

Northeast Florida

Stephen Foster Folk Culture Center State Park

Way down upon the Suwannee River

Real Fun in the Real Florida

Welcome to Stephen Foster Folk Culture Center State Park. The park honors one of America's most influential composers and celebrates Florida's cultural traditions. A gateway for the Suwannee River Wilderness Trail and the Florida National Scenic Trail, the park offers riverside cabins, a beautiful campground, cultural events, educational programs and outdoor activities.

The **Museum** and **Carillon Tower** house exhibits and dioramas depicting scenes from some of Foster's most popular songs. Group tours are available with advance notice. The carillon's electronic roller plays Foster tunes daily.

Visit the **Craft Square** where demonstrating artists share their talents and offer classes and workshops. A children's **playground** is located

near the **Gift Shop** where crafts, toys, books, jewelry and Foster memorabilia are sold. **Picnic** tables are located throughout the park. **Special events** explore farming history, quilting, folk traditions, and the life and music of Stephen Foster. **Weekend retreats** offer instruction in building and playing banjos and dulcimers. The first Florida Folk Festival was held in 1953 and the park continues to host the Florida Folk Festival held each Memorial Day weekend.

Visitors can explore the outdoors, beginning with Carter Camp's 10 miles of trails for off-road **bicycling, hiking** and **horseback riding**. The **Florida National Scenic Trail** follows the river through the park. Five **riverside cabins** are conveniently located near the **canoe launch** and **gazebo** for **canoeing, kayaking** or **fresh water fishing**. (*Fishing license required.*) Our beautiful oak-shaded **campground** has 45 sites for RV and tent camping. Facilities may be rented for meetings and social gatherings.

Nature & History

In 1931 Josiah K. Lilly, the son of Indiana pharmaceutical manufacturer Eli K. Lilly, suggested a memorial to composer Stephen Foster, whose

song "Old Folks at Home" made the Suwannee River known all over the world. The Florida Federation of Music Clubs adopted his idea and obtained contributions of land in White Springs, Florida. The Stephen Foster Memorial Commission administered the development of the park, which opened in 1950.

Stephen Collins Foster was born near Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania on July 4, 1826. Before his death in 1864, Foster composed more than 200 songs.

In the 1700s, White Sulphur Spring, a second magnitude spring located within the park, was regarded as sacred ground for Native Americans because the water was believed to hold curative powers. Located on the banks of the Suwannee River, the Spring was promoted as a health resort from the mid 1800s. Shops, dressing rooms and clinical examination rooms were built beside the spring. The original concrete wall and gate still exist. The first Florida Folk Festival was held in 1953.

The tree-lined Suwannee River with its rock-studded banks combines with tannin-stained water to create a picturesque landscape. The Suwannee River is a typical blackwater stream. The park's natural communities have been

impacted by farming, timbering practices and lack of fire. Upland mixed forest and upland pine forest generally occur on levees and plateaus paralleling the Suwannee River, on moderate-to-steep slopes within ravines. Common wildlife include timber rattlesnakes, gopher tortoises, gopher frogs, alligator snapping turtles, Suwannee cooters and Gulf sturgeon.

Directions

The park's entrance is in White Springs on U.S. 41 North. Exit I-75 at State Road 136, travel east 3 miles. Exit I-10 at U.S. 41 North, travel 9 miles to White Springs.

Park Guidelines

- Hours are 8 a.m. until sunset, 365 days a year. The Museum, Carillon Tower, Craft Square and Gift Shop are open 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. daily.
- An entrance fee is required.
- Pets must be kept on a leash no longer than 6 feet and well behaved at all times.

- Fireworks and hunting are prohibited.
- Alcoholic beverage consumption is allowed in designated areas only.
- Become a volunteer. Inquire at the ranger station.
- Call (386) 397-1920 for a schedule of craft demonstrations and classes.
- Guided tours of the Stephen Foster Museum and Carillon Tower are available by reservation.
- 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

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Department of Environmental Protection
Division of Recreation and Parks

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