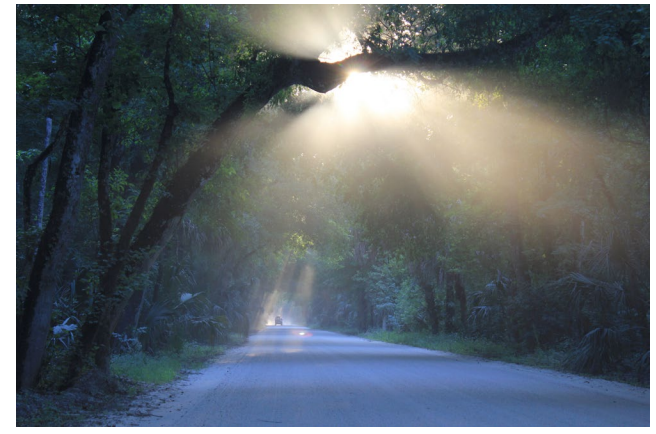




## Highlands Hammock State Park and Lake June-In-Winter Scrub State Park (Highlands County, Florida) Real Florida Guide

Note: Colored numbers correspond with numbers on the map.



Choose from the options below to plan your trip in [Highlands County, Florida](#) or plan your own day-long adventure or a multi-day stay in the area. Highlands Hammock State Park provides a wonderful base of operations for a multi-day stay in the area. The park has a full-facility campground and a youth/group tent campground. Make reservations through [Reserve America](#).



### Day 1, Highlands Hammock State Park



[Highlands Hammock State Park](#) (1) located near the City of Sebring was opened to the public in 1931, and became one of Florida's first four state parks in 1935. The park is known for its beautiful old-growth hammock and thousand year old oaks. Ferns and air plants are abundant. Florida black bear and the Florida panther tread softly through the hammock and may be glimpsed occasionally. A three mile paved loop drive make it easy for visitors to appreciate this state park by driving, bicycling or walking. Picnicking, bird-watching, and ranger-guided tours of the park are other



popular activities.

Hike one or more of the park's [nine nature trails](#). The .6 mile Alexander Blair Big Oak Trail best shows off the glory of what's been preserved in this public place, with towering cabbage palms and live oaks up to a 1,000 years old. Continue on to Hickory Trail via a narrow catwalk. The 2.9 mile Highlands Hammock Nature Trail, a narrow elevated boardwalk with an historic catwalk which traverses a cypress swamp, is where visitors may observe alligators, birds and other wildlife.



Walk deep into the woods under the expansive canopy and admire giant oaks and air plant-laden branches. Amble along the boardwalk of the Richard Lieber Memorial Trail and view the colorful, scattered leaves. See autumn in Florida and observe a flock of white ibis feeding. Another 1,000 year old oak marks this trail, which also connects to Fern Garden.

The tram tour, which is fully accessible and approximately one hour and 15 minutes long, allows visitors the unique opportunity to view birds, alligators, turtles, deer and other wildlife relatively close-up in areas of the park that are restricted to public access.

Tour Florida's one and only Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) Museum. The CCC was one of President Franklin Roosevelt's New Deal programs to put young men back to work during the Great Depression. The museum showcases the history of the program and how these hardworking men were responsible for the beginnings of the Florida State Parks system.





The state park is also home to the sour orange milkshake and wild orange pie, treats you'll find at the Hammock Inn Restaurant across from the museum. Hours may vary, so call the park first at 863-386-6094.

The Florida State Parks CCC Geotrail is available at [www.Geocaching.com](http://www.Geocaching.com). Nine parks were built by the CCC and Works Progress Administration in the 1930s. Search for all nine caches and end at the CCC Museum at Highlands Hammock State Park and receive a commemorative geocoin.

Other options in the area: Consider a day trip to [Kissimmee Prairie Preserve State Park \(2\)](#), approximately one hour northeast of Highlands Hammock State Park. See the [Kissimmee Prairie Preserve State Park and Okeechobee Battlefield State Park \(Okeechobee County, Florida\) Real Florida Guide](#).

Highlands Hammock State Park is 15 minutes from the City of Sebring (3). Plan your trip to coincide with the City's [Annual Fine Arts and Crafts Festival](#) (November).

Between Sebring and the City of Avon Park is the 1,350-acre [Preserve of Sun 'N Lakes \(4\)](#), a Highlands County preserve and a part of the [Great Florida Birding & Wildlife Trail](#). Sun 'N Lakes is perfect for the adventurous wildlife watcher, who will find six-and-a-half miles of casual and challenging multi-use trails to roam and lakes to fish.

## Day 2 – Lake Placid, Florida and the Lake Wales Ridge





From Highlands Hammock State Park drive 27 minutes south to the City of Lake Placid (5). In 2013, *Reader's Digest* voted Lake Placid "America's Most Interesting Town." The city is very proud to have this title, inspired by its [44 murals](#). Each mural has a hidden object. Pick up a mural book at the Lake Placid Chamber of Commerce/Mural Gallery located 18 North Oak Street, Lake Placid 33862. Some murals honor the [American Clown](#) since Lake Placid has the only museum dedicated to American clowns, the [American Clown Museum and School](#). Another mural highlights the town's status as the [caladium capital of the world](#). Plan your trip to coincide with the City's [Annual Caladium Arts and Crafts Festival](#) (July).

Highlands County is also the place to discover the [Lake Wales Ridge](#), Florida's ancient islands. The Ridge was once a string of islands that existed before oceans receded to reveal the Florida peninsula. The Ridge is home to more than 40 species of endangered or threatened animals and plants, many of which exist nowhere else on Earth.



To begin your exploration of this unique environment, drive 13 minutes south from the City of Lake Placid or 38 minutes from Highlands Hammock State Park to visit the [Archbold Biological Station](#) (6). Archbold is dedicated to long-term ecological research and conservation of the Lake Wales Ridge and surrounding central Florida area. Day visitors to Archbold are welcome Monday through Friday 8am–5pm to view a pictorial exhibit about the Station and its history, a 19 minute video, "Islands in Time," about the biodiversity and conservation of the Ridge, and walk two [nature trails](#) emphasizing plant identification and Florida scrub ecology. Check-in at the Learning Center Welcome



Office. A suggested donation for visiting Archbold is \$5 per adult and \$3 per child, which may be placed in the donation box located at the walkway entrance to the Learning Center.



Another way to explore the Lake Wales Ridge is to drive 10 minutes west from Lake Placid or 35 minutes south from Highlands Hammock State Park to [Lake June-in-Winter Scrub State Park \(7\)](#). Lake June-in-Winter Scrub State Park is a quiet 845-acre preserve that provides protection for scrub, "Florida's desert," one of the state's most endangered natural communities. Some of Florida's rarest and most imperiled plant and animal species, including the Florida scrub-jay,

Florida scrub lizard, Florida mouse, gopher tortoise, and Eastern indigo snake are found here. Ospreys and bald eagles are frequently sighted along the three miles of lakefront, and white-tailed deer, bobcat, and Florida black bear are occasionally seen. This state park is best suited for those seeking a remote wilderness experience, bird watching and nature study. Amenities are few, but the natural experience is exceptional. Visitors can hike along the white sugar sand fire lanes, walk a half-mile nature trail, fish from the lake shore, or launch a lightweight canoe or kayak onto the lake (bring your own). A picnic area has a shelter with tables, but no grill. The park is located on the west side of the water body Lake June-in-Winter.

Other options in the area: From Highlands Hammock State Park drive 24 minutes north to the City of Avon Park (8). This is an approximately 40 minute drive north from Lake Placid to visit the [Wildflower Wayside Shrine Trail](#), a short self-guided walking



trail that explores pristine scrubland on the South Florida State College, Highlands Campus at 600 West College Drive, Avon Park, Florida 33825. Along the Wildflower Wayside Shrine Trail are six shrine boxes created by [artist Mollie Doctrow](#) to honor the endangered plant species found on campus.

While in the City of Avon Park consider a half-day canoe or kayak trip on [Arbuckle Creek](#). Bring your own boat, rent a boat, or arrange a trip with [Sebring Kayak Tours](#). If you want a remote paddle, this is your place. The creek flows 23 miles from Lake Arbuckle to Lake Istokpoga and is adjacent to the [Avon Park Air Force Range \(9\)](#). A common site on the creek is a variety of wildlife and alligators. The creek is tree canopied to shade you from the sun. The creek access is just eight miles east from Avon Park off of County Road (CR) 64. Take CR 64 and turn left onto East Arbuckle Road boat ramp (10) at end of the road. There is ample parking. Put in and head north to Lake Arbuckle, then head back.

If you like roadside attractions and the experience of “old Florida,” then visit [Maxwell’s House of Fruit \(11\)](#) located at 644 E. Pleasant Street, Avon Park, Florida. It is only a couple of blocks away from Avon Park's Main Street. Maxwell's House of Fruit is a fruit-packing house with a wide variety of orange products, and free orange juice. The Maxwell family has been in the Florida fruit business since the 1920s. The most popular thing to do is to sit on one of the rocking chairs on the front porch and enjoy orange ice cream. Open Monday–Friday, 9am-5pm; Saturday and Sunday afternoons (Call to verify: 863-453-3938).

### **Day 3, Hickory Hammock Wildlife Management Area**

About a 30 minute drive southeast from Highlands Hammock State Park is 4,000-acre



[Hickory Hammock Wildlife Management Area](#) (WMA) (12). Hike the [Florida National Scenic Trail](#) segment, [Hickory Hammock Trail](#), 4.3 miles through moss-draped oaks and tall hickory trees, floodplain forests and a beautiful Kissimmee River-side campsite.

Horseback riding is popular at the [Hickory Hammock and Bluff Hammock](#) portion of the WMA. An equestrian center with stables and non-potable water is available, along with a primitive campsite for horseback riders. Ten miles of marked equestrian trails, interior dirt roads and fire breaks provide the rider with a varied landscape. Equestrian access is at the end of McArthur Road, three miles north of the main Hickory Hammock trailhead.

Other options in the area: canoe or kayak (bring your own) the Kissimmee River by launching from the [Istokpoga Canal Boat Ramp](#) (13). The ramp area is also a trailhead for horseback riding and hiking in the Hickory Hammock WMA. Two large picnic shelters can host larger groups, and there are also 16 single tables with grills. Another unique feature of this park is the bat house on the north side. Arrive a half hour before dusk to see the bats leave their house.



