

HISTORY AND NATURE

Blue Spring is a first-magnitude spring that discharges over 102 million gallons of water daily into the St. Johns River. When early American botanist John Bartram paddled into Blue Spring in 1774, he appreciated the “admirable fountain” but objected to the water’s “most disagreeable taste.”

Gold Rush prospector turned orange grower Louis Thursby purchased Blue Spring in 1856 and built his house atop a large Indian midden. Before the railroad rolled through in the 1880s, Thursby’s Blue Spring Landing was a hotbed of steamboat activity, transporting tourists and goods to Jacksonville and beyond. Mrs. Thursby was Orange City’s first postmistress.

Years later in 1971, “The Forgotten Mermaids” episode of the Underwater World of Jacques Cousteau was filmed here. The documentary brought attention to the importance of Blue Spring as a winter refuge for manatees, greatly influencing the state’s decision to purchase the land.

Blue Spring is a designated manatee refuge and provides habitat for at least 15 threatened or endangered plants and animals. More than 150 bird species have been identified at the park. Look for wading birds, eagles and kingfishers. Swimming turtles and the flashing scales of gar and sunfish can be seen in the clear spring run. Listen for frog calls, gaze at a basking alligator or glimpse elusive migratory birds.



BLUE SPRING STATE PARK

2100 West French Avenue
Orange City, FL 32763
386-775-3663

PARK GUIDELINES

- Hours are 8 a.m. until sundown, 365 days a year.
- An entrance fee is required.
- All plants, animals and park property are protected. Collection, destruction or disturbance is prohibited.
- Pets are allowed on the paved surfaces, nature trails and in campsites. They are not permitted on the beaches or in any facility. Pets must be kept on a hand-held leash no longer than six feet and be 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 in all Florida State Parks.
- Alcoholic beverage consumption is allowed in designated areas only.

MORE INFORMATION

- To become a volunteer, inquire at the ranger station.
- For camping information, contact Florida State Parks at 800-326-3521 or visit FloridaStateParks.org.
- Florida State Parks are committed to providing equal access for all visitors to facilities and programs. Should you need assistance to enable your participation, please contact the ranger station at 386-775-3663.

FloridaStateParks.org

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BLUE SPRING STATE PARK

*Encounter the gentle giants
we call manatees*



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EXPERIENCES AND AMENITIES

Tucked within the 2,643 acres of Blue Spring State Park are 21 natural communities, including two lagoons, a first-magnitude spring and a north-flowing river.

Stroll along the 0.4-mile **boardwalk** that follows the spring run through a shady hardwood hammock. In the winter, watch up to 700 manatees gather in the 72-degree waters. In order to provide a safe warm-water refuge for manatees, the spring and spring run are closed to all water-related activities from approximately mid-November through March.

In the summer join the fun: **Swim, tube, snorkel** or **dive** in the spring waters, and **picnic** or **barbecue** with friends. Enjoy one of our three **pavilions**, available on a first come, first served basis.

Visitors staying in the campground can bicycle or walk to the spring or enjoy a hike along the nearly 4-mile-long Pine Island **Trail**. There are **51 campsites** (RVs up to 40 feet long) equipped with water, electricity, a picnic table and a grill. A dump station is available, and two bathhouses are complete with accessible showers and bathroom stalls. Six two-bedroom cabins are shaded by oaks near the spring.

Canoe along the spring run or river, take a **padding tour**, or enjoy a narrated two-hour **river cruise**. Canoe, kayak and tube rentals are available. Take a self-guided tour through the historic **Thursby House**. A gift shop, food and beverages are available at the **park concession**.

