

Set amid the lush greenery, winding waterways and native wilderness of North Florida is one of the Sunshine State's little known and most precious treasures. Cut from nature's flawless beauty and set apart by a band of shimmering waters, this sparkling gem reflects the many colorful facets of Florida's rich history and original unspoiled splendor. It is here in crystalclear waters, under sapphire skies and golden sun, shaded by an emerald canopy of green that visitors discover Hamilton County, Florida- the Jewel of the Suwannee.

And while Hamilton County is undeniably a natural treasure, it is equally valuable as one of Florida's historic treasures. With more than 90 sites and structures on the National Register of Historic Places, Hamilton County is a popular destination for both casual history buffs and more serious genealogy researchers. In addition to the more obvious historic sites and structures, the county is dotted with more than 50 county cemeteries, including what is believed to be Florida's oldest. For those who will listen, these weathered tombstones and grave markers whisper an intriguing tale of the area's pioneer past.



Room and Board

Under a canopy of stars or a canopy bed, visitors rest easy in Hamilton County. Campgrounds, cabins and RV parks provide convenient accommodations and ready access to the best of Florida's great outdoors. Those who prefer the great indoors must choose between charming historic bed and breakfasts, world renowned hunting and fishing resorts and the comfort of motels and hotels. No matter the preference, visitors will find Hamilton County very accommodating.

Visitors hungry for a taste of true Southern cuisine will enjoy Hamilton County's home-cooked collection of family-owned and operated cafes, diners and restaurants. Hamilton County serves up fresh seafood and down-home delicacies to satisfy any appetite.

Transportation

Like a diamond mine in your own backyard, the Jewel of the Suwannee is a treasure as surprising as it is easy to reach. Sometimes called the crossroads of Florida, Hamilton County is ideally located halfway between Jacksonville and Tallahassee, near the intersection of I-10 and I-75. The interstates make Hamilton County as easy drive from any direction; scenic state roads like US41 make it a memorable one.



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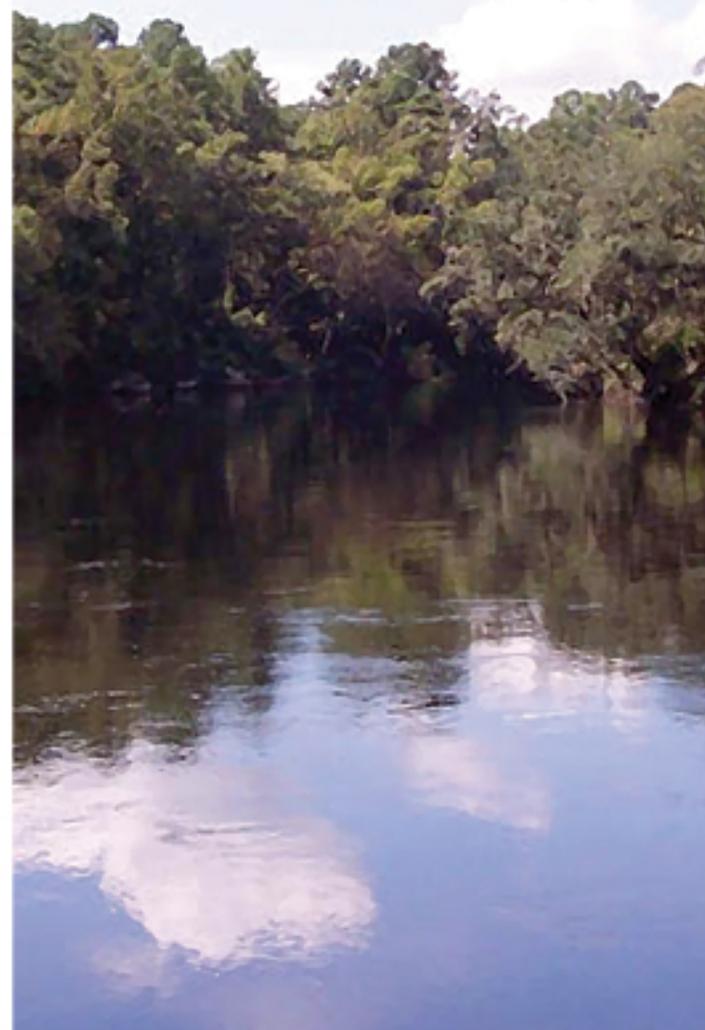
This program made possible through funding provided by Hamilton County Tourist Development Council

Hamilton



County, Florida

Jewel of the Suwannee



A Tale of Two Treasures

Resting on the Florida-Georgia border, Hamilton County is truly set apart from the rest of the state. Bordered by the Withlacoochee River to the west and the world famous Suwannee River to the east and south, the county forms a peninsula within a peninsula, uniquely separated from the landmass of Florida. Neatly splitting this river country is the twisting Alapaha River, adding to the vitality and beauty of a paradise for nature lovers, outdoor sports enthusiasts and wildlife-watchers of all ages. The protected waters of Hamilton County's rivers, crystal clear springs and numerous lakes are an unending source of pleasure for those who enjoy fishing, canoeing, boating, kayaking, swimming, snorkeling and diving; its banks and surrounding habitats offer a world of possibilities for camping, hunting, hiking, biking, photography, wildlife observation and exploring.



Native Beauty

Hamilton County is crisscrossed with a growing network of trails and pathways that highlight the best of the area's natural assets. Big Shoals Public Lands covers a vast 3,772 acres that include 28 miles of multiuse trails for biking, hiking, running and horseback riding. The park also has a canoe launch into the Suwannee, where visitors can paddle out to discover the meaning of the park's name in a breathtaking whitewater ride down the only class III rapids in the state of Florida. Whether on foot or horseback, with pedals or paddles, visitors find it easy and exciting to explore Hamilton County.

Just about any stretch of shore and sky surrounding Hamilton County is ideal for those in search of Florida's native wildlife and unspoiled scenery. But a system of state, county and local parks, campgrounds and managed wildlife areas provide even easier access to some of Florida's true locals.



BIG SHOALS

Cypress Creek Wildlife Management Area, Holton Creek Wildlife Management Area and the Big Shoals Public Lands are favorite spots to observe white-tailed deer, bobwhite quail, raccoons, bobcats, foxes and countless songbirds and wading birds. The patient and quiet visitor may be lucky enough to spot the endangered red-cockaded woodpecker or southeastern kestrel.

Another popular recreation area is the 14,000-acre Twin Rivers State Forest, with more than 1,100 acres in Hamilton County along the banks of Florida's historic Suwannee River and the scenic Withlacoochee River. The state forest is made up of 15 separate tracts with a variety of trees that are home to many songbirds and other unique species of bird. Visitors can picnic, canoe, fish, and explore nature trails through a variety of habitats where Florida panthers, deer, gopher tortoises, quail and other native wildlife make their homes.



Wild Time for Sportsman

Fishing and hunting are popular yearround sports in Hamilton County. Large areas of wetlands fed by the surrounding rivers have created a wide diversity of natural habitats in which native fish and wildlife thrive. A number of small, mineral-rich lakes, such as Lake Octahatchee, produce record-setting catches of largemouth bass, channel and bullhead catfish, bluegill, redear, spotted sunfish, gar, bowfin and other species.

Hamilton County is also one of only two counties in Florida with mobility-impaired accessible hunting, and one of a very few with mobility-impaired fishing.

It's no surprise that Hamilton County is home to one of the most renowned hunting and fishing resorts in the country. Bienville Plantation near White Springs caters to individual sportsmen, corporate groups and families, providing world-class accommodations, dining, guided hunting and fishing expeditions in what many believe to be Florida's most pristine outdoor environment.

Check with the Hamilton County Tax Collector's Office at (386) 792-1284 for information on hunting and fishing licenses.



Small Town Charm

Exploring the history and charm of the towns of Jasper, Jennings and White Springs you will soon discover why Hamilton County was named Florida's first countywide Main Street Community. Strolling shady streets and narrow lanes reveals the true spirit and forgotten flair of small town Florida.

Jasper

In Jasper, the county seat, curious visitors can explore the old jail (built in 1893) and is where prisoners were segregated, housed - and sometimes hung - for more than 91 years. Guests can tour the living quarters of the sheriff and his family, and can even see the original tower still in place.

A stroll along Jasper's Central Avenue leads visitors past several beautiful historic homes, such as the Camp home, as well as the First Methodist Church. The church is on the National Register of Historic Places, and is where renowned civil rights activist and author Ullian Eugenia Smith attended as a child.



For those who want to put the past behind them for a while, the Florida Gateway Golf & Country Club in Jasper offers a refreshing nine-hole

challenge and a great setting to take in Florida's natural beauty. The course includes a driving range and a putting green. To pick up the pace, visitors can get front row seats to watch the fastest game in the world, or try their luck with the cards at the Hamilton Jai-Alai &



Jennings

Jennings is Hamilton County's northernmost town and the heart of the county's rich agricultural area. The quaint town is home to a number of historic sites and structures. Graceful southern homes lend an understated elegance to the quiet streets of Jennings, hinting at its history as a cotton, lumber and turpentine boom town. Jennings is also the town closest to the mysterious Alapaha River. The Alapaha River winds its way through the county from North to South and is sometimes referred to as the dry river or "River of Sand." It earned the name from its playful tendency to disappear underground into limestone caverns during certain times of the year, leaving behind a bed of sand.

To kick it into high gear, race over to JENNINGS GP, North Florida's motorcycle-only road racing circuit track. With 14 turns, the two-mile track is professionally designed to racing specifications, and is thrilling fun for riders of all skill levels.



NATURE & HERITAGE
TOURISM CENTER-
WHITE SPRING



White Springs

The Town of White Springs is the location of Florida's very first tourist attraction. In the early 1800's, pioneers and settlers began to discover the "healing" properties of water boiling from sulfur springs along the north bank of the Suwannee River. These same waters had for centuries been considered sacred by various Native American tribes in North Florida.

Appropriately situated on the banks of the Suwannee River is the Stephen Foster Folk Culture Center State Park, dedicated to the memory of the man who brought the Suwannee to life through song for millions of people around the world. Set among towering pines and timeless oaks, the 888-acre park offers an exceptional mix of natural, cultural and recreational opportunities. The Florida Folk Festival, the oldest state folk festival in the United States, is held at the park each year, drawing musicians, songwriters, nationally recognized performers and thousands of their fans in a musical celebration of Florida's cultural diversity. Year-round visitors can enjoy a variety of exhibits and special events celebrating Florida's folk heritage, stroll the park's beautiful gardens and grounds, or take advantage of camping and picnicking facilities, and hiking and biking trails. The park's centerpiece is the Stephen Foster Memorial Carillon Tower, the world's largest tubular bell instrument, which fills the air with concerts throughout the day. The center includes a museum with guided tours, craft and gift shop and more.

The park is also home to the first hub of the Suwannee River Wilderness Trail, where a lazy day trip of a multi-day adventure can begin.

The White Springs Historic District offers a self-guided asking tour of its many historic sites. Strolling the streets and lanes of White Springs, visitors can use a convenient tour brochure that provided a colorful map and interesting facts on the dozens of historic homes, churches and other sites and structures from the town's intriguing past.



For more information:

Hamilton County Tourism
www.hamiltonTDC@windstream.net
www.hamiltoncountyflorida.com
 (386)792-6829

Hamilton County Development Authority
sramsey@hamiltonCDA.org
 (386)792-6828

Hamilton County Chamber of
 Commerce, Inc.
hamcoc@windstream.net
www.hamiltoncountyflorida.com
 (386)792-1300

Stephen Foster Folk Culture Center
 State Park
Elaine.mcgrath@dep.state.fl.us
www.floridastateparks.org/stephenfoster
 (386)397-4331

Nature & Heritage Tourism Center
 (386)397-4461
 Info for the Suwannee River
 Wilderness Trail
www.suwanneeriver.com
 (800)868-9914

White Springs City Hall
cityhall@windstream.net
www.whitesprings.org
 (386)397-2310

Jasper City Hall
jaspercm@windstream.net
www.jasperflonline.com
 (386)792-1212

Jennings Town Hall
 (386)938-4131

White Springs Library
 (386)397-1389

Jasper Public Library
 (386)792-2285

Jennings Public Library
 (386)938-1143

Visit Florida I-75 Welcome Center
www.visitflorida.com • (386)938-2981

Old Jail Museum
OldJailMuseum@gmail.com
 Jasper
 (386)855-0652

Hamilton Jai Alai & Poker
www.hamiltondownsjai.com
 (386)638-0011



Special Events

Wild Azalea Festival
 3rd Saturday in March
 (386)397-2310

Antique Tractor Show
 1st Thursday-Saturday in April
 (386)397-4331

Hamilton County Championship Rodeo
 Last weekend in April
 Hamilton County Arena, Jasper
 (386)792-1300

Florida Folk Festival
 Memorial Weekend, Friday-Sunday
 Stephen Foster Folk Culture Center State Park
 White Springs
 (386)397-2733

Wild Blackberry Festival
 2nd Saturday in June - Downtown Jasper
 (386)792-1300

Hamilton County 4th of July Celebration
 Entertainment, Food & Fireworks
 July 4th
 Hamilton County Recreation Center, Jasper
 (386)792-3098

Antiques Arts & Collectibles
 3rd Saturday in July
 Stephen Foster Folk Culture Center State Park
 (386)397-4331

Come to the River 5k and Healing Arts Festival
 1st Saturday in September
 Stephen Foster Folk Culture Center State Park
 (386)397-4331

Hamilton County Events Day Fair
 1st Thursday in October
 Hamilton County Arena, Jasper
 (386)792-1312

Jeanie & Stephen Foster Auditions & Ball
 1st weekend in October
 (386) 397-4331

Suwannee River Gullit Show & Sale
 3rd weekend in October
 (386)397-4331

Haunted Old Jail
 Last Weekend in October & Oct 31
 Jasper
 (386)855-0652

Big Shoals Pumpkin Fest
 3rd Saturday in October
 (386)397-4331
 Big Shoals in White Springs

Sweets N the Streets Festival & Christmas Parade
 2nd Saturday in December
 Downtown Jasper
 (386)792-1300

Festival of Lights and Parade
 Parade 1st Friday in December, Festival lasts the month
 Downtown White Springs
 (386)397-4331

McCulley Farms Trail Rides
 3rd Saturday in March & October
 Jennings
Richard@McCulleyFarms.com
 (386)938-1147