

South and East of Naples Along the Tamiami Trail

Presentation by Paul Pacter

www.PaulVisits.com

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South and East of Naples Along the Tamiami Trail (US-41)



Tamiami Trail (US-41) Naples to Dade Line = 65 miles.

In 60 minutes, we'll cover the highlights of what's there, including:

- A National Park.
- National Preserve.
- National Wildlife Refuge.
- State Parks.
- Wildlife. History. The Everglades.



Great day trips in the Naples area.

Building the Tamiami Trail Naples to Dade Line 1923-1928

Tampa to MIAMI 284 miles.

AKA US-41

Tampa to Naples is North-South 163 miles.

Naples to Miami East-West 121 miles.

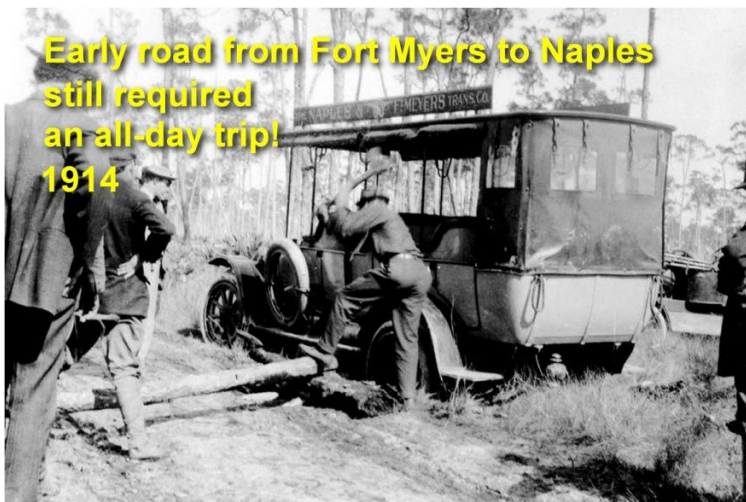


Tamiami Trail

- Initially proposed and agreed to by the various counties on the route in 1915. **Aim: economic development.**
- Much of the road from Tampa to Fort Myers was already in place, but needed improvement.
- Ft Myers to Miami would be new.

- Dade County started work on their end immediately. Made good progress.
- Lee County (which included what's now Collier) did some work on road from Ft Myers to Naples. **But ran out of money. State had no funds to help.**

Early road from Fort Myers to Naples still required an all-day trip!
1914



1923: Land developer Barron Collier offered to fund completion of the Tamiami Trail Naples to Dade line. In return, the State legislature would establish a new county and name it after him.

- State agreed.
- Population of Collier County in 1925: just 1,258.



Construction started 1923. Completed 1928. Opened April 26, 1928.

Basic process: Use dynamite to create an east-west canal. Use the resulting dirt to build the roadbed in the swamp above flood level. Called a "borrow canal" because the soil was borrowed to build the road.



2.6 million sticks of dynamite were used.

Brought in by log tram or by oxen. →

This machine bored the dynamite holes. →



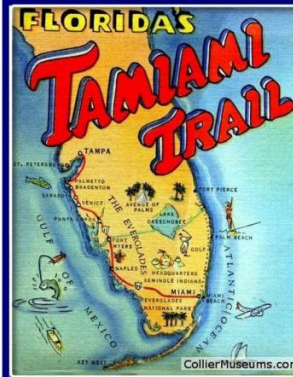
Mobile worker bunks, kitchens, toilets moved in the canal as the road progressed. Workers paid \$60/month. Worked all day standing in swamps, bitten by mosquitos.

Digging with Dredges



Mobile Bunks

**Tamiami Trail
Opened Apr 25, 1928**



Festivities in Everglades

N-S was US41
E-W was US94



Marco Island



**Marco Island Historical Museum
One of Five Collier County Museums**

Website: www.colliermuseums.com

Where: 180 South Heathwood Drive, Marco Island.

When: Tues to Sat.
9am to 4pm.

Admission:
Free.



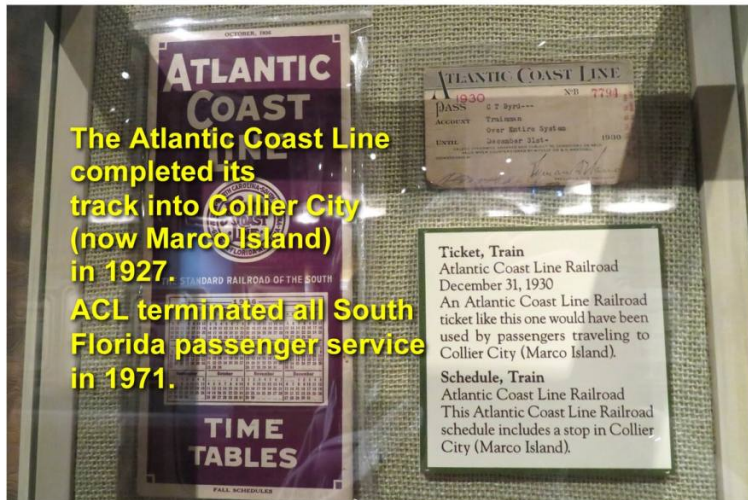
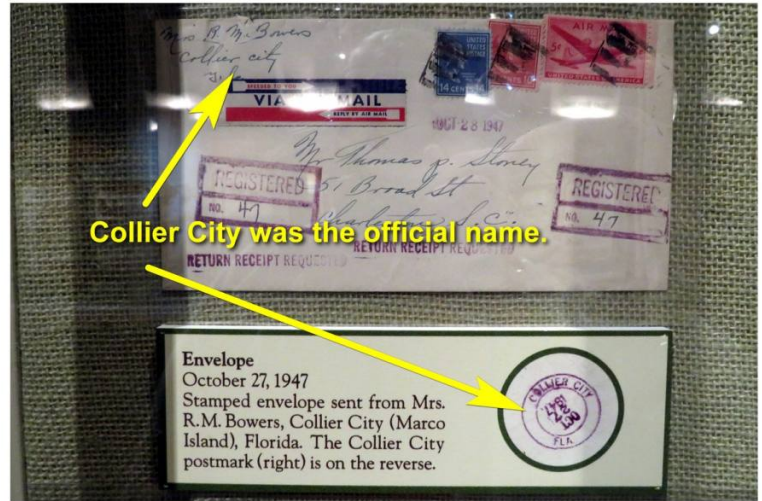
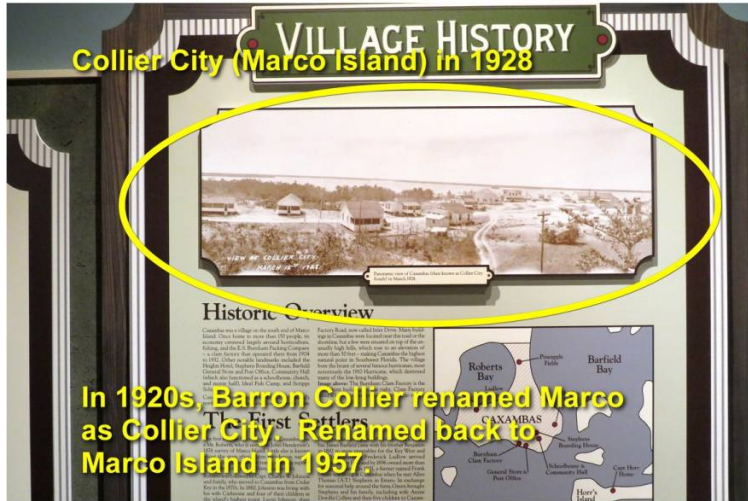
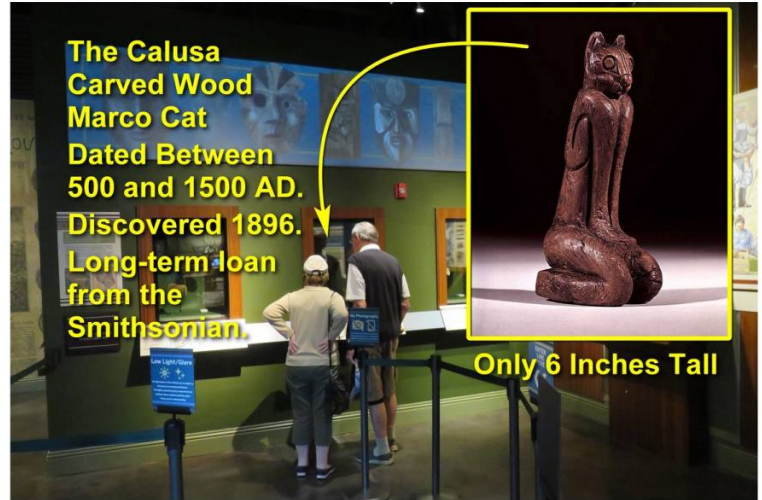
**Marco Island Historical Museum
Large copy of the Marco Cat**



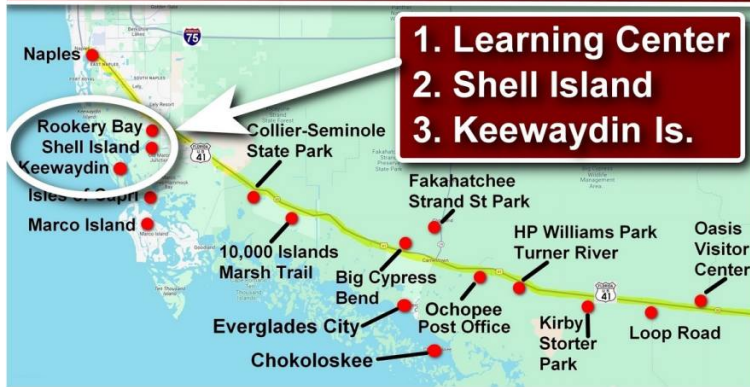
Museum traces the settlement of Marco from the Calusa (500 AD) to Spanish (1500s) to Seminole (1700s) to first permanent settlers (1870s) to today.

**Museum has extensive history of the Calusa and other early native Marco Island people
Including 200 pre-Columbian artifacts.**





Rookery Bay National Estuarine Research Reserve



Rookery Bay National Estuarine Research Reserve

Website: <https://rookerybay.org/>

Comment: Rookery Bay National Estuarine Research Reserve stretches across 110,000 acres from Gordon Pass in Naples to the western Everglades of pristine mangrove forest, uplands, and protected waters.

Three main locations:

1. Learning Center
2. Shell Island
3. Keewaydin Island

Environmental Learning Center:

Admission: Adults \$10.

When: Tues-Sat 9am-4pm. Sun-Mon closed.

Learning center: 16,500-square-foot educational, research and training facility with research laboratories, classrooms, auditorium, aquariums, visitor center, art gallery, cultural exhibits.

Observation bridge across Henderson Creek. Three half-mile walking trails.



Rookery Bay Environmental Learning Center Bridge Over Henderson Creek
Creek is Brackish and Tidal (flow changes direction)



Rookery Bay Reserve

View of Henderson Creek from the Bridge
Creek is Tidal



Three trails, each 1/2 mile long
Snail Trail has viewing platform on the Creek
Slash Pine and Catbird loops are primitive and wet in rainy seasons.



Rookery Bay Environmental Learning Center Viewing Platform on Henderson Creek



Shell Island Road

Briggs Boardwalk: Half-mile boardwalk. Small nature center. Self-guided tours dawn to dusk. Guided tours Jan-March

Monument Point Trail: 1,000 feet from boat launch area to Henderson Creek. Can fish at Monument Point.

Boat tours: 3 hours. \$109.

Guided kayak tours: 2 hours. \$65 to \$75.

Rookery Bay - Shell Island Hiking, Boardwalk, Nature Cruises



Rookery Bay Shell Island Briggs Boardwalk - ½ Mile Loop



Rookery Bay - Briggs Boardwalk

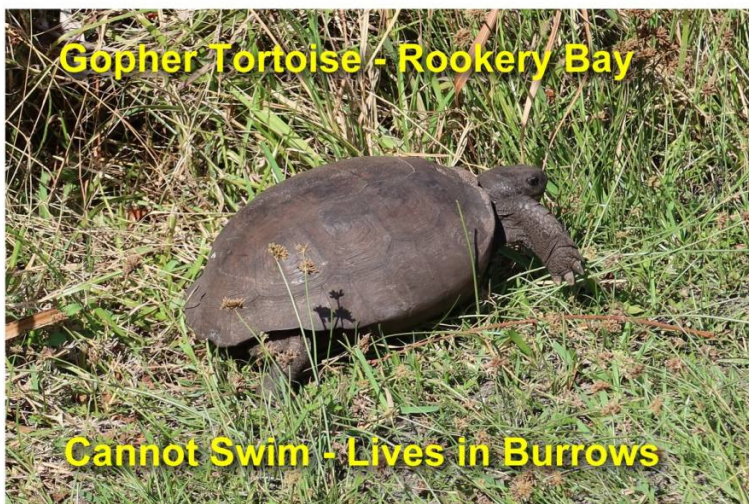


Sabal Palm – Florida State Tree (South Carolina too)
Can Grow to 65 Ft Height.
aka Cabbage Palm, Palmetto,
Swamp Cabbage.



*Our State Tree is technically NOT a tree!
It is a GRASS.*

Gopher Tortoise - Rookery Bay



Cannot Swim - Lives in Burrows

Calusa Shell Mound 1700s or earlier



Bits of History on Shell Island

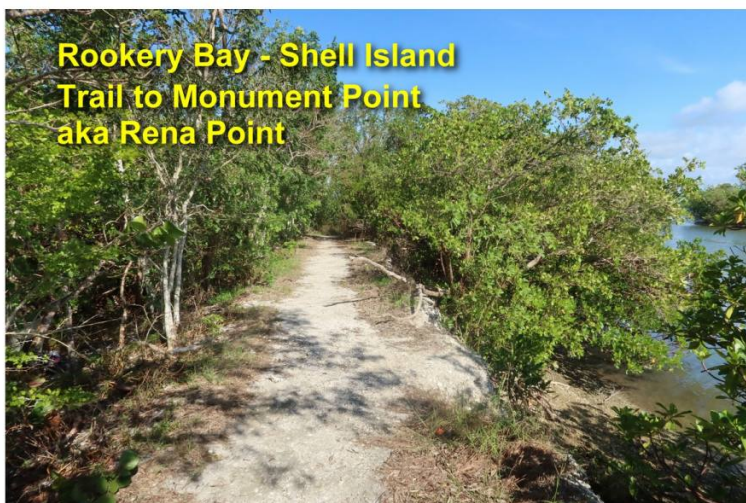
1887 Water Tank

1901 & 1908 Gravestones





Rookery Bay Nature Cruises

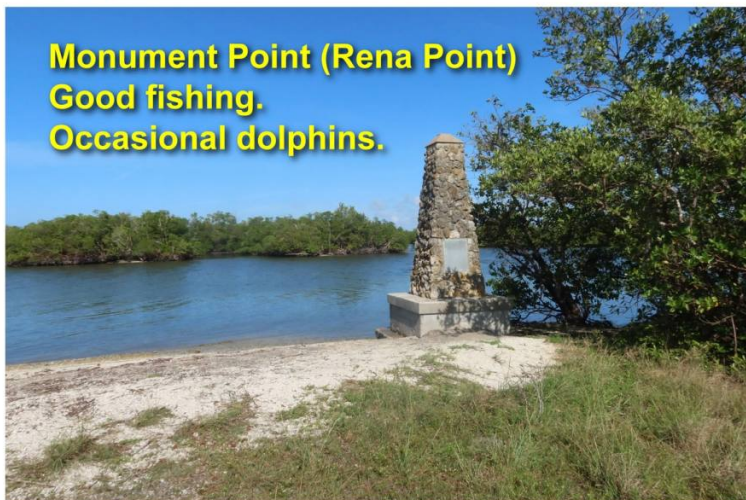


Rookery Bay - Shell Island Trail to Monument Point aka Rena Point

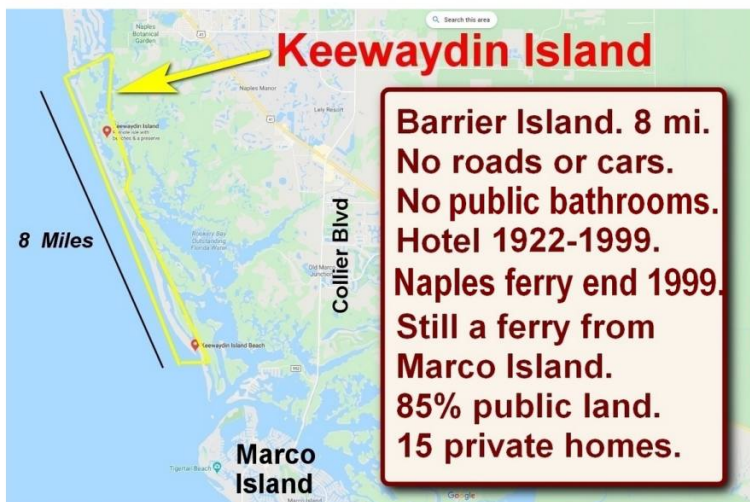


Trail to Monument Point aka Rena Point NOT Accessible at High Tide

Parking



Monument Point (Rena Point) Good fishing. Occasional dolphins.



Keewaydin Island

**Barrier Island. 8 mi.
No roads or cars.
No public bathrooms.
Hotel 1922-1999.
Naples ferry end 1999.
Still a ferry from Marco Island.
85% public land.
15 private homes.**



Keewaydin Island

Internet Photo



Keewaydin Ferry Boat - 1934

At Collier County Museum at Government Center, East Naples



Collier-Seminole State Park

Collier-Seminole State Park

Where: US-41 Tamiami Trail, 8 miles east of Collier Blvd.

Daily: 5am to sunset.
\$5 or annual pass.

What: 7,271 acres. Mangrove swamp. Royal palms. Camping. Boat rentals. Hiking. History (Walking Dredge, Barron Collier).

Collier-Seminole State Park



Barron Collier's Impossible Dream Building the Tamiami Trail - 1920s

The Dream

Barron Collier came to Florida in 1911 and fell in love with the beauty of the area. This region was Florida's last frontier and its potential for development awakened a dream of bringing people to this tropical paradise.



Collier was born in Memphis Tennessee. At the age of 20, he began a career in streetcar advertisement that would make him a millionaire. By the early 1920s his wealth enabled him to purchase over 900,000 acres in South Florida that would become Collier County.

The Challenges

In Collier's time, most people traveled to South Florida by rail. The coming of the automobile prompted schemes to connect cities and towns by highways. In 1915 a highway was planned from Tampa to Miami. Each county along the route was responsible for funding construction in its jurisdiction.



Lee county, which included Ft. Myers, Naples and land further south, soon ran out of money for the project. The difficulty and cost of building a road across the Everglades had been underestimated. Many said it was impossible! Barron Collier offered to fund the highway construction across the Everglades if a new county was created and named after him.

The Achievement

The 50-mile section of road across the Everglades took four years to complete. Workers built over a mile a month. The Bay City Walking Dredge located here was one of the machines used to help build the road. In 1938, the 273-mile Tampa to Miami road (Tamiami Trail) officially opened.



The Tamiami Trail completed, Collier envisioned developing a national park here, but failed to rally support for his idea. The land first became a county park and then in 1947, a state park. Collier-Seminole State Park represents a part of the tropical paradise that Collier loved.

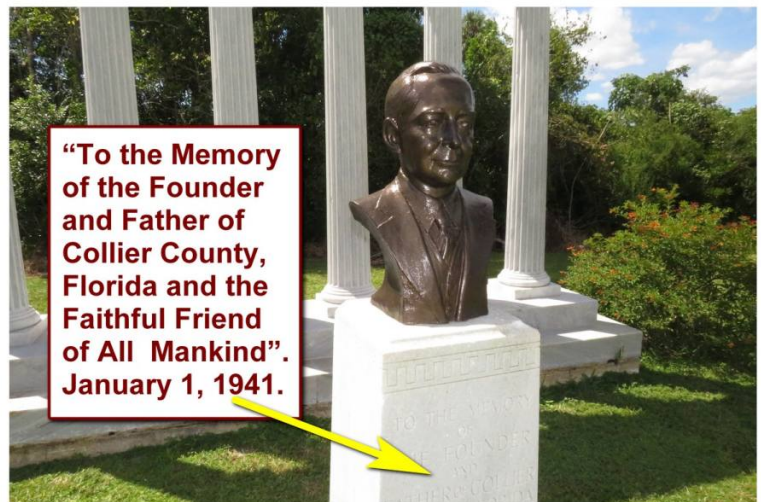
Bay City Walking Dredge - 1924 One mile per month



Barron Collier Memorial Collier-Seminole State Park



"To the Memory of the Founder and Father of Collier County, Florida and the Faithful Friend of All Mankind".
January 1, 1941.



Collier-Seminole State Park Blackwater River Kayaking and Canoeing

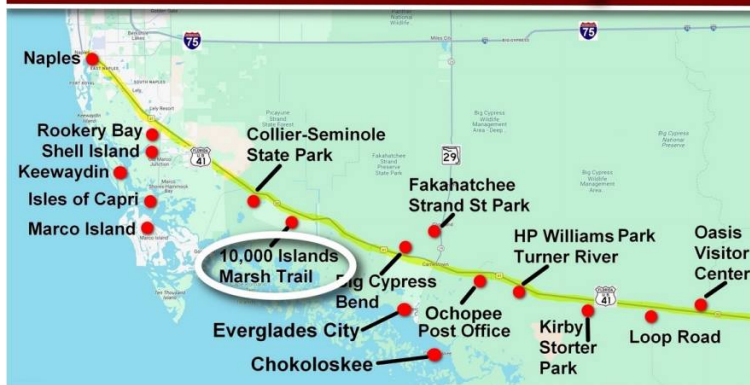


"Not for the inexperienced hiker."
"Wilderness savvy is in order, as you'll be wading the better part of 6 miles to experience a watery forest like none other – the Big Cypress Swamp."
"A real workout!"

<https://floridahikes.com/collier-seminole-hiking-trail>



Ten Thousand Islands National Wildlife Refuge



Ten Thousand Islands National Wildlife Refuge

Where: Visit by boat trip is best.
By car: US-41, 11 mi E of Collier Blvd.

Daily: Free.

What: 35,000 acres.

Mangrove islands.

Countless plants, wildlife.

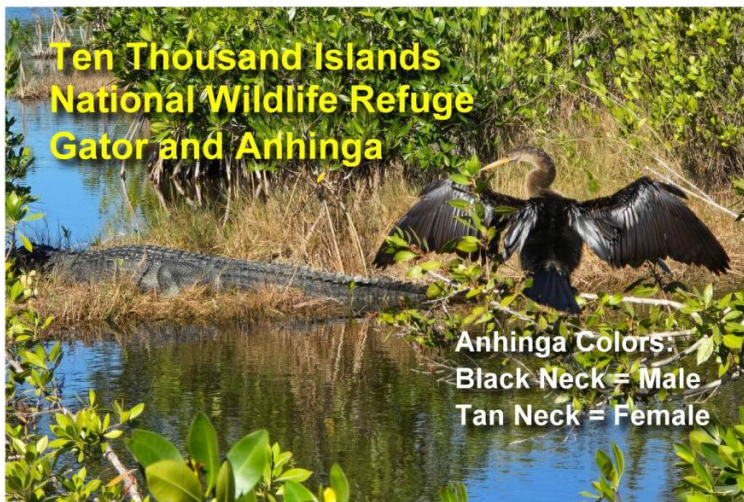
1-mile hiking trail, observation tower.



Ten Thousand Islands National Wildlife Refuge
Start of Marsh Trail 1.2 miles.
First 1,000' paved. Then gravel.



Ten Thousand Islands National Wildlife Refuge
Great Everglades Views
Great Bird Watching Year Round



Ten Thousand Islands National Wildlife Refuge
Observation Tower

Spectacular View from Observation Tower Ten Thousand Islands National Wildlife Refuge

This is between rainy and dry seasons.
Rainy: Cannot see mangrove roots at all.
Dry: Mangrove islands have land around them.



Same place at
10,000 Islands
March 2020 to
May 2021.

10,000 Islands NWR Brown Pelicans



Today's Lunch Menu: Tilapia



True Story: On April 6, 2022 I was
sitting on this bench when...



Notice the tilapia or
turtle in its mouth

Gallinules (also called Moorhens) Ten-Thousand Islands



Limpkin

Their diet is dominated by
apple snails. This one is at
Collier-Seminole State Park
next to Ten Thousand Islands.



Teals, Coots, and Others Dec 7, 2022 - Marsh Trail



Big Cypress Bend Boardwalk



Big Cypress Bend

Fakahatchee Strand Preserve State Park

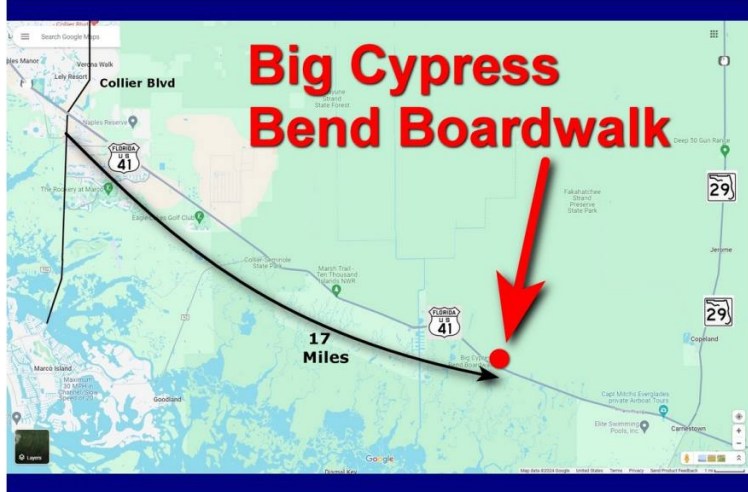
Website: www.floridastateparks.org/parks-and-trails/fakahatchee-strand-preserve-state-park

Where: US-41, Copeland FL 34137.

Get There: US-41 East 17 miles from Collier Blvd intersection.

When: 8am to sunset.

Admission: \$3.



What: Fakahatchee Strand Preserve is the largest State Park in Florida (out of 175 parks).

Big Cypress Bend Boardwalk is one feature of the Preserve.

At the moment, there are TWO Big Cypress Bend Boardwalks: One closed and one partially open.

Eventually the two will be connected to form a loop.

Why are there currently two Big Cypress Bend Boardwalks?

- There is an old 3,200' boardwalk plus 1,000' gravel path thru a swamp to an alligator pond. Lots of wildlife.
- The State had planned a major loop extension of the old boardwalk – and had started work on a small part of the extension plus new parking and visitors' center – when Hurricane Ian hit in Sept 2022.

Ian made the old boardwalk unusable.

- The State had funding for only part of the new extension.
- Finally, in Feb 2024, about ½ mile of the new extension opened, along with a parking area and visitors' center.
- The State still needs funding for the rest of the new extension and also for repairs to the old boardwalk.

The map on the next slide illustrates all of this.

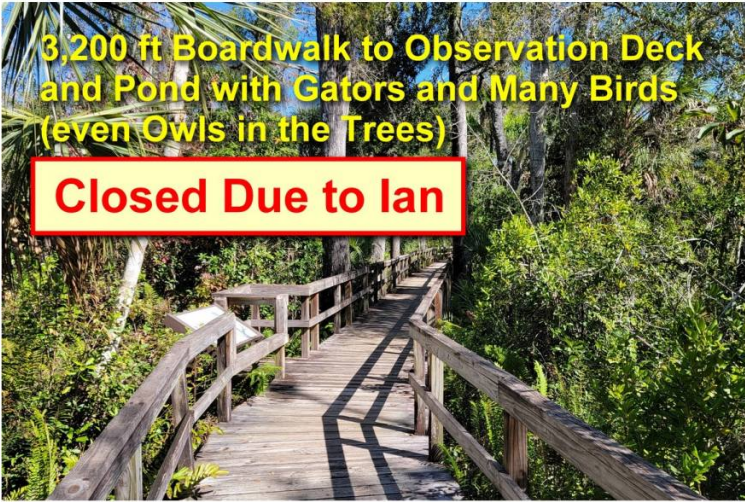


The next 4 slides show the OLD boardwalk and alligator pond.

- These are not currently accessible due to Hurricane Ian damage.
- After the old boardwalk is repaired, it will become part of the expanded hiking loop (including boardwalk, canopy walk, and trails) shown in the previous map.

3,200 ft Boardwalk to Observation Deck and Pond with Gators and Many Birds (even Owls in the Trees)

Closed Due to Ian



**Lake at the End of the Boardwalk
One of the most beautiful spots in or near Naples!**

Not currently accessible due to Ian.



**Big Cypress Bend
Gators Cuddling**

Area not accessible due to Hurricane Ian.



**Barred Owl Looking
Down on the Pond**



**The rest of the slides illustrate
the parts of Big Cypress Bend
that are now open.**



**Big Cypress Bend Boardwalk
New bridge from parking to visitors' center.**



Visitors' Center Overlooks a Wet Prairie



Start of New Big Cypress Bend Boardwalk





Under the Boardwalk at Big Cypress Bend



**Big Cypress Bend Boardwalk
At Green Heron Lake**



Big Cypress Bend



**Fakahatchee Strand Preserve
State Park**

Fakahatchee Strand Preserve State Park

Florida's largest State Park.

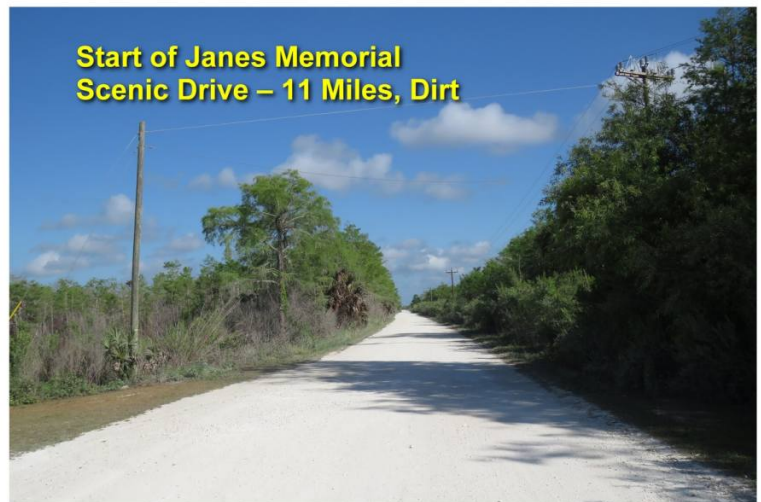
Where: SR-29 just north of US-41.

What: Florida's Amazon.

– **Big Cypress Bend Boardwalk.**

– **Janes Memorial Scenic Drive.**

11-mile dirt road with hiking, wading,
alligators (on road), wild orchids.



**Start of Janes Memorial
Scenic Drive – 11 Miles, Dirt**

Janes Scenic Drive 11 mile dirt road.

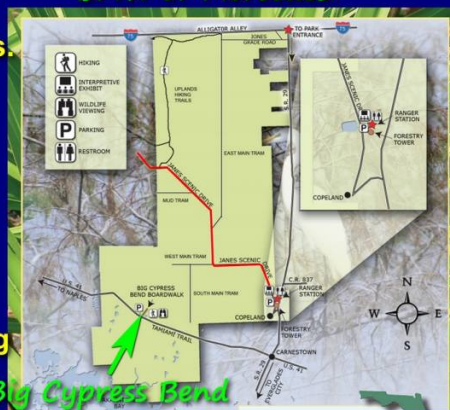
Ruts and potholes.

**Goes through
subtropical
wilderness,
swamp, prairie.**

**Along the road,
basking alligators
and snakes.**

**Hiking trails. Bring
bug repellent.**

*Not for your pampered
BMW or Mercedes!*



Big Cypress Bend



**Janes Memorial Scenic Drive
Along the road (from car window)**

Everglades City



Today both are small, isolated towns of about 400 people. Populations:

Everglades City

1930	172
1940	518
1950	625
1960	552
1970	462
1980	524
1990	321
2000	479
2010	400
2020	352

Chokoloskee

2000	404
2010	359
2020	346

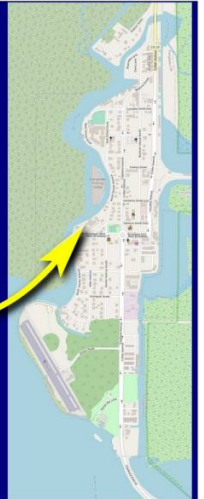
Collier County total population 2020: 375,752

Until 1962 Everglades City was the Collier County Seat.

1868: An army deserter (John Weeks) was hiding in what is now EC. Began some farming.

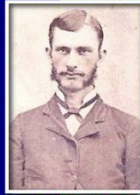
1870: First real settler William Smith Allen. Allen remained until 1889. Farmed along river front.

1870-1881: A few settlers arrived. Built rough homes. Fishing and farming.



1881: First visionary settler George Storter Sr arrived. Invested in property and developed agriculture.

By 1890: Storter bought out Allen and Weeks and other settlers. Planted vegetables and sugar cane (and made syrup). Started trading post and inn. Church. Railroad 14 miles north to Deep Lake.

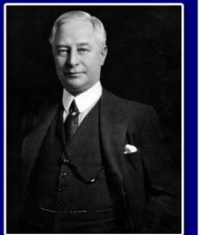


1825-1919

Storter's home, store, farm.

Barron Gift Collier

- Born Memphis 1873. Died 1939.
- Made \$1 million in street lighting by age 26. Then printing and streetcar advertising.
- Visited SW Florida 1906. Loved it.
- By 1916 had bought 1 million acres of land.
 - He became the largest landowner and developer in Florida.
 - He also owned a chain of hotels, bus lines, banks, newspapers, telephone company, steamship line.



Collier's 1 million acres cost him between 12 cents and 30 cents an acre.

In 1922, Barron Collier bought out George Storter and virtually the whole Everglade village.

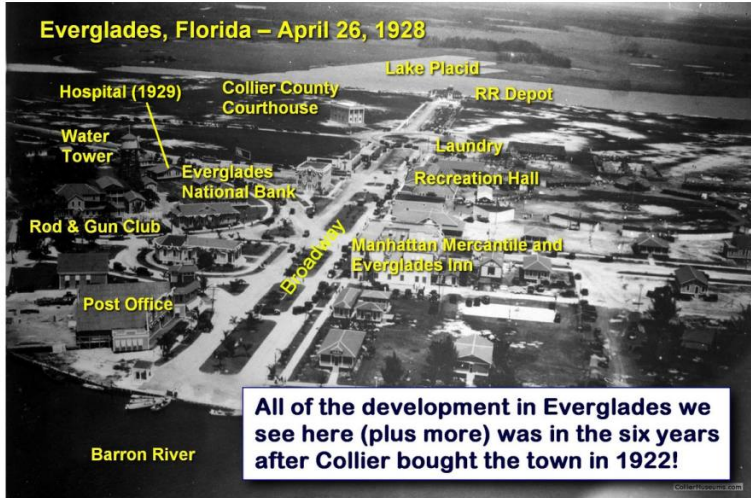
- Renamed the Allen River the Barron River.
- Added an s to the town's name (Everglades).

At that time only one dozen resident families. Plus a few fishing and hunting cabins owned by non-residents.



Everglades area prospered under Collier's leadership in the 1920s.

- Planned community including shops, hotels, school, bank, churches, public utilities, courthouse, hospital, newspaper.
- Created Collier County separate from Lee.
- He brought a passenger and freight railroad into Everglades.
- He built the Tamiami Trail.
- He built County and State Road 29 north Everglades to Immokalee.



Amid all the development in Everglades, there were major hurricanes in 1926 and 1928:



1929-1939 Great Depression. 1939 Collier died. His vision for EC was never realized!

Museum of the Everglades



Websites: www.colliermuseums.com
<https://evergladesmuseum.org/>

One of five Collier County Museums.

Where: 105 West Broadway, Everglades City.

Get There: South on US-41, right on US-29. 35 miles from central Naples.

Admission: Free.

When: Tues-Sat 9am to 4pm.

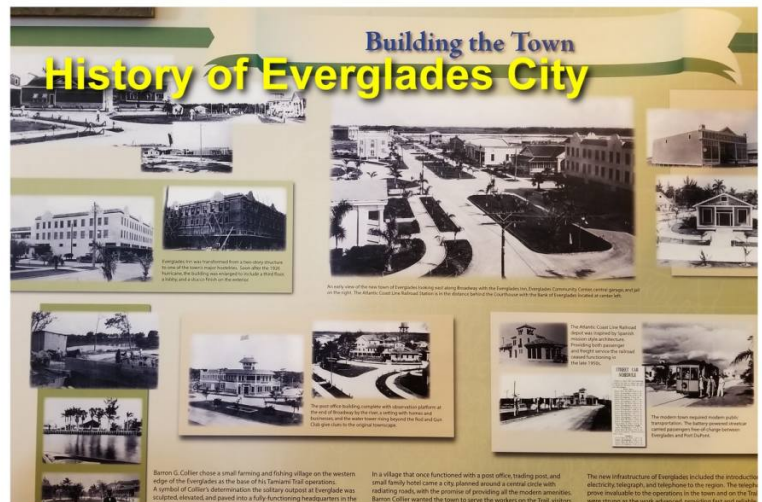
What: History of Everglades City including:

- **People of the Everglades:** Calusa and Seminoles.
- **Founding and History of Everglades City.**
- **Building the Tamiami Trail.**
- **Illegal Trades:** Moonshine.
- **Opening Everglades National Park.**
- **Fishing.**
- **The Python Problem.**
- **Several excellent videos.**

Museum of the Everglades Old Collier Laundry Building - 1928



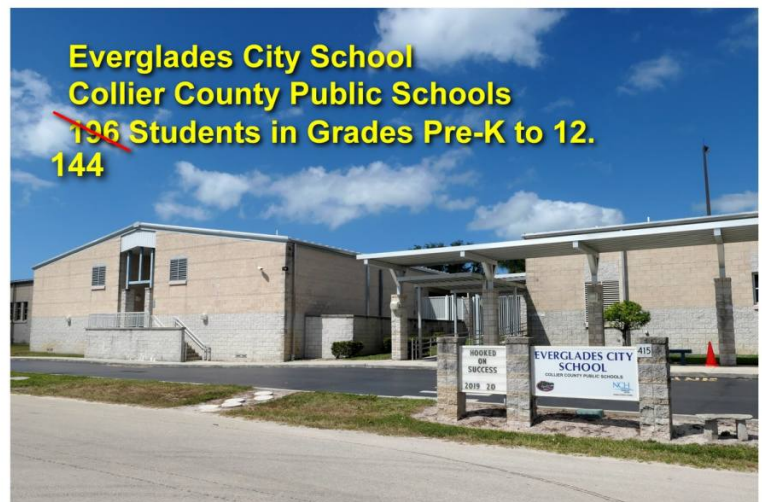
One of five Collier County Museums.



**First Baptist Church – Built 1923
 Moved to Everglades from Jerome
 when Jerome sawmill closed 1956.**



**Everglades City School
 Collier County Public Schools
 196 Students in Grades Pre-K to 12.
 144**



Rod & Gun Club

200 W Broadway on Barron R.

1871: Site of settler William Allan's cabin.

1889: George Storter bought site, built store and inn.

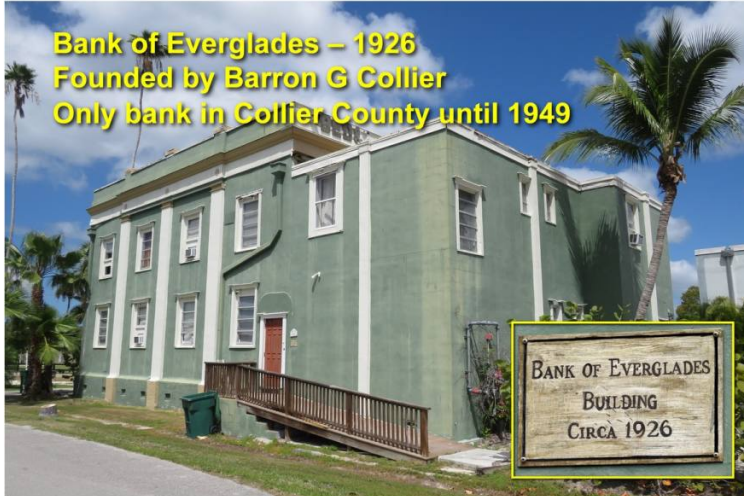
1922: Barron Collier bought inn. Private club.

1972: Bowen family (Michigan) bought. Still own.



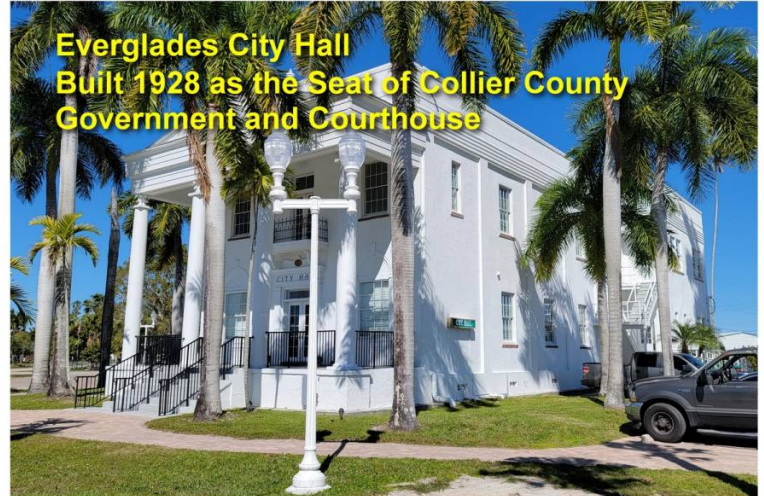
Bank of Everglades – 1926

Founded by Barron G Collier
Only bank in Collier County until 1949



Everglades City Hall

Built 1928 as the Seat of Collier County
Government and Courthouse



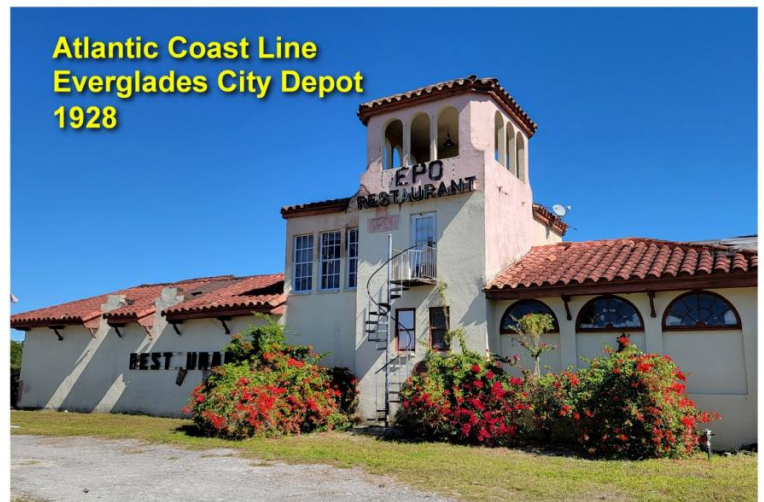
Everglades Community Church

1940



Atlantic Coast Line Everglades City Depot

1928

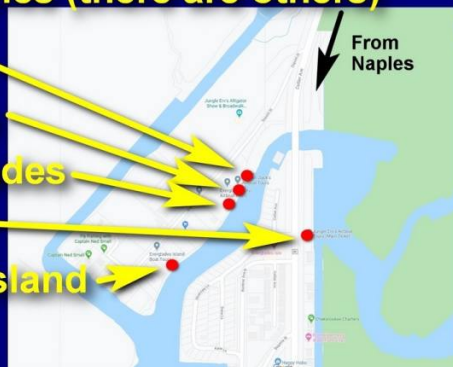


Airboat Tours from Everglades City

Some Examples (there are others)

Capt. Jack's
Capt. Doug's
Orig. Everglades
Jungle Erv's
Everglades Island

Also others
along US-41



Chokoloskee



Settlement of Chokoloskee Island

Chokoloskee means Old House in Indian language. But nobody knows the legend of the name.

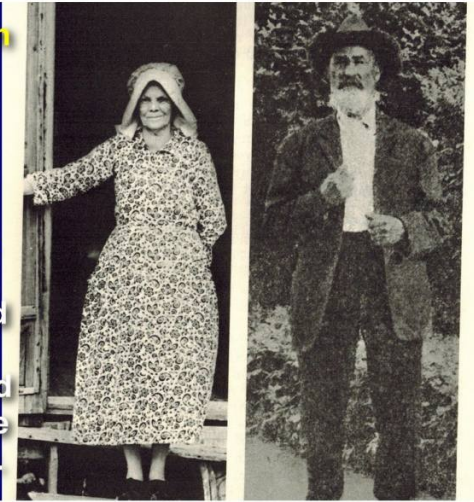


First settlers on Chokoloskee.

Mrs C G (Susan) McKinney.

C G McKinney.

In 1886 age 39 he abandoned a wife and 5 kids and moved to Chokoloskee with the nanny.



In 1896 Ted Smallwood settled on Chokoloskee. Started as a farmer.

He said there were 5 families there at the time.

In 1897 Ted married Mamie.

Today the two main roads on Chokoloskee are Mamie Street and Smallwood Drive.



Ted Smallwood's Store Started 1906 This building 1917



Ted Smallwood Store
National Register of Historic Places
360 Mamie Street, Chokoloskee
Daily 11am to 5pm, \$5
www.smallwoodstore.com



Chokoloskee Church of God
Original wood structures destroyed by hurricanes 1928 and 1960.
This one built 1961



Havanna Cafe
Chokoloskee
October thru May



Ochopee Post Office



Smallest Post Office in USA
Ochopee, FL 34141
Open Monday-Saturday



On US-41 4 Miles East of SR-29

1953



CollierMuseums.com

H P Williams Park Turner River Road



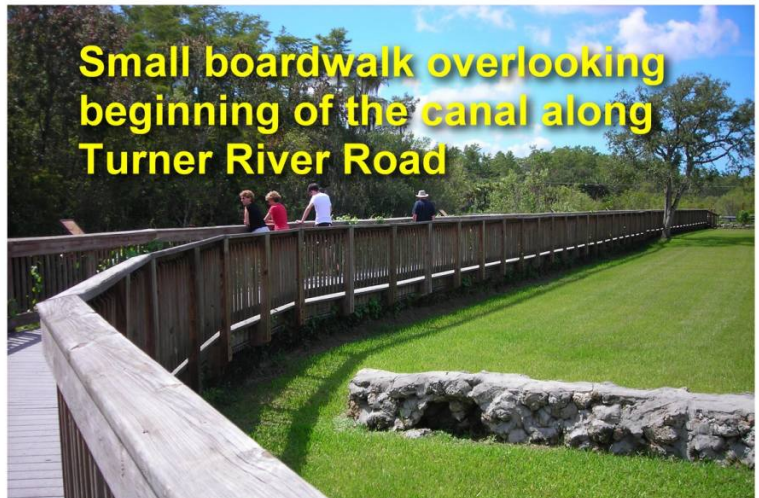
HP Williams Park – Turner River Rd

Where: US-41 Tamiami Trail 30 mi E of Collier Blvd (6 mi E of SR-29).

What: Small park with boardwalk and alligators. *HP Williams Park*

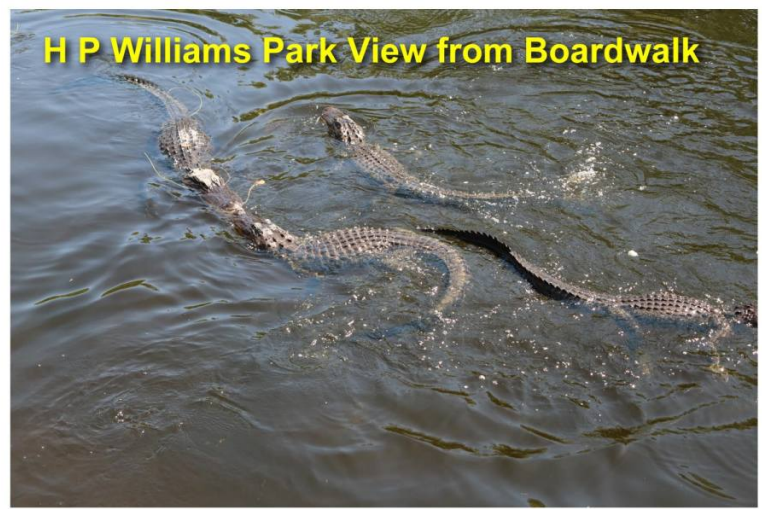
Plus 21-mile dirt road along a canal, also with gators and other wildlife.

- **Do not feed gators.**
- **Be cautious getting out of your car.**

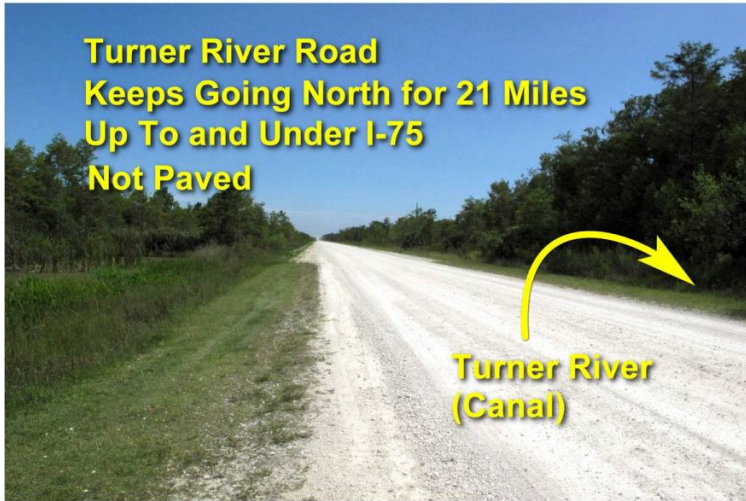




**Behind the Bathrooms
Next to the Boardwalk**



H P Williams Park View from Boardwalk



**Turner River Road
Keeps Going North for 21 Miles
Up To and Under I-75
Not Paved**

**Turner River
(Canal)**

- If you do decide to drive up Turner River Road to see wildlife, some tips:**
- It's a dirt and gravel road. Dusty.
 - River & wildlife on the right driving north.
 - 2 or 3 miles is usually all you need.
 - Be very careful if you get out of your car.
 - Best to take photos from the car window.
 - Good photo ops where you see these signs →
 - **Obey the sign!**



Turner River



Taken from the Window of My Car



In the Canal Along Turner River Road

Kirby Storter Park



Kirby Storter Park Part of Big Cypress National Preserve

Website:

www.nps.gov/bicy/planyourvisit/kirby-storter-roadside-park.htm

Where: 48900 Tamiami Trail E, Ochopee, FL 34141.

Get There: On US-41 (Tamiami Trail) 37 miles east of Collier Blvd. Or take I-75 to State Rd 29 exit then down to US-41.

Admission: Free. Open dawn to dusk.

What:

- Half-mile boardwalk. Non-strenuous.
- Starts on a sawgrass prairie.
- **Chickee hut for birding.**
- Continues through a cypress swamp.
- Ends at an overlook at a gator hole.
- **Gator hole is a pond dug out by alligators to assure deep water even during dry season.**
- Wildlife include birds, snakes, fish, turtles, and alligators.

Map of Big Cypress National Preserve



Kirby Storter Park Beginning of Boardwalk

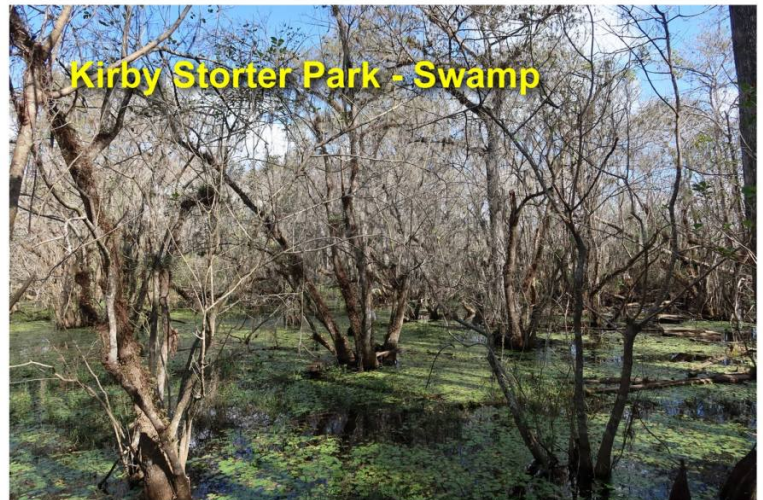


Kirby Storter Park

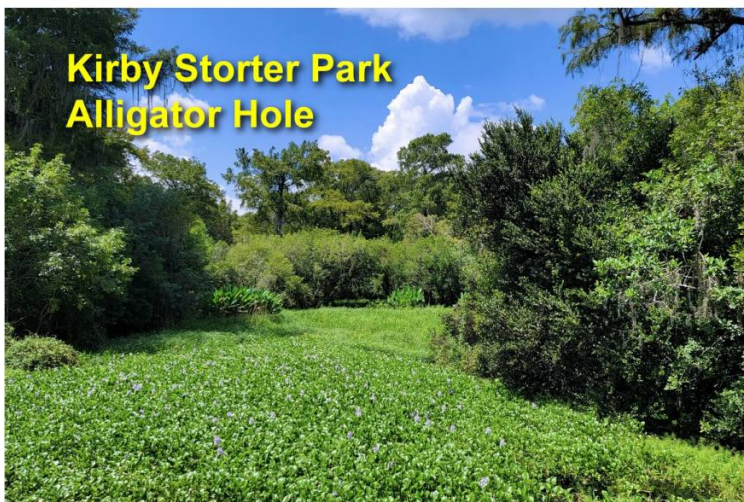
In October 2024, fire destroyed part of the Kirby Storter boardwalk. Part has now reopened, but the damaged part is not yet rebuilt.



Kirby Storter Park - Swamp



Kirby Storter Park Alligator Hole



Juvenile Alligator
By age 5, they lose their camouflage stripes.



Loop Road



Side story about Collier's Tamiami Trail:

- State decided to build Tamiami Trail in 1915.
- Miami developer James Jaudon agreed to build section from Miami to 24 miles west of Dade County line.
- Along this road, Jaudon planned to build "the Next Miami" called "Pinecrest".

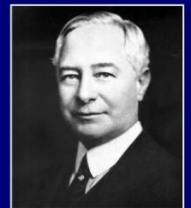


James Jaudon

Map of Jaudon's Loop Road. Now a gravel wilderness road.



- Jaudon's company built a few rustic homes 1921-1923. And dirt Loop Road.
- But by 1923 he ran out of money. Could not find any outside investors.
- 1923 state awarded Tamiami Trail contract to Barron Collier.
- Including Jaudon's 24-mile section.



Barron Collier

Collier did not agree with Jaudon's loop.

- He built a straight road to the Dade line.
- Loop Road dirt road survived.
- But not as part of Tamiami Trail.
- By early 1930s, 200 people lived along Loop Road. Pinecrest had a saw mill, school, store, gas station, bunk house.
- In 1937 Jaudon's company filed for bankruptcy. Land sold to Government.
- Today a few pioneer types live along Loop Road.

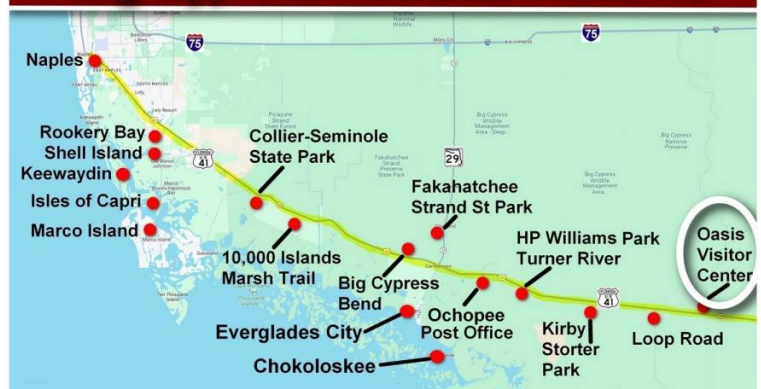
Today you can drive Loop Road.

Everglades. Swamps. Wildlife.

And you can see the ruins of (supposedly) Al Capone's home in the ruins of Pinecrest.



Oasis Visitor Center Big Cypress National Preserve



**Big Cypress National Preserve
Oasis Visitor Center**
33100 Tamiami Trail East
Ochopee, FL 34141
Info and exhibits, plus...
Great boardwalk to see
lots of alligators swimming
in a canal.
On US-41
45 mi East of Collier Blvd.



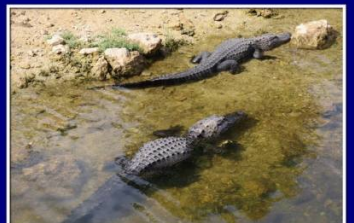
**Big Cypress
National Preserve
Boardwalk**
Open Daily



**Big Cypress Preserve
Oasis Visitor Center**



Views from the Boardwalk



Oasis Visitor Center
May 14, 2025

Lunch?



Just East of Oasis Visitor Center on US-41

Clyde Butcher
BIG CYPRESS
GALLERY
SWAMP WALK TOURS • LODGING
NATURE TRAIL • GIFT SHOP



Everglades National Park



Everglades National Park

- Legislation passed 1934.
- 1.5 million acres of land acquired 1934-1947.
- Dade, Monroe, Collier Counties.
- Largest subtropical wilderness in US.
- Elevation 0 to 8 feet.



Everglades National Park opened in 1947.

- Dedication ceremony in Everglades City.
- Attended by President Harry Truman.

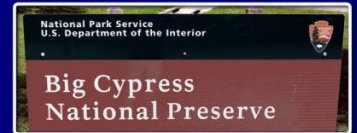
UNESCO World Heritage Site 1979



1947

Big Cypress National Preserve Abuts Everglades National Park.

- Established 1974. Adds 729,000 acres.
- Very similar topography.
- Classification as Preserve is political.
- Preserve allows more commercial and recreational activity than Park.



Everglades National Park Gulf Coast Visitor Center destroyed by Hurricane Irma in 2017. A temporary replacement visitor center was destroyed by Hurricane Ian in 2022.

New visitor center is under construction. Opening late 2025.



It's The End of Our Trip Along the Tamiami Trail

