



## Manatee Springs State Park Three Day 'Springs Break' Real Florida Guide

Note: Colored numbers correspond with numbers on the map and represent destinations for each day. **Red** = Day 1, **Green** = Day 2 and **Blue** = Day 3.

Enjoy a three day 'springs break' sampling some of Florida's crystal-clear watery gems sprinkled among the nine-county region known as the Nature Coast. You can make your base camp at Manatee Springs State Park's full-service campground or the comfortable cabins at Fanning Springs State Park. Take your time sauntering from spring to spring, dip a paddle in the majestic Suwannee River, bike the scenic Nature Coast State Trail, and enjoy the natural wonders and wildlife of the region.

### Day 1



[Manatee Springs State Park](#) (**1**), with a full-facility campground surrounded by red oak woodlands, makes an excellent base camp for exploring the charms of the Nature Coast. The park's first-magnitude spring produces an average of 100 million gallons of clear, cool water daily. In winter, West Indian manatees swim upriver to the warmer waters of the springs. Popular for snorkeling and scuba diving, the headwaters of the spring are also an inviting spot for swimming. [Canoe and kayak rentals](#) are available all year round on the





spring run that forms a sparkling stream meandering through hardwood wetlands to the Suwannee River. Hiking and bicycling are available on eight miles of an inviting shady off-road trail system. Try your luck fishing from the park's boardwalk along the spring run and in the Suwannee River for largemouth bass, catfish and a variety of tasty pan-sized fish.

## Day 2

Enjoy a 14 mile road trip from Manatee Springs to [Fanning Springs State Park \(2\)](#), cruising through a fragment of Florida where time seems to stand still. Fanning Springs flows a short distance into the Suwannee River and has attracted people for thousands of years. Fanning Springs now produces less than 65 million gallons of water daily, making it a second magnitude spring. Historically, Fanning Springs was a first-magnitude springs as recently as the 1990s. Swimming or snorkeling here is refreshing on a hot day. White-tailed deer, gray squirrels, red-shouldered hawks, pileated woodpeckers and barred owls all call this area home. Manatees sometimes visit the spring during the winter months. Comfortable full-service cabins at this park offer a good place for families and friends to relax and unwind together. Primitive camping is available only for those arriving by foot, bicycle or paddling on the [Suwannee River Wilderness Trail](#).



Across from Fanning Springs State Park on US 19 is part of the 32-mile paved [Nature Coast State Trail \(3\)](#). This trail is an excellent destination for runners, walkers, bikers







and skaters, as well as horseback riding on an unpaved, parallel trail segment between Old Town and Fanning Springs. Officially part of Florida's Greenways and Trails System, this state trail has also been designated as a [National Recreation Trail®](#). Among the trail's highlights is the Historic Suwannee River Railroad Bridge which offers an excellent view over the majestic Suwannee River. This an excellent place to observe (or hear) [Gulf sturgeon](#) leaping from the water from May through October. Trailheads are located within five linked small communities, making the trail easily accessible, in addition to being close to accommodations, restaurants and other recreational opportunities offered by [Pure Water Wilderness](#).



A short distance from Fanning Springs and the Nature Coast State Trail is [Andrews Wildlife Management Area \(4\)](#). Nestled along the historic Suwannee River, this oasis of old-growth hardwood forest offers 10 miles of shady unpaved nature trails and a boardwalk trail meandering through a cypress wetland.

### Day 3

Continue 'spring hopping' by exploring two more sparkling gems north of Fanning Springs. Start at [Otter Springs Park & Campground \(5\)](#), a site on the [Great Florida Birding and Wildlife Trail](#) that also offers cabins and camping facilities. A canoe launch and rental canoes are available at the head of the 0.9-mile spring run. The park has more than five miles of well-marked, well-maintained, multi-use trails from which you can explore a variety of habitats such as bottomland and floodplain forest, swamp,







upland mixed forest, pine flatwoods and sandhills. Golf carts are also allowed on the lightly traveled trails. Next take a short drive north to [Hart Springs County Park \(6\)](#), a family-oriented recreation area. The park boasts one of the area's largest swimming facilities and a half-mile long boardwalk that winds through the pristine cypress hammock to the Suwannee River. Hart Springs also offers a volleyball court, boat rentals, RV and tent camping, covered picnic areas, and two air-conditioned pavilions for family gatherings. Hart Springs is a designated river camp for paddlers and boaters on the [Suwannee River Wilderness Trail](#).





