

Florida Trail Association, Inc.

Building More than Trails



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END-TO-END AND LONG DISTANCE HIKING ON THE FLORIDA TRAIL

Dear Hiker:

The following information is provided to help you plan your hiking adventure.

The Florida Trail is available for you to enjoy because of the work of thousands of Florida Trail Association volunteers, our agency partners and other volunteer groups over fifty years.

It is very important to understand the following about the Florida Trail:

- The trail is continuous, but some sections are still on roads.
- The trail crosses both public and private property.
- Access and camping regulations vary with land ownership and management.
- FTA annually publishes a Data Book with waypoints available in October/November.
- FTA maps include waypoints that conform to those in the Data Book.
- **Changes to the trail can occur with little notice. When in doubt follow the blazes.**
- FTA controls the information of the Florida Trail Map series and the Data Book. Other books are updated at the discretion of the author and publisher. FTA has no control over the information contained in those books or the timeliness of the updates.
- Water levels and sources vary considerably due to local weather conditions.

Becoming a member of the Florida Trail Association is important because it;

- Permits access to the Florida Trail across private property
- Gives you a listing of all the Section Leaders of the FTA. Contact them for the latest information on trail conditions, water levels, etc.
- Includes a subscription to the quarterly FTA publication, The Footprint.
- **Enables you to share in supporting the dream of a continuous footpath the length of Florida!**

Other useful things to do:

A volunteer non-profit association dedicated to developing, maintaining, promoting and protecting a continuous public hiking trail the length of Florida; providing opportunities to hike and camp; and educating others to appreciate and conserve the natural beauty of Florida.

- Contact the Florida Fresh Water Fish and Game Commission at (850) 488-3831 or <http://myfwc.com/hunting/wma-brochures> for hunting dates and regulations on public and private lands.
- Obtain a recent Florida highway map, or atlas to assist in accessing the termini of the sections and finding your way to nearby post offices and towns for supplies.
- Visit our website for trail updates.

Good luck and see you on the trail,

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "David S. Velders". The signature is written in a cursive, slightly slanted style.

President



FAQ'S FOR FT LONG-DISTANCE HIKERS - 2017



How long is the Trail?

The Florida Trail is approximately 1400 miles long. The mileage varies slightly every year as local maintaining chapters relocate parts of the Trail, working to take the FT off of private property and roads and into a protected corridor. Since there are multiple routes a hiker can choose from. A thru-hike is approximately 1100 miles and averages 2-3 months.

How do I get there?

The southern terminus is at the Oasis Ranger Station on US 41 about half-way between Miami and Naples. Miami and Naples both have bus service, motels, restaurants and campgrounds and Miami has a large international airport. From Naples and Miami you will have to hire a cab to get to Oasis.

The northern terminus of the Florida National Scenic Trail is at Fort Pickens in the Gulf Islands National Seashore south of Pensacola. Pensacola has an airport, bus and taxi service as well as numerous motels, restaurants and campgrounds. It's a short taxi or bus ride from the Pensacola airport to Pensacola Beach, but from there you will have to walk out to Ft Pickens or take a water taxi to the Ft Pickens Campground. Call Chulamar Charters for water taxi at 850-492-1099.

The Alabama terminus, for those hiking the ECT, is at the boundary between the Conecuh National Forest in Alabama and Blackwater River State Forest in Florida. From the kiosk it is approximately 0.7 miles on Forest Road 326B out to Beaver Creek Rd and from there approximately 35 miles to the town of Milton via Beaver Creek Rd, SR 4 and CR 191 - Munson Highway.

What about these multiple routes I can choose from?

Currently there are several options for the thru-hiker to take.

The FNST circles Lake Okeechobee from Clewiston on the south to Okee-Tantie on the north. The thru-hiker may select which side of the lake they wish to walk. They are not required to completely circle the lake. The east side offers more towns and amenities, the west side is a little more rural in nature. Note that for the 2014-15 hiking season a majority of the eastern route is closed for dike repairs. For this reason we recommend the western route this year.

Around central Florida there are also two routes. The eastern route runs from the Kissimmee River through Tosohatchee, Oviedo, Longwood, Seminole State Forest and up into the Ocala National Forest. The western route runs from the Kissimmee River through St Cloud, Green Swamp, Withlacoochee State Forest, Cross-Florida Greenway and then into the Ocala National Forest. The eastern route is shorter and closer to urban areas and supplies but many miles are on paved multi-use trails through the Orlando suburbs. The western route currently has more road-walk at the south end, but it also has more forested trail at the north end. Again, the thru-hiker may elect one or the other of these routes; they are not required to hike both.

The final decision point is out in the western panhandle. At the little community of Harold hikers can elect to hike south to Fort Pickens in Gulf Islands National Seashore or to hike north through Blackwater River State Forest to the Florida/Alabama state line.

Which is the preferred hiking season?

The hiking season in Florida runs basically from October through April. Because of unpredictable weather and hunting seasons in the fall, **we strongly recommend thru-hikers start in the south no earlier than January** and end in the north by May. While all but a few miles of trail is open 365 days a year, most Florida land managers either restrict camping to developed campgrounds or prohibit camping all together during hunting seasons. The major hunt seasons start in September in the south and run into March in the north. Starting your hike in early January in the south will avoid most hunting restrictions and place your hike during the winter "dry" season. Attempting a thru-hike during the height of general gun (deer) hunting season will either force you to hike 30-50 miles between campgrounds, stay in local motels, or camp illegally and be subject to fines and/or being escorted off the property. Hiking during the "off season" avoids hunting but subjects hikers to heavy heat and humidity (95 degrees with 98% humidity is not uncommon), daily afternoon thunderstorms, and seasonal campground closures due to low use. And when campgrounds are closed that also means the water supply is shut off.

What is the weather like during a Florida winter?

While Florida winters are moderate compared to the rest of the United States, we do get fronts coming through that can cause the temperature to drop below freezing in a matter of hours. These cold fronts also generally bring rain. Fortunately, such weather usually doesn't stay with us for more than a few days, but it does mean you should pack more than shorts and t-shirts for your hike. Be prepared for temperatures ranging from 20 degrees to 80 degrees during this winter hiking season. During El Nino years the trail is likely to be wetter and colder than normal.

Are shelters available along the Trail?

There are currently only six shelters along the Florida Trail, three of them in Blackwater River State Forest. It is therefore necessary for you to provide your own tent, tarp, bivy, or hammock for your hike. Because of our voracious insects good "no-see-um" netting on your shelter is recommended.

Do I need maps and where can I get them?

FTA sells a series of hiker maps and a Data Book. Because of frequent changes in the trail route most thru-hikers feel the maps are necessary. A full set of thru-trail maps (which includes the DataBook) may be purchased from the FTA office or the FTA online store. Notices to Hikers detailing trail changes that have occurred since the map publication are posted on the FTA website.

Do I need to be a member of the FTA to thru-hike the Trail?

Where the FT crosses private property, FTA always tries to work with the private land owner to allow for public access. However, some private land owners prefer to restrict access to only members of the Association with which they have their agreement. Membership in the Florida Trail Association is a legal requirement to cross these lands and non-members are subject to trespass laws. Individual membership is \$35 per year. These funds are used to further the goal of a protected foot trail the length of Florida! You may become a member by applying for membership at the FTA online store or by calling the FTA office.

Do I need a permit to hike the Trail?

A few private, public and military land managers require advanced notification and a permit to cross their land. The two major permits are handled through the Florida Trail Association office. For the Big Cypress Seminole Indian Reservation you are required to sign a release and mail it in to the Reservation at least 2 weeks prior to your hike. For Eglin Air Force Base, self-registration kiosks are available at both ends of the trail. It is **required** that you register before entering Eglin AFB. The basic permits required of thru-hikers are laid out in the "Long Distance Hiker Packet" which you may download from the FTA website (<http://www.floridatrail.org/long-distance-resources>) or request via mail from the FTA.

How many miles of road-walk remain and do I have to walk them?

For 2014 there remains a little less than 300 miles of roadwalk along the various routes. In order to qualify for the FTA End-to-End certification you must walk the entire trail as it exists at the time of your hike. Most of the road-walks are blazed, although not as frequently as in the woods. The FTA trail maps and Data Book include the road walks.

What is the mileage between points X and Y on the Trail?

Our published map set and Data Book contain detailed information on campsites and campgrounds, water sources, trailhead locations, and land manager regulations. Be aware however, that the Florida Trail is evolving at a rapid pace in some areas as the trail is moved from private land and roads into a protected corridor. Maps and books only a few months old may be out of date and private landowners may change their access policies at any time. Stores open this week can be closed next week. Check the FTA website for "Notices to Hikers" under Trail conditions.

What should I know about hiking in the swamps?

Contrary to popular belief, the Florida Trail only passes through two swamps. In the central panhandle is Bradwell Bay Wilderness Area in the Apalachicola National Forest. Please note that not ALL of the trail through the Bradwell Bay WA is underwater, only about 8 miles is actually swamp. But it is a true blackwater Titi (pronounced TIE-tie) forest swamp. Expect to spend the majority of a day getting through Bradwell Bay because it's usually an obstacle course of trees and roots. For North-bounders, the Monkey Creek crossing at the east end of the swamp is generally the deepest part, so when you reach Monkey Creek you can decide whether to proceed through the swamp or take the roads around it. But relax, allow yourself plenty of daylight, take your time and have some fun.

Note: The following is a detour I've taken when Bradwell Bay is high; (Northbound)

Turn LEFT on FR 329, (waypoint 10-7 on Map 10) and follow all the way to FR 314 and turn RIGHT back to FT (waypoint 10-10 on Map 10)

More careful planning is required for passage through Big Cypress National Preserve. If wilderness is measured by how long it would take you to get out to find help, then Big Cypress is true wilderness. Between Loop Rd and I-75 the FT crosses only one traveled road – US 41 at the 8 mile mark. Water levels vary widely depending on how much rain the "hurricane season" (June through November) dumped on central and south Florida. The trail can also be very rough in January and early February since our trail volunteers are prohibited from getting in and doing trail maintenance if the National Park Service judges the water levels are too high. In a normal year water in January and February will be calf-deep to knee-deep with a few stretches of thigh-deep

to waist-deep water. Water levels start dropping in January so that by late March much of Big Cypress may be dry. Ground level rises as you hike north so from about Ivy Camp south of I-75 up to the Indian Reservation boundary you will be feet-dry – in a normal year. If the southeastern US is having a wetter or drier than normal winter, then hikers need to adjust their expectations accordingly. However, in defense of Big Cypress as a hiking destination, it is a unique environment. The Preserve is the most biologically diverse region of the terrestrial Everglades, and while dominated by a wet cypress forest is host to an array of flora and fauna, including mangroves, orchids, alligators, a variety of birds, the Florida Panther, and the Florida Black Bear. The preserve is also home to nine federally listed endangered species including the West Indian Manatee, the eastern indigo snake, and the Florida Sandhill Crane. And unlike Bradwell Bay which is a blackwater swamp, the waters of Big Cypress are crystal clear. So be prepared, but keep your eyes open for the vast array of plant and animal life you may see nowhere else on earth.

Will I see a Panther or be chomped by an Alligator?

Florida is home to the Florida Panther, the Florida Black Bear, American Alligator, several pit vipers (Copperhead, Water Moccasin/Cottonmouth, Pygmy Rattlesnake, Timber Rattlesnake and Eastern Diamondback Rattlesnake) and the Coral Snake as well as numerous small wild animals. Actually, you will be lucky to catch a glimpse of the larger animals, because both the panther and our black bear are very shy of humans. Alligators are a possibility in any water. Keep your eyes open so as not to startle them and they will not challenge a human. Folks who get bitten by gators are generally swimming near dawn or dusk when the gator can't distinguish that the foot it is biting is attached to something much bigger. In 25 years of hiking the Florida Trail I have seen many alligators **from** the trail (in canals and ponds) but I have seen only one gator actually **on** the trail - in Big Cypress. We simply took a bunch of photos and detoured around him giving him about 50 feet of "breathing room". And I consider myself very fortunate to have actually seen one panther in the wild, from a distance, again in Big Cypress.

We've also been getting many questions recently about the exotic pythons in the wild in South Florida and want to emphasize that no humans have been harmed by the pythons on or near the Trail. Like any other snake, be cautious but if you should happen to see one, leave it alone and it will leave you alone.

You probably have more to fear from our mighty mosquitoes, raccoons, squirrels, fire ants and ticks than the larger mammals and reptiles. Lyme disease is in Florida, so a daily tick check is wise. Good camping practice requires you to hang your food to keep the animals away and prevent them from associating humans with food. In Big Cypress and the three National Forests bear bag hanging is a requirement, in other locations it is certainly a good precaution. It is wise to watch where you place your feet and hands to prevent encountering snakes and fire ants.

Are dogs allowed on the Trail?

Since many Florida state agencies and private landowners either prohibit dogs or place severe restrictions on them, the Florida Trail Association cannot recommend attempting a thru-hike with your dog. The two swamps mentioned above are particularly dangerous for dogs due to the possibility of alligators. If you really want to bring Fido along on a hike, then limit yourself to section hikes in the national and state forests.

How about my mountain bike/horse?

Several short portions of the Florida Trail occur on shared, multi-use trails (usually paved) but the vast majority of the trail is designated for foot traffic only. That means no horses, no bicycles, no pack stock, and no motorized vehicles.

What do the Florida Trail Association Chapters do?

Volunteers from our member chapters perform trail maintenance, build new trail, represent hiker interests at governmental and community meetings and serve on the FTA Board of Directors which formulates policy. Chapters also sponsor hikes - for members and the general public. Active members within the chapters can provide to hikers valuable information about their sections of trail. Do not be afraid to contact them for localized advice. All chapter websites/Facebook pages/Meetups can be accessed from the FTA website.

What clothing is required?

Rain protection is a must and layering is the rule for clothing. Layered synthetic clothing will allow you to regulate your body temperature on those days that start with finding your water bottle frozen solid and end with you baking in semitropical heat. You should carry a safety orange vest, poncho or pack cover to wear during hunting seasons. This is particularly important during the general gun (deer) season, which runs from mid-October to March, depending on which part of the state you are hiking.

What about boots?

Many Florida Trail hikers use sturdy "aerobic" type shoes. Others wear lightweight hiking boots. You will not find a lot of rocky terrain along the Florida Trail, but the hard sand on most of the trail requires good ankle and heel support. In the south the limestone/marl base of the trail is very hard and often slippery. Blisters can be a problem for those not accustomed to walking on sand, so include blister treatments in your first aid supplies and check frequently for "hot spots". Low gaiters can help to keep the sand out of your shoes and socks. Hiking sandals work well for some people, but sand spurs between the toes can be a problem in a few areas. In Big Cypress and Bradwell Bay you'll want toe protection from submerged logs and shoes that the marl/mud won't suck off your feet.

Is the water safe to drink?

All water in Florida should be treated unless identified as potable by signs. You must filter, boil or chemically treat all surface water.

Can I build fires for cooking?

Carry a backpacking stove to cook your meals. Don't rely on fires. Not only is it more convenient and easier in wet weather, it minimizes your impact on the land around your camp. Winter being our dry season, it is also the start of our wildfire season. Campfires are not allowed at all along some sections of the Trail and may be temporarily banned in other areas during periods of high fire danger. When you can build a fire, keep it small. Use sticks no larger than your fingers and use only pre-existing fire rings or build a leave-no-trace fire on a deep sandy base. Be particularly cautious of underground roots.

What is my daily mileage likely to be?

Florida offers its own set of challenges that can affect daily mileage. In high water years portions of the trail may have to be waded, cutting your mileage in half. In low water years, water sources may be few and far between making for high mileage days between campsites.

Big Cypress National Preserve in the south (particularly below the Oasis Ranger Station) and Bradwell Bay in the north are especially difficult sections where lower mileage (7-10 miles per day) can be counted on. The dike walks along Lake Okeechobee can be cruised pretty easily at 15-20 miles per day. Also, remember that since our prime hiking season is during the winter, daylight hours are short.

Don't underestimate the terrain in Florida simply because there are no peaks to be bagged. Instead, take the Trail as you find it. One of the fascinating things about the Florida Trail is the number of diverse ecological systems the trail traverses. A six inch change in altitude can mean a total difference in the plants and animals you are likely to encounter.

Should I be concerned about my personal safety?

Hiking the Florida Trail is much safer than living in any city, but problems can occur. Most people living along the trail or in nearby towns do not know of the Trail's existence, so relying on locals for information about the trail will generally get you lost. Also, since people in Florida are not used to seeing hikers and the homeless population in Florida explodes in the winter months, hitchhiking is more problematic compared to some other trails. Here are a few suggestions for hiking the Florida Trail:

- Don't hike alone.
- When you pass a trail register, sign in.
- Be wary of strangers. Trust your gut instincts.
- Be careful with your equipment and don't leave yourself open to theft.
- Don't camp near road crossings.
- Leave a trip plan with a friend and keep them apprised of your location on a regular basis.
- A cell phone for emergency use is a wise precaution, but note that in many places along the trail you will have no reception.
- If posting your hike on the internet, build in a delay of several days. That makes it harder for strangers with evil intent to pinpoint your location.

Anything else?

Please keep in mind that the Florida Trail is very much a work in progress at this time. It has to be treated as a grand adventure where you never really know what might be around the next corner rather than a stroll in the woods on a carefully blazed thoroughfare surrounded by other thru-hikers. If you elect to long-distance hike the Florida Trail, you are among pioneers in the hiking community, not following closely in the footsteps of thousands of others.

Be respectful of private property rights and local land management regulations. It is only through their good will that the trail crosses their property.

The trail is frequently rerouted as we work to take the trail off roads and private property and into more scenic and public surroundings. Purchase the maps and the Data Book, but be prepared to trust recent blazes if they disagree with published maps and books.

Go to the www.fthikers.org/forum to ask questions of people who are currently hiking or have hiked sections of trail recently. Check the Notices to Hikers (Trail Conditions) on the FTA website to get up-to-date information. Contact the FTA office well in advance of any long distance hikes to find out about changes in permitting and permissions. Check with the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission for hunting regulations.

Let us know when you complete your end-to-end hike! We're trying to keep a record of all our thru-hikers. And don't forget to fill out and return the End-to-End Application for a the patch and certificate.

Most of all, enjoy your adventure on the Florida Trail and the many and diverse ecosystems you will be hiking through.

FLORIDA TRAIL THRU-HIKER MAP PACKET

\$99.95 plus shipping & tax

- 23 double-sided maps printed on 11x17 water resistant paper which can be folded to fit in your pocket
- Includes the Blackwater River connector to Alabama and the Ocean to Lake section
- Plus the Florida Trail Data Book with detailed mileage tables for all of the Florida Trail System
- A savings of \$46 over buying each map and the Data Book separately! Order at www.floridatrail.org - click on "Shop" on the main page, or call 1-877-HIKE-FLA. (445-3352).

PERMITS NEEDED TO THRU-HIKE THE FLORIDA TRAIL

Updated: July, 2019

THE FLORIDA TRAIL ASSOCIATION is working with land management agencies to streamline the registration and permitting process on all portions of the Florida Trail System. As new trail is being continuously added the permits required are in a constant state of change. The most important requirements and information for thru-hikers are listed below. When in doubt, check with the local land managers. **BE SURE TO CARRY YOUR PHOTO ID AT ALL TIMES WHEN HIKING THE FNST.**

South/Central Region

Big Cypress - A permit card must be signed by hikers at the southern end of the trail at the Oasis Visitor Center or the I-75 rest stop, north parking lot. This card must be carried while in Big Cypress. Permits can be filled out online and printed here:

<https://www.nps.gov/bicy/planyourvisit/upload/Backcountry-Permit-12-13-11-small.pdf> or obtained at the Oasis Visitor Center, or the mailbox at Mile Marker 63.

Seminole Reservation - Permission is needed to hike through the Seminole Indian Reservation and hikers must sign a release form. A limited number of hikers are permitted to hike through per month. Contact the FTA office a minimum of 30 days before starting your thru-hike so we have time to mail you the release, or find the form online at :

http://floridatrail.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/05/7_LDH_SeminoleReleaseForm.pdf. Fill out the form, get it notarized, make a copy to carry with you on the Reservation and mail it to the Reservation. The Reservation will need about 2 weeks to process the permission. **YOU WILL NOT HEAR ANYTHING BACK FROM THE RESERVATION UNLESS THERE IS A PROBLEM.**

Kissimmee River- Permits must be obtained from the SFWMD to camp in SFWMD campsites: Yates Marsh, Chandler Slough East, Micco Landing, Oak Creek, Starvation Slough, KICCO, Rattlesnake Hammock and Long Hammock. Call SFWMD weekdays 9AM-4PM for free permits, (561) 924-5310 x3333. Thru-hikers are given a several day window for camping.

Kissimmee Prairie Preserve State Park: To camp at the Prairie Loop primitive campsites, thru-hikers must make reservations in advance by calling (863) 462-5360. No reservations are needed for the Cowboy Crossing or Pine Island Slough campsites. Thru hikers must stop at the Kissimmee Prairie Preserve State Park office at waypoint 34-5 and pay the \$5 camping fee.

Forever Florida: Thru-hikers must call 407-957-9794 to reserve a campsite. Thru-hikers are given one night of camping free of charge.

Tosohatchee WMA: Camping fees waived for thru hikers. A reservation must be obtained by calling 407-568-5893.

Green Swamp East, Map 30 - Permits waived for thru-hikers but hunting restrictions on camping still apply. Hunt schedules can be found at <http://myfwc.com/hunting/wma-brochures/sw/green-swamp/> or by calling Southwest Florida Water Management District (352) 796-7211, (800) 423-1476 (FL only)

Green Swamp West, Map 29 – Permits waived for thru-hikers but hunting restrictions on camping still apply. Hunt schedules can be found at <http://myfwc.com/hunting/wma-brochures/sw/green-swamp/> or by calling Southwest Florida Water Management District (352) 796-7211, (800) 423-1476 (FL only)

Little Big Econ State Forest and Charles Bronson State Forest: Thru-hikers must call 407-971-3500 for a free camping permit.

Seminole State Forest- The day use entrance fee is \$2.00 per person ages 6 and above. Camping fee for the “Walk-up” camps is \$10 per night for up to five people and \$2 per night for each additional person. If users are camping, then they do not have to pay the day use fee. All fees are paid at the Self Service Pay Stations located at the Bear Pond and Cassia Trailhead. Camping at the Walk-up camps for thru-hikers is permitted during the hunts. The three Walk-up camps along the FNST are Shelter, Black Water and Sulphur. The Wekiva Camp is along the white blazed Wekiva Trail.

North Region

Clearwater Lake Recreation Area, Ocala NF - Map 20 - Campground adjacent to the trail via the Clearwater Lake Trailhead. Sites available on a first come first serve basis.

Alexander Springs Recreation Area, Ocala NF - Map 20 - On a blue spur trail off the Florida Trail. Fee required to camp. Reserve a campsite at recreation.gov. Campsites are \$24.00 dollars a night. During general gun hunting season, this is the last full service campground until Juniper Springs, 18 miles later.

Juniper Springs Recreation Area - Map 20 - Full service campground adjacent to trail. Make reservations at recreation.gov. Sites are \$23.50 per night.

Gold Head Branch State Park, Map 18 - Requires a fee to camp in the State Park including the primitive campsite. Hikers entering from the south end of the park can call the entrance station and pay the next day on the way out.

Camp Blanding, Map 17 – Hikers should check the kiosks located just inside the east and west entrances to Camp Blanding. Camp closures are posted on these kiosks. If the Camp is closed for military exercise hikers should follow the white blazed alternate trail around the base.

Ocean Pond Campground, Osceola NF - Map 16 - Accessed of a blue spur trail. Campsites are first come, first served. There are full service sites for \$18.00 dollars a night and primitive sites for \$8.00 dollars a night.

Stephen Foster State Park - Map 14 - Full service campground located very close to the trail. Make reservations at reserveamerica.com. Sites are \$20 dollars a night.

Holton Creek River Camp - Map 13 - This is the second river camp between White Springs and Branford. To make reservations call 1-800-868-9914. Each platform sleeps up to 8 people, has a ceiling fan and an electrical outlet, hammock hooks for at least 3 hammocks, and a small seat and table. Just outside, each platform has a spigot with potable water, a fire ring and a picnic table. In addition to the five screened sleeping platforms, each river camp also has primitive campsites, hot showers, restrooms, grills and picnic tables and a picnic pavilion. There is no charge to stay at River Camps and they are popular so we encourage you to reserve your spot to guarantee space for your group.

Panhandle Region

St. Marks, Map 11 - Requires a permit and small fee for each campsite used. Camping is only available to persons hiking the entire length of the Refuge. You must obtain the written permit prior to entering the refuge. St Marks is the ONLY National Wildlife Refuge that allows hikers to camp and that privilege is extended ONLY to thru and section hikers of the Florida Trail.

Failure to obtain your permit may jeopardize this agreement for future hikers. St Mark's National Wildlife Refuge, PO Box 68, St Marks, FL 32355, (850) 925-6121

Pinelog State Forest, Map 6 – The established campground (fee) is the only camping allowed in Pinelog during hunting dates.

Eglin East, Map 4, & Eglin North, Map 3 & Eglin West, Map 2 – **Thru-hikers** (backpackers starting and ending their hikes 50 miles beyond Eglin's boundaries), need a special permit from Eglin for Recreation Use and Camping. Thru-hikers need to contact Jackson Guard (850-882-4165 or 4166) for special permitting.

NOTE: This list may not include every permit and fee you may need while hiking the Florida Trail, but it does include the major ones you need to know about in advance.

PRINTED RESOURCES FOR FT THRU-HIKERS

The Florida Trail Guide, Sandra Friend & John Keatley
2013, Watula Press, ISBN 978-0-9898495-0-0

Along the Florida Trail, Sandra Friend & Bart Smith
2003, Westcliffe Publishers, ISBN 1-56579-480-X

Ten Million Steps, M.J. Eberhart
2000, SkyHouse Publishers DBN 1-58592-039-8

Hiking the Florida Trail, Johnny Molloy
2008, University of Press of Florida ISBN 978-0-8130-3195-8

Surviving the Wilds of Florida, Reid F. Tillery
2005, Collingwood Publications, ISBN 0-9634397-5-2

America's National Scenic Trails, Kathleen Ann Cordes
2001, University of Oklahoma Press, ISBN 0-8061-3296-5

The Hiking Trails of Florida's National Forests, Parks, and Preserves, Johnny Molloy and Sandra Friend
2007, University Press of Florida, ISBN 978-0-8130-3062-3

Ecosystems of Florida, Ronald L. Myers and John J. Ewel,
1990, University of Press of Florida ISBN 0-8130-1022-5

National Audubon Society Field Guide to Florida, Peter Alden, Richard Cech, and Richard Keen
1998, Alfred A. Knopf

Priceless Florida: Natural Ecosystems and Native Species, Ellie Whitney, D. Brue Means, and Anne Rudloe
2004, Pineapple Press, Sarasota, FL ISBN 978-1-56164-308-0

Some Kind of Paradise, Mark Derr
1998, University Press of Florida ISBN 0-8130-1629-0

A Land Remembered, Patrick D. Smith
2001, Pineapple Press, Sarasota, FL

Travels of William Bartram, Mark Van Doren, ed.
1823, reprint 1983, Dover Publications

30 Eco-Trips in Florida, Holly Ambrose
2005, University Press of Florida, ISBN 0-8130-2850-7

A Birder's Guide to Florida, Bill Pranty
1996, American Birding Association, ISBN 1-878788-24-8

The Nature of Florida, James Kavanaugh
2005, Waterford Press, ISBN 978-1-58355-302-2

Swamp Song, Ron Larson
1995, University Press of Florida, ISBN 0-8130-1355-0

The Book of the Everglades, Susan Cerulean, editor
2002, Milkweed Editions, ISBN 1-57131-260-9

The Yearling, Majorie Kinnan Rawlings
1938, multiple editions

INTERNET RESOURCES

Florida Trail Association <http://www.floridatrail.org>
(from here you can also access all the local chapter websites and trail pages)

floridahikes.com/florida-trail

Florida Hiking Syndicate Public Group on Facebook

Florida Fish & Wildlife Conservation Comm. <http://myfwc.com/hunting/> **(FL Hunting Seasons Info)**

Florida State Parks <http://www.floridastateparks.org>

Florida Forest Service <http://www.freshfromflorida.com/Divisions-Offices/Florida-Forest-Service/Recreation>

National Forests in Florida <http://www.fs.usda.gov/fnst>

Florida Trail Email List (FT-L) <http://mailman.backcountry.net/mailman/listinfo/ft-l>

Big Cypress National Preserve <http://www.nps.gov/bicy>

Gulf Islands National Seashore <http://www.nps.gov/guis>

Cross-Florida Greenway <http://www.floridastateparks.org/crossflorida>

St. Marks National Wildlife Refuge <http://www.saintmarks.fws.gov/>

Florida Office of Greenways & Trails <http://www.dep.state.fl.us/gwt/>

Florida Hiking Forum



Florida Trail Association, Inc.

Building More Than Trails

1050 NW 2nd Street, Suite A
Gainesville, FL 32601
(352) 378-8823
Toll Free (877) HIKE-FLA

Fax (352) 378-4550
fta@floridatrail.org
www.floridatrail.org

Dear Long Distance Hiker:

Enclosed please find the General Release and Covenant Not to Sue Form that the Seminole Indian Tribe requires hikers to sign before crossing the Reservation property.

- 1) Complete and sign the Release in front of two witnesses. The witnesses are required to sign also. Be sure to get the **signatures notarized if you are a legal resident of the State of Florida.**
- 2) Make a copy of the release for yourself. The Reservation will NOT notify you in any way unless you are denied passage.
- 3) Mail the original release to this address:
SEMINOLE TRIBE OF FLORIDA
Attn: Real Estate Services, Room #104
6300 Stirling Road
Hollywood, FL 33024-2198
- 4) Carry the copy of your release with you while on the Reservation.

If you have any further questions, please feel free to contact me.

Sincerely,

Diane Strong

Diane Strong

Membership & Retail Coordinator

GENERAL RELEASE AND COVENANT NOT TO SUE

I, _____, the undersigned, hereinafter Releasor, being a member of the Florida Trail Association, which has been issued a permit by the Seminole Tribe of Florida for the purpose of the Association's members hiking on and over the Big Cypress Seminole Indian Reservation, will attend and participate in a hike, hereinafter Event, to be conducted through the Tribe's Big Cypress Seminole Indian Reservation, hereinafter Premises, and in consideration of being permitted to attend and/or participate in said Event do hereby voluntarily assume the risks and consequences of attending and participating in the Event in said Premises. The Releasor hereby knowingly, freely, and voluntarily releases, waives, acquits, and discharges the United States of America, the Seminole Tribe of Florida, the Seminole Tribe of Florida, Inc., and any of their Tribal Council members, Tribal members, officers, directors, employees, agents, shareholders, and volunteers together with their heirs, personal representatives, successors, assigns, all referred to as Releasees, from liability to me, my representatives, assigns, heirs, and next-of-kin for all loss or damage, and any claims therefor brought by, or on behalf of, me on account of injury to my person or property, or resulting in my death.

Releasor agrees to indemnify the Releasees and each of them from any loss, liability damage or cost Releasees may incur due to presence of Releasor in or on the Premises and during participation in the Event whether caused by the negligence of Releasees or otherwise, or by persons who may be on the Premises lawfully or otherwise.

Releasor assumes full responsibility for and risk of bodily injury, death, or property damage due to negligence of Releasees, or otherwise, while Releasor is in or on the Premises and while participating in said Event.

Releasor agrees on behalf of himself/herself and his/her successors and assigns not to institute any action or suit at law or at equity against the Releasees, nor to assist in the institution or prosecution of any claim, demand, action or cause of action for damages, costs, loss of services, expenses, or compensation by any other person or entity, and to indemnify and hold harmless Releasees from any and all claims brought by, or on behalf of himself/herself.

Releasor agrees that this Release, Waiver, and Indemnity Agreement is intended to be as broad and inclusive as permitted by the laws of the United States and the Seminole Tribe of Florida. If any portion of this Agreement is held invalid, it is agreed that the balance shall, notwithstanding, continue in full legal force and effect.

Releasor, being of lawful age, in consideration of being permitted to attend and participate in the Event on the Premises does for himself/herself, his/her heirs, executors, administrators, and assigns hereby release and forever discharge said Releasees, their heirs, administrators, and executors of and from any and every claim, demand, action or right of action, of whatsoever kind or nature, either in law or in equity, arising from or by any reason of any bodily injury or personal injuries, known or unknown, death and/or property damages resulting or to result from any accident which may occur as a result of attendance and participation in said Event conducted on the Premises by the Florida Trail Association whether or not by negligence.

GENERAL RELEASE AND COVENANT NOT TO SUE

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Releasor further states that he/she has carefully read the above Release, that Releasor knows the contents of the Release and understands it and agrees to be bound by its terms and signs this Release as his/her own free act.

This Release contains the entire agreement between the parties to this Agreement, and the terms of this Release are contractual and not a mere recital.

This Agreement is executed on _____, 20____, by _____, referred to as Releasor, County of _____, State of Florida. Phone No. (____) _____.

SIGNATURE OF RELEASOR:

WITNESSES:

Signature

Signature

Print Name

Print Name

Signature

Print Name

FTA Combination Locks at Buckman Lock

Normal operating hours are 6:30am to 3pm everyday. Lock tender # 386-329-3575

In the past, a few campers at the south campsite (not hikers) have left the FTA combination locks and gates open at Buckman Lock, creating a liability for the Office of Greenways and Trails. Mickey Thomason, Central Region Manager for the Cross Florida Greenway, has now restricted FTA to releasing the lock combination **ONLY** to **FTA MEMBERS** who are **THRU-HIKING** the Florida Trail. All other trail users should arrange their hiking schedules to cross Buckman Lock during normal lock operating hours. FTA members who are thru-hiking the entire trail may call the FTA office (M-F, 9 am to 5 pm) for the combination to the locks. Both locks are set to the same number but the combinations are changed randomly.

The combination locks are on the high chain link fences on either side of Buckman Lock. Hikers will only need to use the combination locks if crossing Buckman Lock outside of the normal lock operating hours of 6:30 am to 3 pm everyday. (Exact times may change, so it is advisable to call the lock when you get close.) Buckman Lock phone – 386-329-3575.

Some hikers have had trouble getting the combination locks open due to unfamiliarity with the lock design. These locks do not spring open like the combination locks used on school lockers. To open these locks depress the lock hasp into the lock body, dial in the correct combination numbers - aligning them with the arrow on the left side of the lock body - then jerk the lock open. To close, depress the lock hasp into the lock body and spin the combination to a different number.

Hikers should take care to make sure that the combination locks are closed after they pass through. Thomason indicated that if the FTA combination locks continue to be left open, the FTA locks will have to be removed and hikers will no longer be able to cross the Lock outside of the normal operating hours.

THE FLORIDA TRAIL END TO END HIKERS DESIGNATION

The Florida Trail Association confers the designation END TO END on any individual who affirms they have walked end to end on the Florida Trail. The policy gives equal recognition to through hikers and section hikers alike. The Florida Trail Association assumes that those who apply for END TO END status have hiked every mile of the Florida Thru Trail including any roadway connectors. Alternate trails are considered viable substitutes to the orange blazed trail in an emergency such as flooding or severe storms, which have made the trail impassable. Parallel road walks are accepted as alternative routes when conditions put the hiker in peril. The sequence, direction, speed, length of time taken to finish and whether one carries a back pack or not are not considered issues.

Note: The Florida Trail has been in transition for the past 25 years. Therefore, it will not be necessary for anyone who walked the trail before the end of 1999 to have completed all the road walks and consideration will be given as to the location of the Florida Thru Trail terminus changes.

Definitions:

Thru Hiker – is a person who is attempting to hike end to end within a year in a single continuous journey by hiking from one terminus of the Florida Thru Trail to the other.

Section Hiker – is a person who is attempting to hike all of the Florida Trail in segments, over a period of time. The length of time, sequence of segments, and direction of travel on each segment are not considered issues.

END TO END STATUS APPLICATION

To: Florida Trail Association
1050 NW 2nd St, Suite A
Gainesville, FL 32601

From: Legal Name _____

Trail Name _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

Telephone _____ Email _____

Date: _____

I wish to inform the Florida Trail Association that I have hiked end to end on the Florida Trail and wish to apply for an END TO END patch and have my hike recorded with the Florida Trail Association.

I started my hike on: _____ and ended my hike on _____

I was a through hiker _____ section hiker _____ (Check one)

I hiked Lake Okeechobee: on the west side _____ east side _____ (Check one)

I hiked: the western route _____ the eastern route _____ in central Florida. (Check one)

I hiked: Santa Rosa Island _____ the Alabama border _____. (Check one)

I wish to share my journal or some of my experiences on the trail with the Florida Trail Association and give them permission to publish same in literature they publish or have published. Yes _____ No _____

Signed _____