region, this park has a variety of natural plant communities. These areas vary from the floodplain forest and low-lying hammocks near the river to the dry uplands characterized by sand pine scrub and scrubby flatwoods communities. Intermediate elevations feature pine flatwoods. Circular depressions in the flatwoods soils are occupied by grassy marshes or dome-shaped cypress swamps.

Directions

Located off U.S. 301 five miles south of Sun City Center on Lightfoot Road, and seven miles north of Parish

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.
- A Florida fishing license may be required.
- Fireworks and hunting are prohibited.
- Consumption of alcoholic beverages is prohibited except in designated areas only.
- Volunteer. Inquire at the ranger station.

- For information about Friends of Little Manatee River State Park, call (813) 671-5005.
- 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
Department of Environmental Protection
Division of Recreation and Parks
Little Manatee River State Park
215 Lightfoot Road
Wimauma, FL 33598
(813) 671-5005
FloridaStateParks.org