

Nature & History

The Savannas is comprised of six natural communities: pine flatwoods, wet prairie, basin marsh, marsh lake, sand pine scrub and scrubby flatwoods. Each community is characterized by a distinct population of plants and animals that are naturally associated with each other and their physical environment.

Of particular interest is the sand pine scrub, a globally imperiled plant community covering the eastern boundary of the park. It is dominated by sand pines and is home to the Florida scrub-jay and gopher tortoise. Rare plant species, like the prickly apple cactus, Lakela's mint and four-petal pawpaw, dot the landscape.

The basin marsh covers nearly 1,000 acres. The landscape changes dramatically with the rainfall as does the wildlife that lives here. The deeper marsh lakes provide habitat for largemouth bass, alligators, waterfowl and bald eagles.

Archaeological evidence suggests native occupation of the area approximately 7,000 years ago. These native peoples inhabited the Atlantic Ridge, relying on the rich fauna and flora of the nearby Indian River.

During the Second Seminole War (1835-1842), Lt. Colonel Benjamin Pierce first used the term 'savannah' to describe a series of ponds and marshes found here. In 1879, Captain Thomas Richards planted the first pineapples, grown from cuttings he transported from Key West. The plants thrived in the sandy, well-drained soils and dozens of plantations appeared along the Atlantic Ridge. African Americans and Bahamians provided plantation labor working the fields in extremely uncomfortable conditions. From 1895 to 1920, Jensen Beach was known as the "Pineapple Capital of the World."

Florida State Parks

Florida Department of Environmental Protection
Division of Recreation and Parks

Savannas Preserve State Park

2541 Walton Road
Port St. Lucie, FL 34952
(772) 398-2779

FloridaStateParks.org

Park Guidelines

- Hours are 8 a.m. until sunset, 365 days a year. The Education Center is open 9 a.m. until 5 p.m., Thursday through Monday.
- An entrance fee is required.
- Only electric outboard motors are permitted.
- 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 leash no longer than 6 feet and well behaved at all times.
- Equestrian activities are prohibited on the Atlantic Coastal Ridge due to the sensitivity of this endangered natural community.
- Fireworks and hunting are prohibited.
- Alcoholic beverage consumption is allowed in designated areas only.
- Inquire at the Education Center to volunteer.
- 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 Education Center at (772) 398-2779.

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Southeast
Florida

Savannas Preserve
State Park

Largest freshwater marsh system on
Florida's southeast coast



Photo by Jamie Hansen



...the Real FloridaSM

National Gold Medal Winner

Florida State Parks - "America's First Two-Time Winner"



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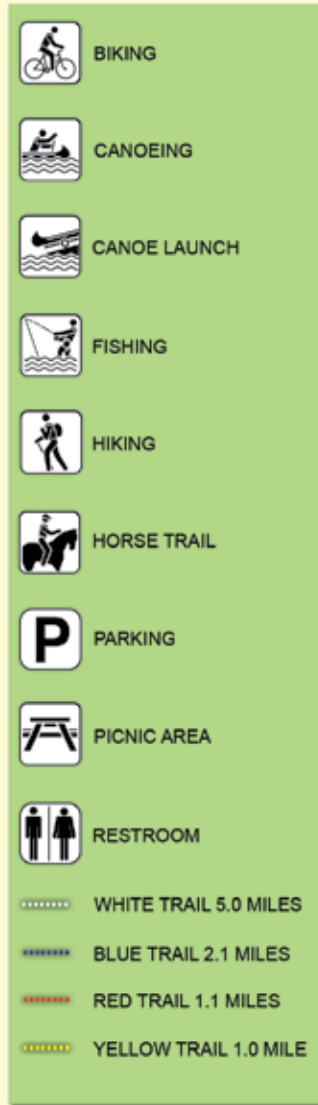
Encompassing more than 5,400 acres and stretching more than 10 miles from Ft. Pierce to Jensen Beach, Savannas Preserve State Park contains the largest, most ecologically intact stretch of freshwater marsh in southeast Florida. The park offers visitors a variety of ways to explore and learn about this natural area.

Begin by visiting the **Education Center** located off Walton Road. The award-winning facility features **interactive exhibits** and **displays** on local history, the preserve's natural communities, plant and animal species and how the Florida Park Service is managing the park for future generations to enjoy. The center also features **live animal exhibits**.

Numerous interpretive activities are available to school groups and park visitors, including **guided walks** and **kayak/canoe trips**. **Kayaking and canoeing** are good ways to explore the Savannas, water levels permitting. The launching area is located .75 miles from the Education Center and affords visitors easy access to the basin marsh. A small **picnic pavilion** and environmentally-friendly restroom are located nearby. For additional information, or to reserve a tour, please call the Education Center at (772) 398-2779.

From the Walton Road entrance, **hikers**, **bicyclists** and **horseback riders** share more than 8.5 miles of **multi-use trails**. An equestrian area, located off nearby Scenic Park Drive, can easily accommodate trailers with plenty of space to unload horses.

The trailhead on Jensen Beach Boulevard is the starting point for a leisurely 1.5-mile hike through the park's pine flatwoods. It has a **picnic pavilion** and restroom.



Directions

Savannas Preserve State Park is located approximately 2 miles east of U.S. 1 on Walton Road in Port St. Lucie.

