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

Presentation by
Paul Pacter

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www.PaulVisits.com

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

In 90 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.

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

Marco Island

Marco Island Historical Museum
One of Five Collier County Museums

Website: www.colliermuseums.com

Where: 180 South Heathwood Drive, Marco Island.

Get There: Collier Blvd (I-75 Exit 101) to Marco Is. South on Bald Eagle Dr. Becomes Heathwood Dr. Museum is on right across from Marco Library.

When: Tuesday-Sat 9am to 4pm.

Admission: Free.

What: Traces the settlement of Marco from Calusa (500 AD), to Spanish, to Seminoles (and Seminole Wars), to permanent settlement in 1870.

From there, the museum covers Marco's agricultural history (fishing, clamming, and pineapple farming), growth of the village (early 20th c), and major property development (1920s and again beginning in 1960s).

Brief History of Marco Island

500 AD: Calusa Indians arrived. Possibly descendants of the Mayans (Yucatan).

Mid-1500s: Spanish explorers arrived. By mid-1700s Calusa were wiped out or fled.

1700s: Creek Indians arrived from Georgia and Alabama. (Later renamed Seminoles.)

1816 to 1858: 3 Seminole Wars vs US Army. Most Seminoles wiped out or fled.

1845: Florida statehood.

1870: First permanent settler William Collier arrived. Village of Marco founded. Not related to Barron

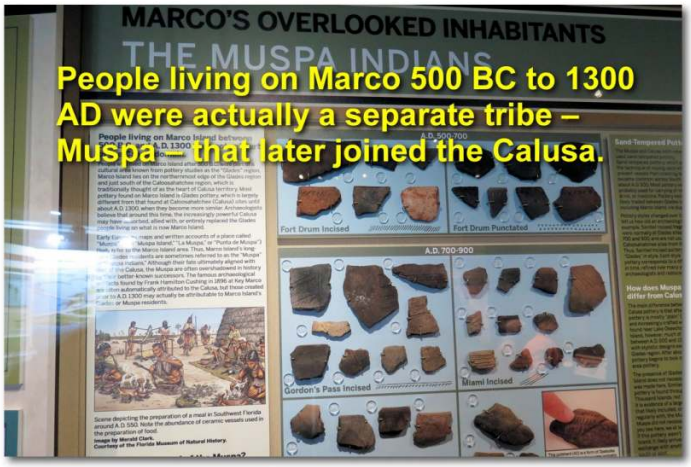
1896: Old Marco Inn opened by Colliers. Still stands.

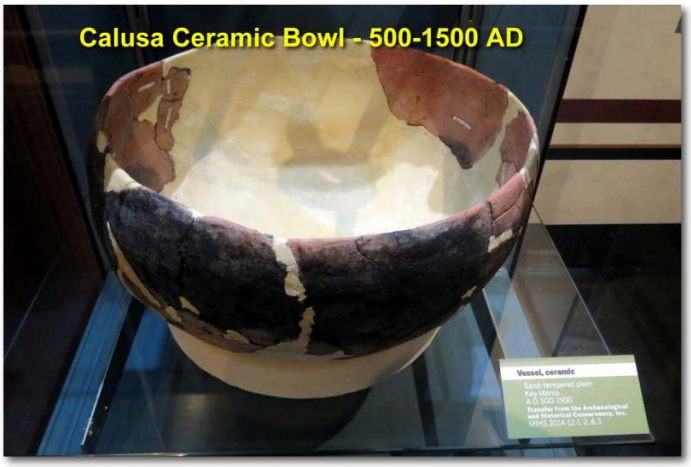
1912: Ferry service to Marco began.

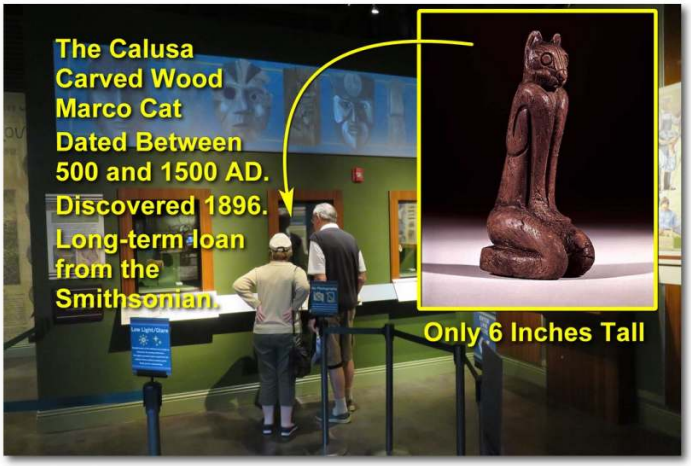
1920s: Barron Collier bought large amount of land. Incorporated Marco as Collier City. Development rush began. But failed in Great Depression. 1957 name reverted to Marco.

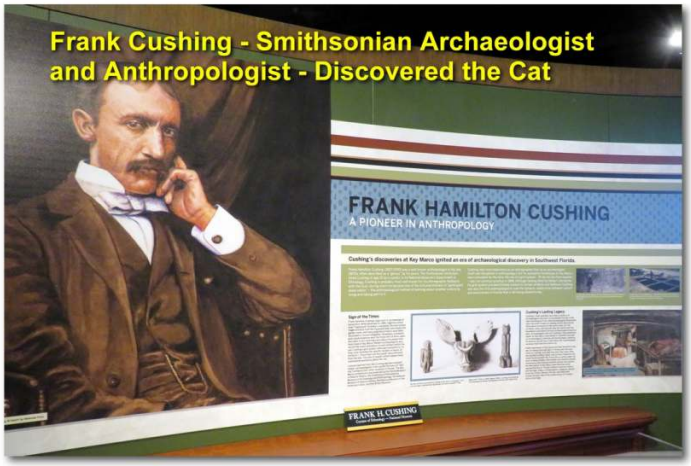
1938: First bridge to Marco (Goodland).

1960s: Mackell Bros. bought most of Barron Collier's land. Development took off.





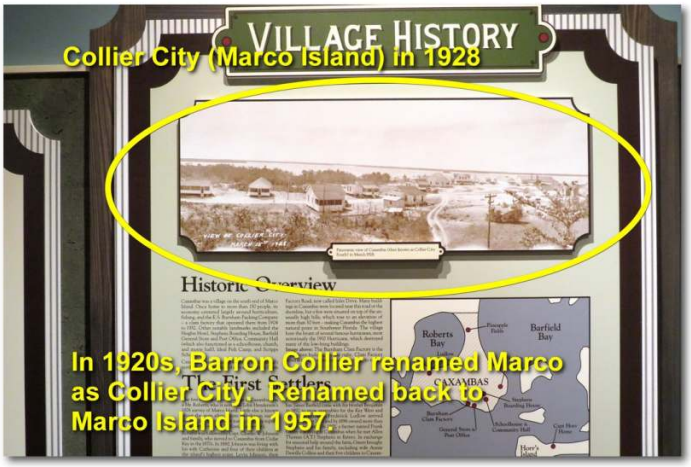


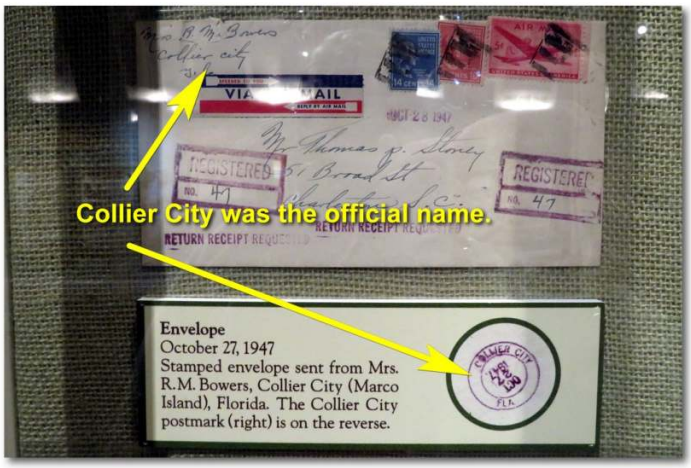


What happened to the Calusa?

1. 1513 Spanish explorers (Ponce de Leon etc) arrived in SW Florida.
   - Weapons easily defeated the Calusa. Took land and took Calusas as slaves.
   - Brought diseases (smallpox, measles, typhus) that were fatal to Calusa.
2. Early 1700s Creek and Yemasee Indians (now known as Seminole) invaded from Alabama and Georgia. Conquered Calusa.

That was the end of the Calusa.





Marco Island - Tigertail Beach Parking Free with Collier County Beach Sticker

Where to have lunch at Marco? Ideas:

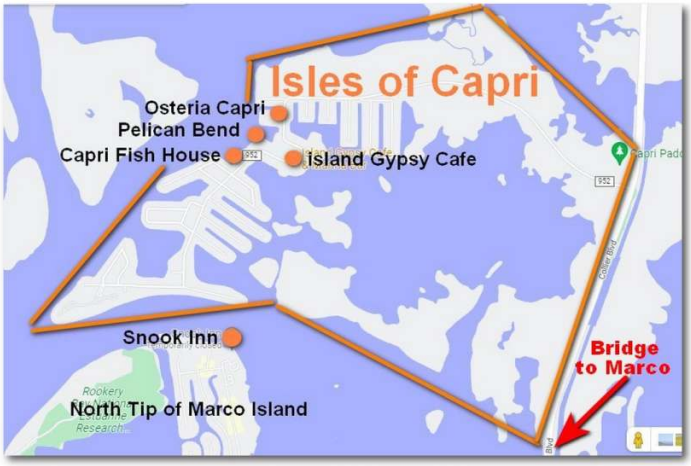
North tip of Marco:

- Snook Inn.

On Isles of Capri, west of Collier Blvd just before bridge to Marco Island:

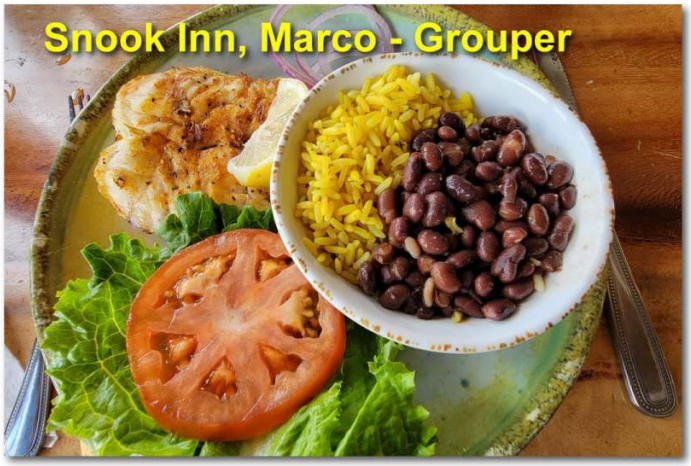
- Capri Fish House.
- Pelican Bend.
- Island Gypsy.
- Osteria Capri.

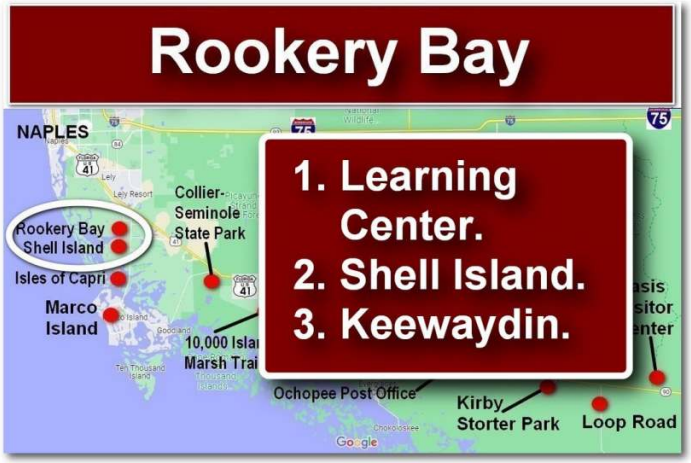
Map on next slide...



Capri Fish House

Oysters **Grouper Fingers**





Rookery Bay National Estuarine Research Reserve

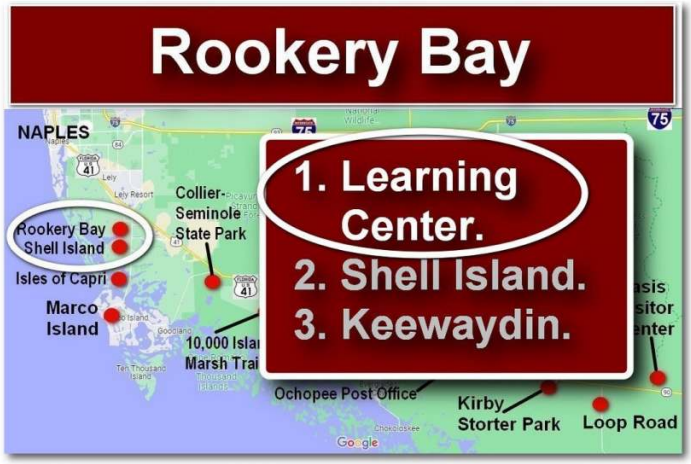
Website: https://rookerybay.org/

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: Next slide.

Rookery Bay has several locations of interest to day-trippers:

1. Environmental Learning Center: 300 Tower Road, Naples. On Collier Blvd one mile south of US-41.
2. Shell Island Road (boardwalk, trails, nature cruises): Collier Blvd 3 miles south of US-41. West on Shell Is. Rd.
3. Keewaydin Island. Also called Key Island. Can only get there by boat.



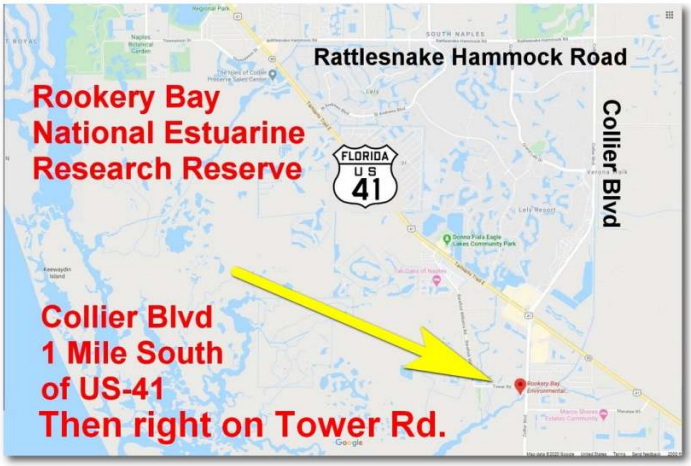
Environmental Learning Center:

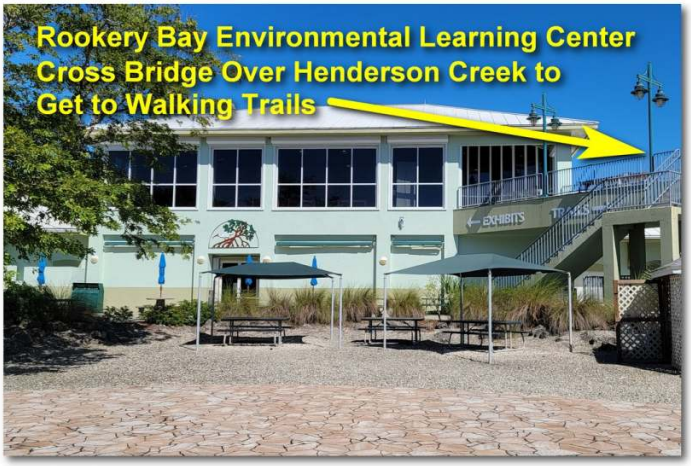
Admission: Adults $8. Boat tours $109.

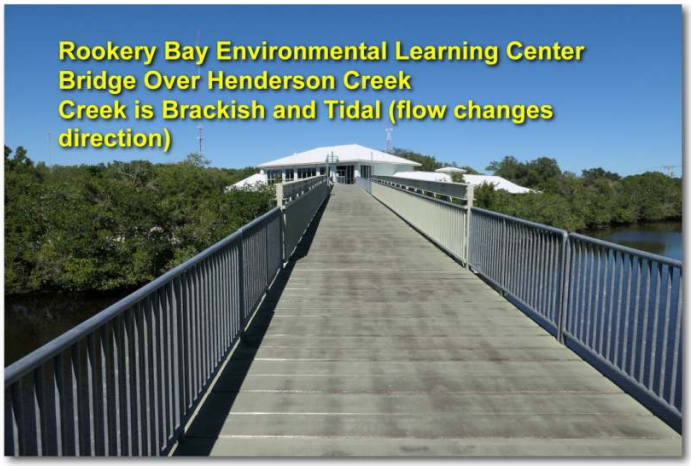
When: Mon-Fri 9am to 4pm. Closed Sat-Sun.

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.

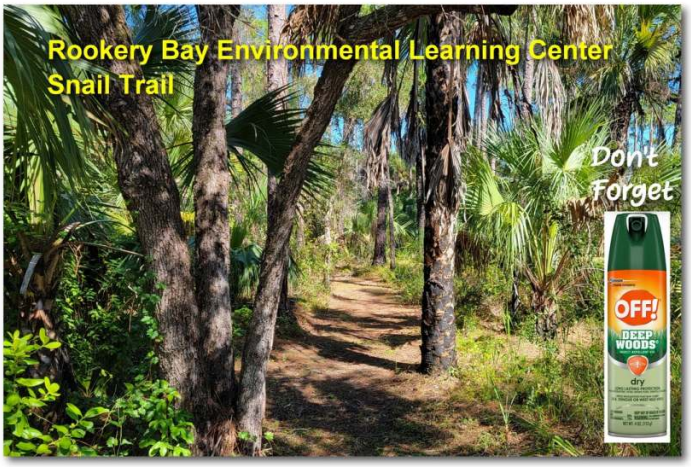





Rookery Bay Environmental Learning Center
Bridge Over Henderson Creek
Creek is Brackish and Tidal (flow changes direction)

Rookery Bay Reserve
View of Henderson Creek from the Bridge
Creek is Tidal

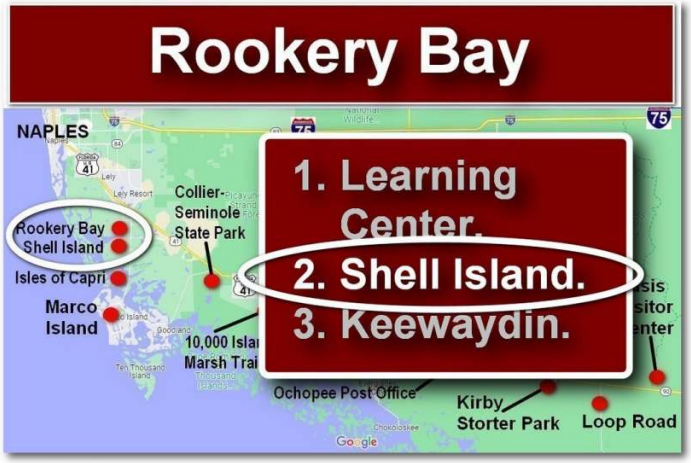
Three trails, each ½ mile long
Snail Trail has viewing platform on the Creek
Cabbage Loop 0.5 miles
Slash Pine Loop 0.5 miles
Snail Trail 0.5 miles
Boardwalk & Viewing Platform
Henderson Creek
You Are Here
Environmental Learning Center
Bench
Historic Site
Habitats
Water
Mangroves/ Mixed Wetland
Pine Flatwoods
Mixed Hardwoods Wetland
Mixed Palmetto


Rookery Bay Environmental Learning Center
Snail Trail
Don't Forget
OFF!
DEEP WOODS
dry

Rookery Bay Environmental Learning Center
Viewing Platform on Henderson Creek
Egret
Two Wood Storks
Wood Storks in Tree
Many Birds
Egret at Treetop

Rookery Bay Learning Center Exhibits
Calusa Axe

Rookery Bay Environmental Learning Center
Exhibit
FLORIDA'S LEAST WANTED


Rookery Bay
NAPLES
Rookery Bay
Shell Island
Isles of Capri
Marco Island
Collier-Seminole State Park
10,000 Islands
Marsh Trail
Ochopee Post Office
Kirby Storter Park
Loop Road
1. Learning Center.
2. Shell Island.
3. Keewaydin.

Shell Island Road

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

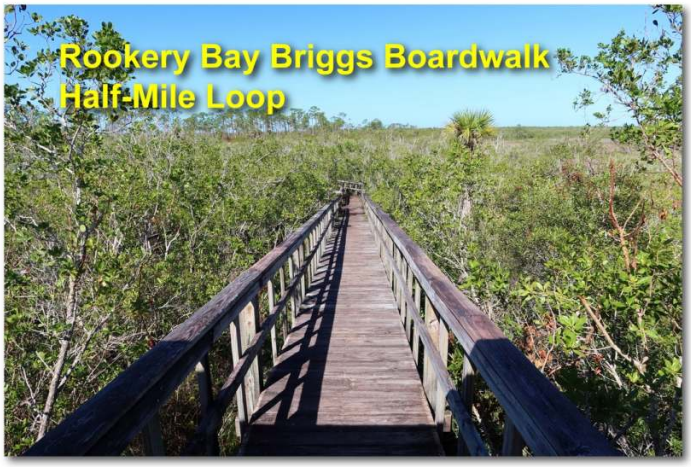
Nature trails: 4 trails each approximately ¼ mile long. Can be overgrown and muddy.

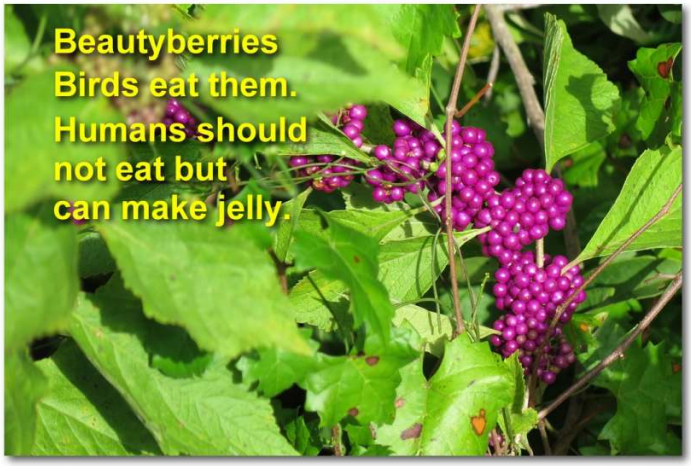
Boat tours: 3 hours. $109.

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

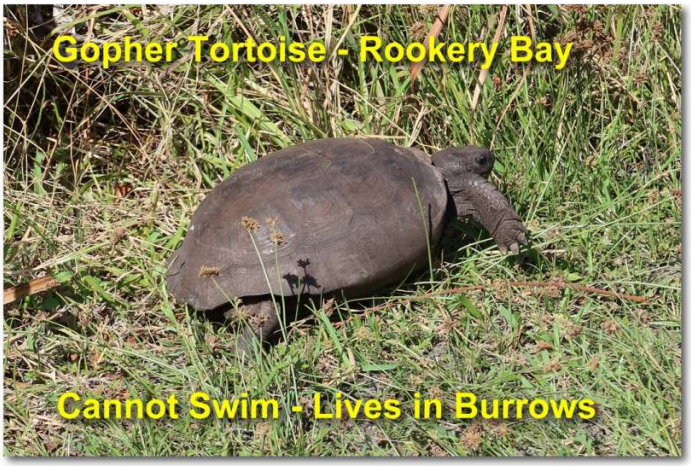
Rookery Bay - Shell Island
Hiking, Boardwalk, Nature Cruises

Dec 22 Website says: "NOTICE: trails are currently overgrown and not suitable for hiking. Please check back for updates."





Sabal Palm – Florida State Tree
Can Grow to 65 Ft Height.
aka Cabbage Palm,
Swamp Cabbage.

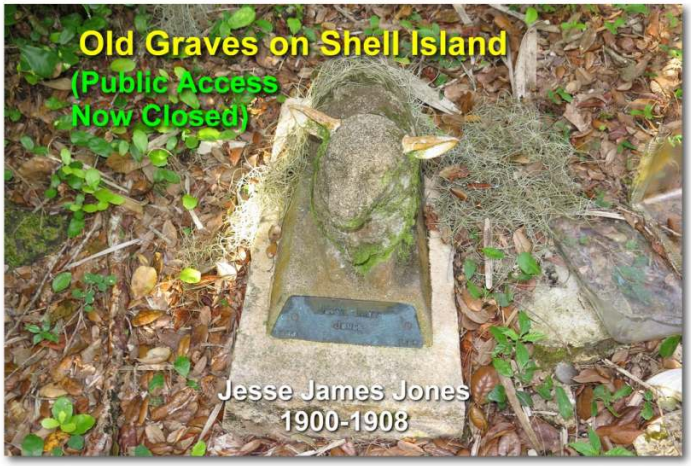

Gopher Tortoise - Rookery Bay
Cannot Swim - Lives in Burrows

Calusa Shell Mound
1700s or earlier

Calusa Axe (Illegal to remove)

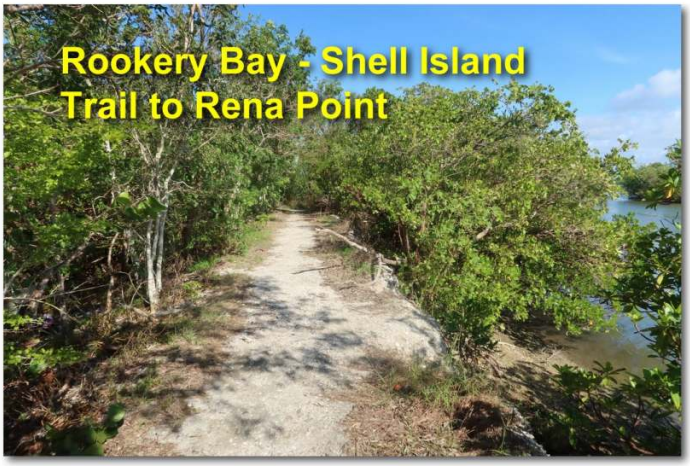
Rookery Bay - Shell Island Road
Water
Tank
Dated
1887

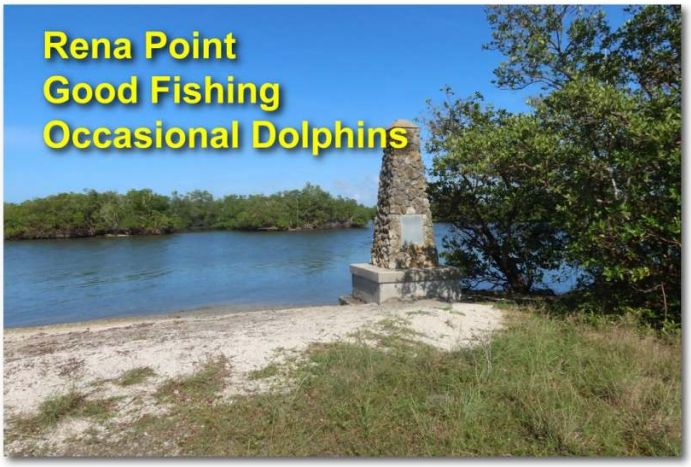
Old Graves on Shell Island
(Public Access Now Closed)
George Washington Kirkland
1832 to 1901

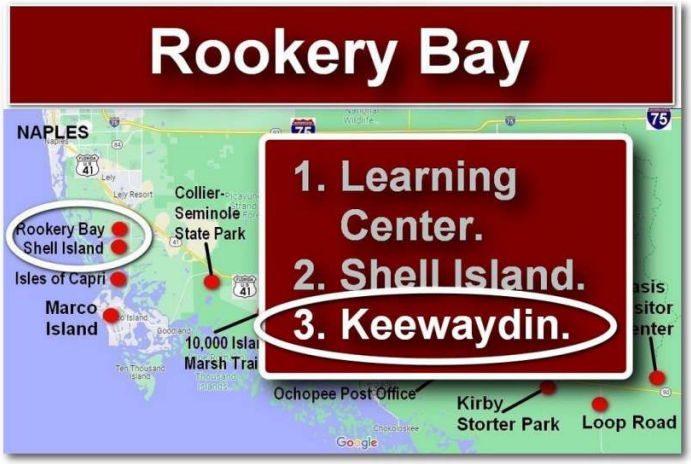

Old Graves on Shell Island
(Public Access
Now Closed)
Jesse James Jones
1900-1908

Rookery Bay Nature Cruises
Nature Cruises
Charters

National Geodetic Survey Marker
On Shell Island https://geodesy.noaa.gov/
Entire US Has Been Mapped.
Used for:
- Floodplain and shoreline mapping.
- Boundary determination.
- Construction engineering.
- Science: Hydrology, Plate tectonics.
- Shipping and transportation.







Keewaydin Island:
Barrier island. 8 miles long.
No roads or cars.
Sanctuary for wildlife. Recreational destination for local residents and tourists (swimming, fishing, walking, shelling).
15% privately owned (15 homes); 85% public.
Commercial shuttle boat service to/from Marco Island to south tip of Keewaydin www.hemingwaywatershuttle.com/.
$22 each way (children $12).

Several boats offer lunch food for sale.
No bathroom facilities on the island.
I have sailed around but never been there.

Keewaydin Island History:
The Keewaydin Club (Privately Owned) Resort and Cottages on the Island

1934-1999 there was private Keewaydin Club with cottages and shuttle ferry from Port Royal, Naples, to north tip of Keewaydin.

Ferry (Kokomis) is now on exhibit at Collier County Museum.

Collier-Seminole State Park

Website: www.floridastateparks.org/parks-and-trails/collier-seminole-state-park

Where: 20200 Tamiami Trail E., Naples
Another entrance at Old Marco Road.

Get There: US-41 Tamiami Trail East, 8 miles east of Collier Blvd/SR-951.

When: 5am to sunset.

Admission: $5 per vehicle, or annual pass.

What: 7,271-acres in one of the largest mangrove swamps in the world.

- Wide variety of wildlife and vegetation typical of Florida's Everglades.
- Park includes one of three original stands of royal palm in Florida, co-existing with large areas of mangrove swamp.
- Camping, boat rentals, bicycling, hiking.
- Observation Deck.

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 1928, the 273-mile Tampa to Miami road (Tamiami Trail) officially opened.

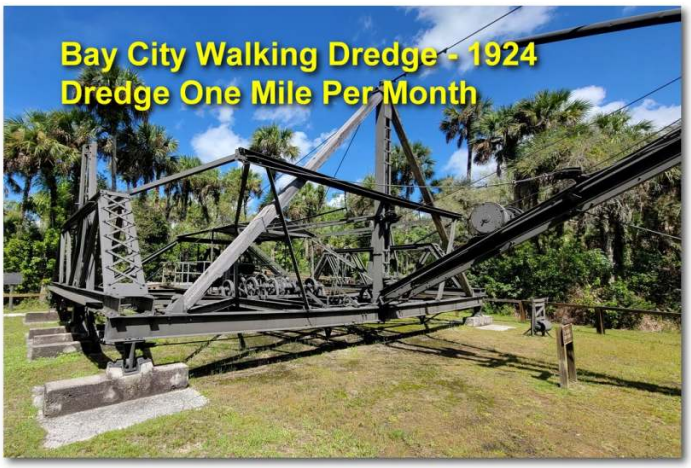
The Tamiami Trail completed, Collier envisioned developing a national park here, but failed to rally support for his idea. The land first became a county park and then in 1947, a state park. Collier-Seminole State Park represents a part of the tropical paradise that Collier loved.

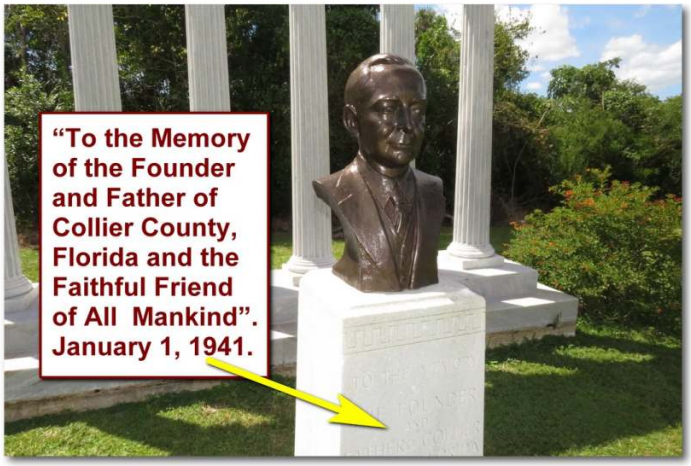
Bay City Walking Dredge

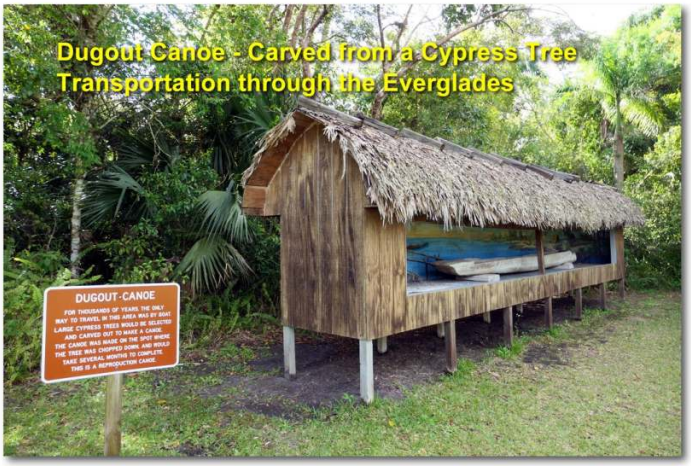
The park is the site of a National Historic Mechanical Engineering Landmark, the last existing Bay City Walking Dredge.

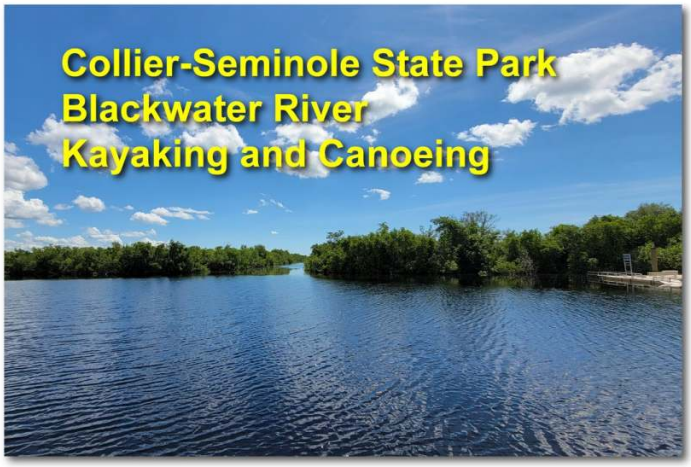
Built in 1924, it was used to build the Tamiami Trail Highway (US-41) through the Everglades and Big Cypress Swamp, linking Tampa and Miami.

Opened southwest Florida to travelers.









"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

Ten Thousand Islands Nat'l Wildlife Refuge

Website:
www.fws.gov/refuge/ten_thousand_islands/

Get there by boat (best): Ramps at Goodland and Port-of-the-Islands. Guided boat tours from Marco Island and Everglades City.

Get to Marsh Trail by car: US-41 11 miles east of Collier Blvd.

Managed by: US Fish & Wildlife Service, National Wildlife Refuge System, Department of the Interior.

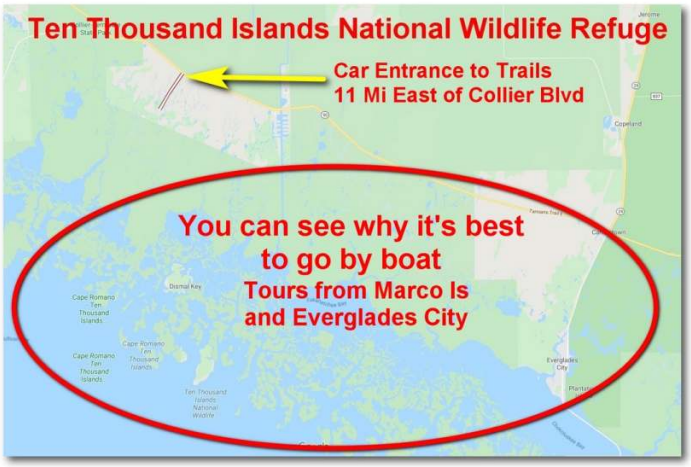
What: Established 1996. Covers 35,000 acres.

A maze of mangrove islands and narrow waterways that serve as nursery grounds for countless plants, animals, and fish.

One of 545 national wildlife refuges.

Approximately two thirds of the refuge is mangrove forest.

Mile-long hiking trail, canoe and kayak trails, and an observation tower overlooking the marsh.



Boat Tours from Everglades City:
Everglades National Park Boat Tours

https://evergladesfloridaadventures.com/

Quiet boats. Narrated by naturalists. Tours every 30 minutes, 9am to 5pm, Dec. to mid-April. Less frequent April to Dec.

Tours depart from the Tower Docks on Chokoloskee Causeway on Rt. 29, ½-mile south of Traffic Circle in Everglades City.

$40 adults, $36 seniors, $20 children.

Boat Tours from Marco Island

Eco Endeavors
https://ecoendeavors.org/

2.5 hours. 25 miles round-trip.

Through the mangrove forests and barrier islands.

Stop at a quiet barrier island only accessible by boat. Shelling. Swimming.

$420 whole boat charter up to 6 people. May be some shared-boat options too.

Wikipedia:
"Some of the Ten Thousand Islands are suitable for overnight visits, as dictated by the United States Fish and Wildlife Service. Since this is a wilderness area where wind, weather and lack of fresh water can become threatening, the Wildlife Service recommends only seasoned canoeists and sea kayakers attempt the trip."

The refuge is home to a wide variety of plants and animals

Fish: Nearly 200 species, including tarpon, snook, red drum, spotted sea trout, goliath grouper, smalltooth sawfish.

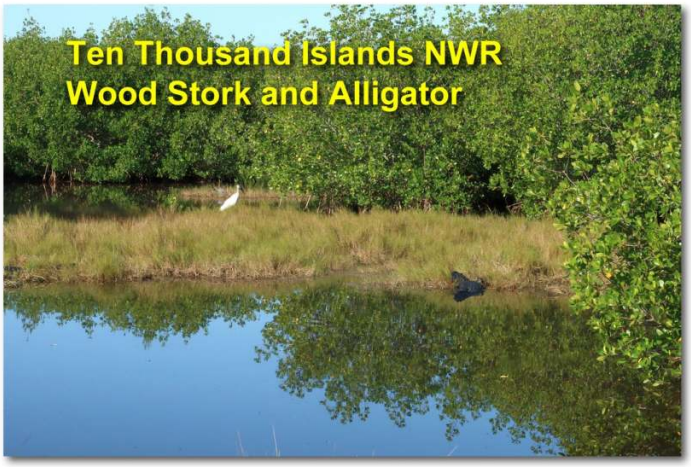
Birds: More than 200 species, including least tern, black skimmer, bald eagle, peregrine falcon, wood stork, brown pelican, mangrove cuckoo, red knot.

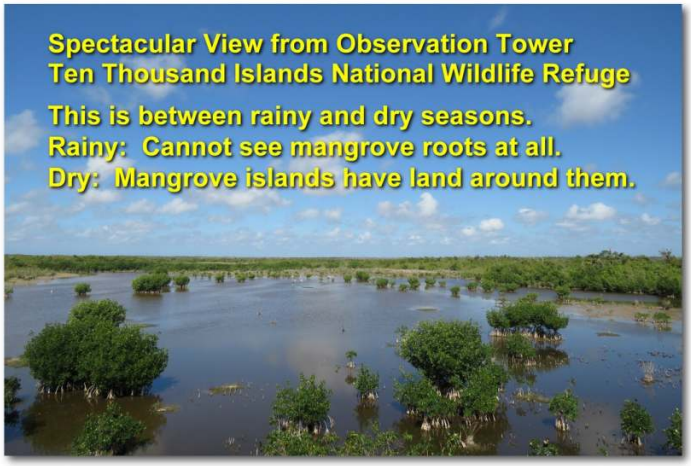
Reptiles: Including anoles, loggerhead sea turtles, green turtles, Kemp's Ridley sea turtles, alligators.

Animals: Including raccoon, river otter, bottlenose dolphin, Florida manatee.

Plants: Innumerable species, including mangroves, sea oats, cordgrass.

Invasive plants: Including latherleaf and Brazilian pepper.





Great Egret
A large heron
with all-white
plumage

Ten Thousand Islands
National Wildlife Refuge
Marsh Trail

In addition to the tower, there are several
benches where you can sit and watch.

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

Ten Thousand Islands
National Wildlife Refuge
Marsh Trail

Cormorant Eating
A Fish

Big Cypress Bend

Big Cypress Bend
Fakahatchee Strand State Preserve

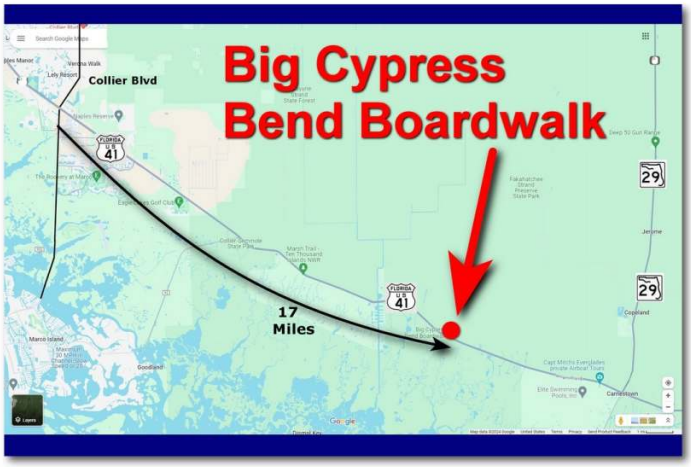
Website: www.floridastateparks.org/parks-and-trails/fakahatchee-strand-preserve-state-park

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 exension 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.

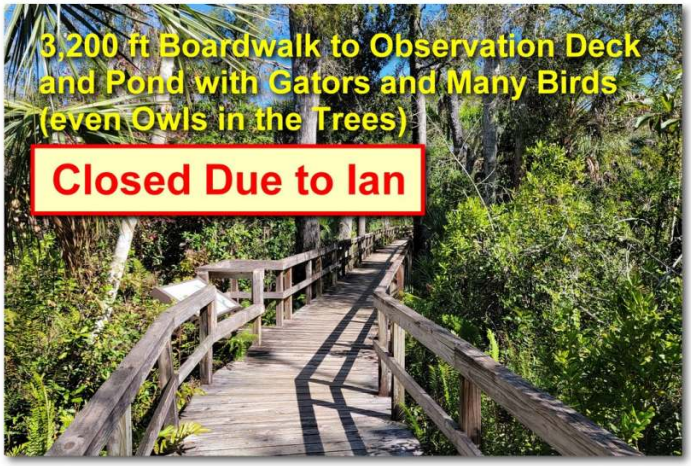
Ian made the old boardwalk unusable.

- 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.

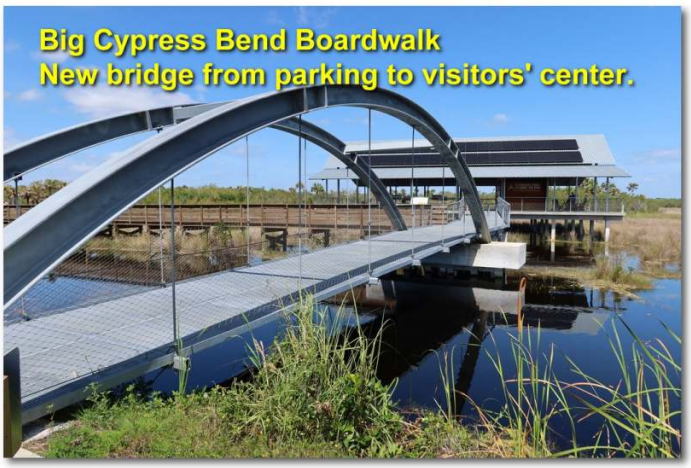
The map on the next slide illustrates all of this.

The next 7 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.



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



Visitors' Center and Start of Boardwalk

Visitors' Center Overlooks a Wet Prairie

Start of New Big Cypress Bend Boardwalk

Prairie - Big Cypress Bend

Egret in a tree on the prairie

Boardwalk becomes a crushed shell path
when you reach Green Heron Lake

You walk along a crushed shell path
at Green Heron Lake

Green Heron Lake
Big Cypress Bend

Old Boardwalk – To Be Repaired. Closed.

New Boardwalk and Trail – Already Opened.

New Boardwalk, Canopy Walk, and Trail – To Be built.

Big Cypress Bend Boardwalk ● is only a very small part of Fakahatchee Strand Preserve State Park → (entire park 5 mi x 20 mi).

- Janes Scenic Drive is a good gravel road.
- All the dotted red lines are hiking and wading trails.

Copeland - Fakahatchee Strand

Fakahatchee Strand Preserve State Park

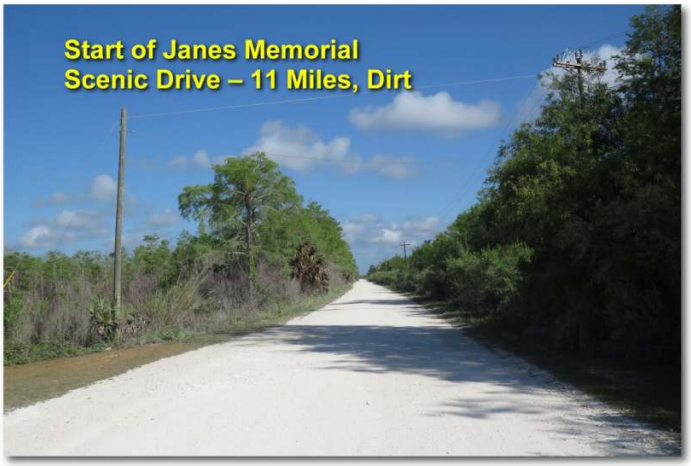
Website: www.floridastateparks.org/parks-and-trails/fakahatchee-strand-preserve-state-park

Where: Off SR-29 in Copeland, FL.

Get There: (1) I-75 to Exit 80 SR-29. South 14 miles on SR-29. Right on Janes Memorial Scenic Dr (paved part). (2) US-41 East of Collier Blvd 24 miles to SR-29. Turn left and go 3 miles on SR-29. Turn left on Janes Memorial Scenic Dr (paved part).

When: 8am to sunset.
Admission: $3 per car.
What: Largest state park in Florida. "Florida's Amazon." Wild orchid capital of the US.

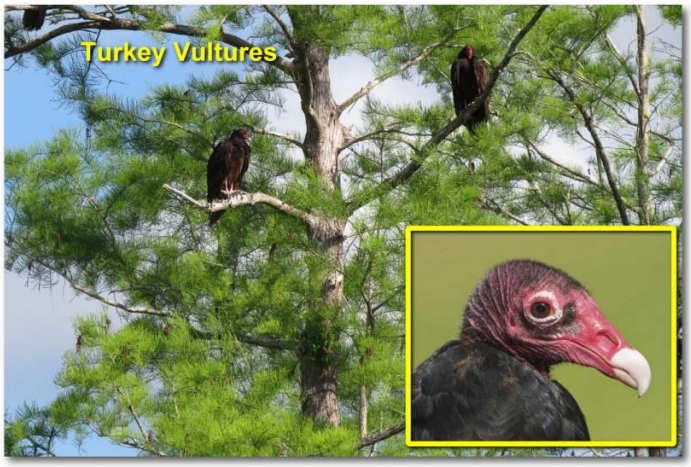
- **Big Cypress Bend Boardwalk.** Separately described.
- **Janes Memorial Scenic Drive.** 11-mile dirt road extending from the park visitor center in Copeland to Fakahatchee's border with Picayune Strand State Forest.

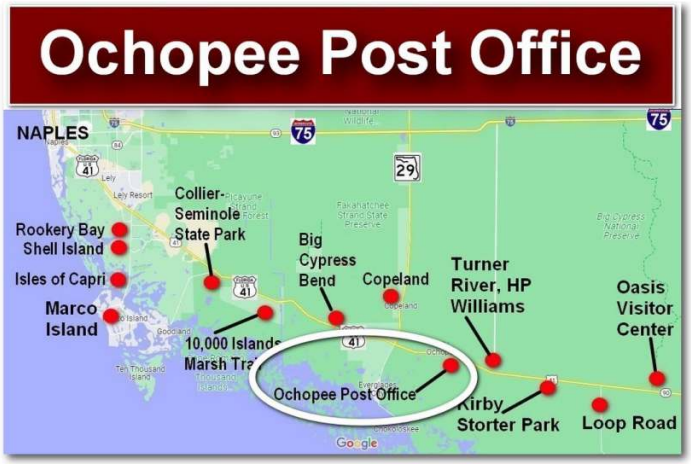


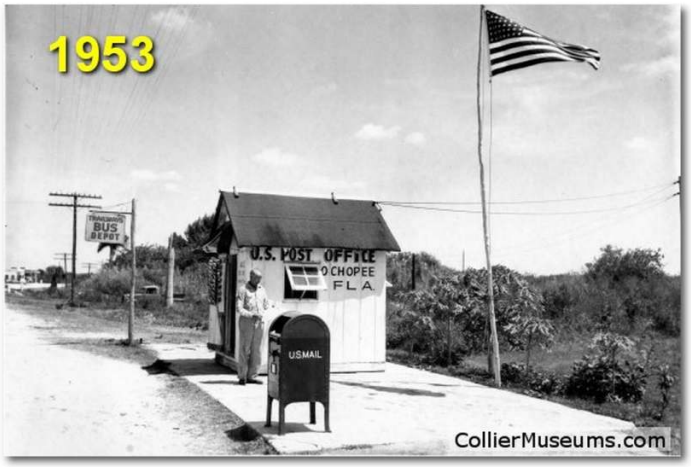
Janes Scenic Drive
11 mile dirt road.
Ruts and potholes.
Goes through subtropical wilderness, swamp, prairie.
Along the road, basking alligators and snakes.
Hiking trails. Bring bug repellent.

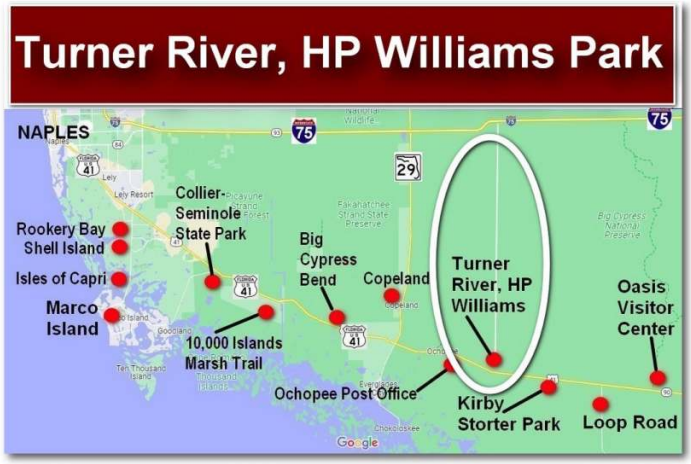
Not for your pampered BMW or Mercedes!

Big Cypress Bend









Turner River Road

Website: None.

Where: Ochopee, Florida.

Get There: US-41 Tamiami Trail 30 miles east of Collier Blvd (6 miles past SR-29). Turn north on Turner River Road (CR-839).

Turner River Rd then runs 21 miles due North under and just past I-75. Then you turn around and drive back to US-41.

Admission: Free.

What: 21-mile rural wildlife drive. But you only need to do a mile or two. Road is mostly sand and crushed rock. Runs alongside a canal. Canal and its banks often have alligators, birds, other wildlife. Also kayaking or canoeing. Some hiking.

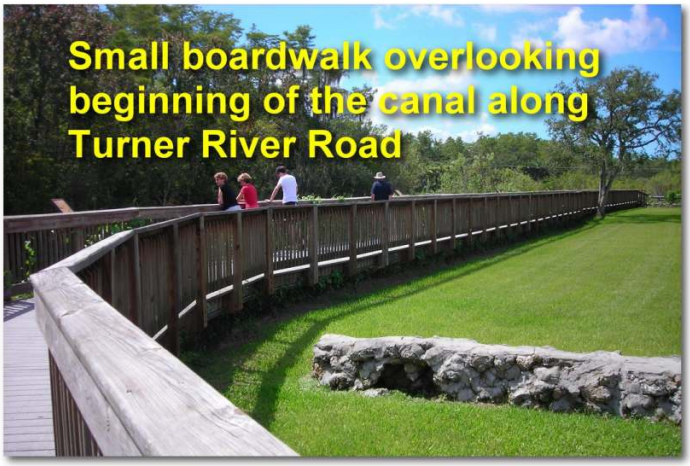
No not feed gators. Be very cautious getting out of your car.

At US-41 intersection is a small boardwalk and picnic area.

You can choose to park next to the boardwalk and view wildlife from there.

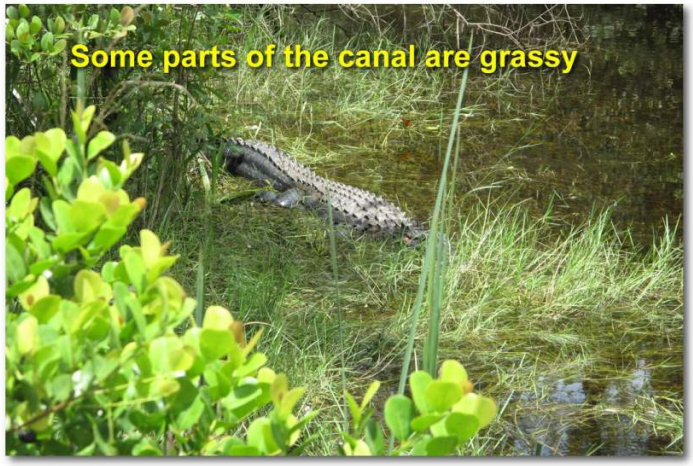
Or, you can venture out on Turner River Road. The road is dirt and gravel and goes over 20 miles due north, with the river (canal) on the right as you drive north. Where the State has posed "do not feed alligators" signs are usually good viewing places. Be careful if you leave your car!

Let's start with some boardwalk photos.



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!

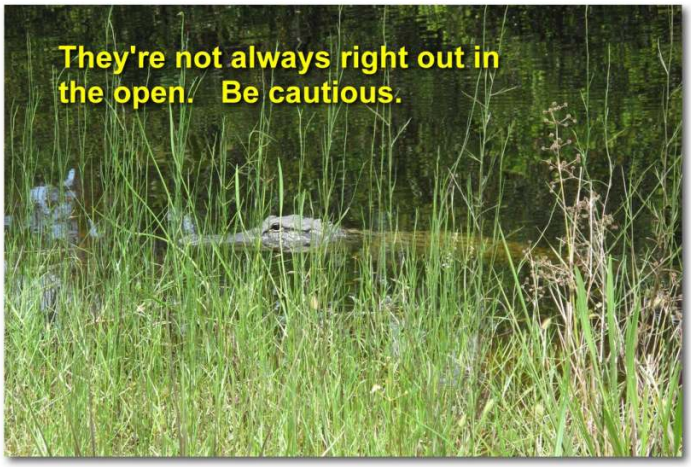


Sometimes lounging on the
side of the road

Taken from the Window of My Car

Along Turner
River Road

Along Turner River Road


They're not always right out in
the open. Be cautious.

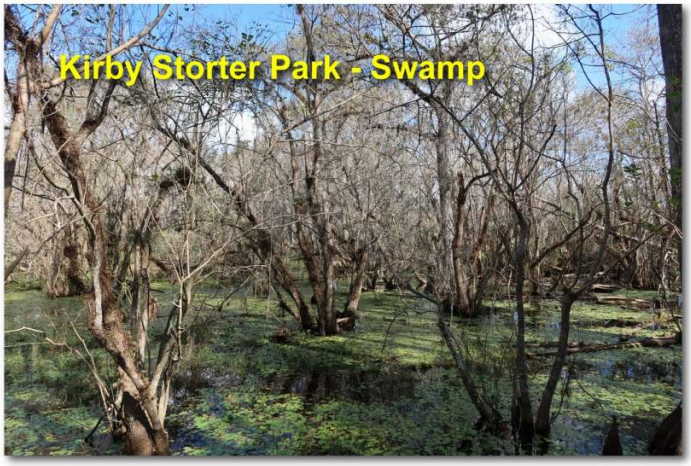
Tricolored
Heron

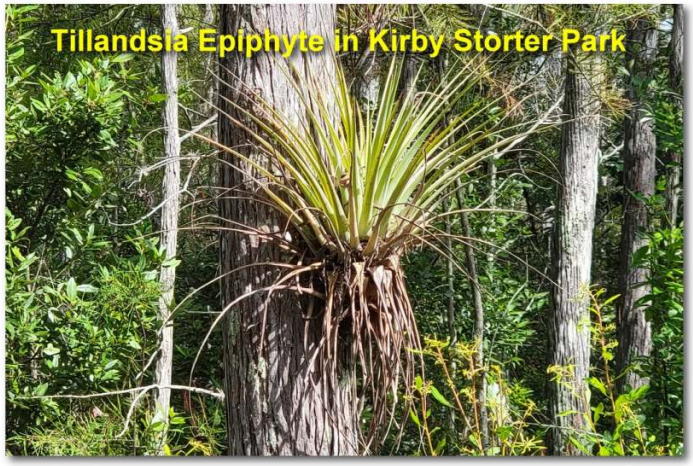
Side road off
Turner River Road

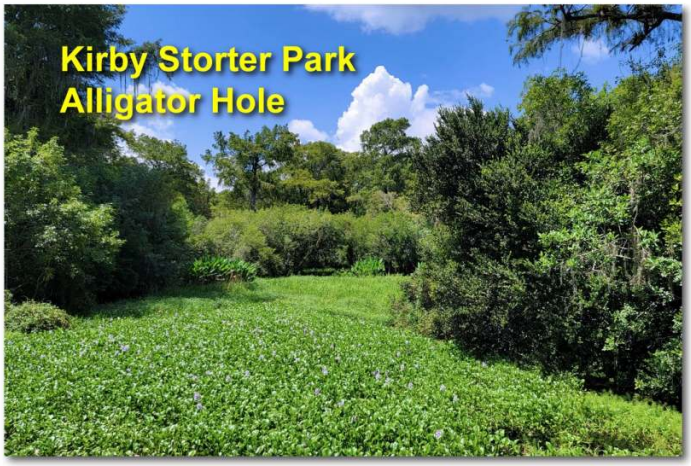
Kirby Storter Park
NAPLES
Rookery Bay
Shell Island
Isles of Capri
Marco
Island
Collier-
Seminole
State Park
10,000 Islands
Marsh Trail
Big
Cypress
Bend
Copeland
Ochopee Post Office
Turner
River, HP
Williams
Kirby
Storter Park
Loop Road
Oasis
Visitor
Center
75
29
41

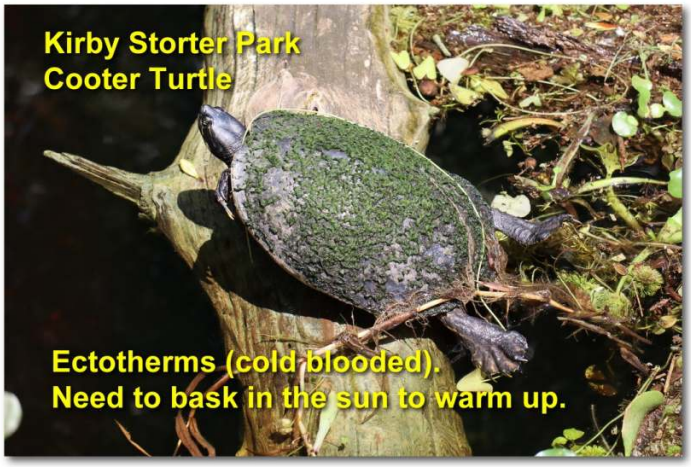
Kirby Storter Park
Part of Big Cypress National Preserve
Website:
www.nps.gov/bicy/planyourvisit/kirby-storter-roadside-park.htm
Where: 48900 Tamiami Trail E, Ochopee, FL 34141.
Get There: On US-41 (Tamiami Trail) 37 miles east of Collier Blvd. Or take I-75 to State Rd 29 exit then down to US-41.
Admission: 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.









Building the Tamiami Trail

Building the Tamiami Trail – 1923-1928

TAmpa to MIAMI 275 miles.

AKA US-41

Tampa to Naples is North-South 163 miles.

Naples to Miami East-West 112 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.

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. →

2.6 million sticks of 60% nitroglycerin dynamite

After dynamiting, digging was done by a:

Walking Dredge →

or a:

Floating Dredge. →

Dredges were built in Bay City, Michigan

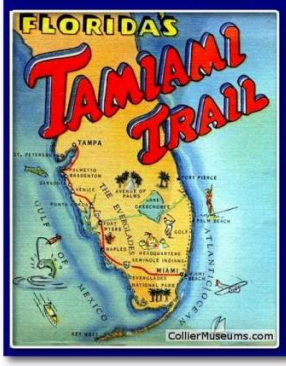
Mobile worker bunks, kitchens, toilets moved in the canal as the road progressed. Workers paid $60/month. Worked all day standing in swamps, bitten by mosquitos.

Collier built 6 stations along the Trail. Each staffed by a husband and wife. He got a motorcycle and patrolled the road. She ran the gas station and store.

All 6 stations are now gone.

Last one, Monroe Station in Ochopee (above) burned in 2016. Vandalism.

Tamiami Trail
Opened Apr 25, 1928



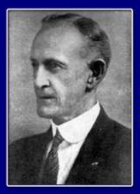
Festivities in Everglades

N-S was US41
E-W was US94

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

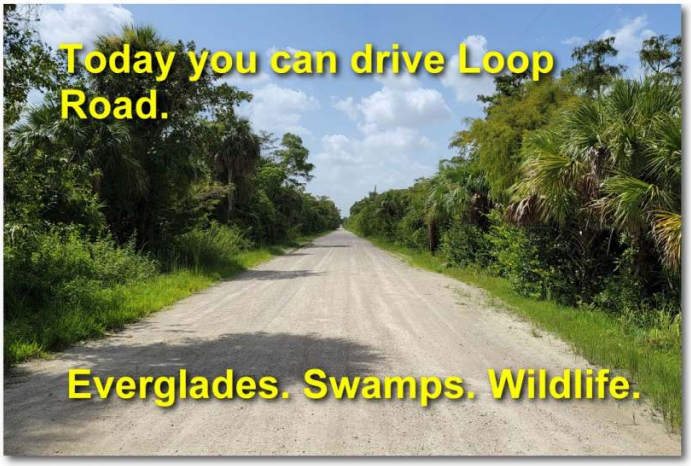
Map of Jaudon's Loop Road.
Now a gravel wilderness road.

- Jaudon's company built a few rustic homes.
- But Jaudon ran out of money. And could not attract outside investors.
- Then the state awarded the Tamiami Trail contract to Barron Collier.
- Including Jaudon's 24-mile section.

Barron Collier

Collier did not agree with Jaudon's loop.

- He build a straight road to the Dade line.
- Loop Road gravel 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 in "Pinecrest".

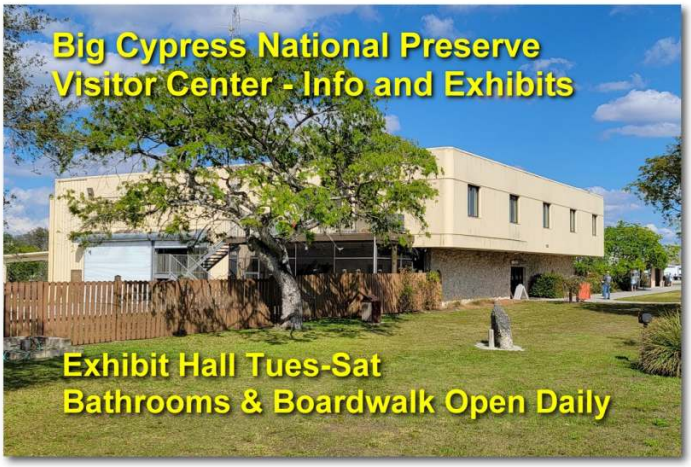


Oasis Visitor Center

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.



Everglades National Park

Everglades National Park

1. Everglades City Visitor Center
2. Reed Welcome Center US41 *
3. Oasis Visitor Center *
4. Shark Valley Visitor Center
5. Coe Visitor Center, Homestead
6. Flamingo Visitor Center

* Technically in Big Cypress National Preserve, not Everglades 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.

1947

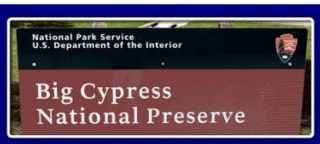
UNESCO World Heritage Site 1979

Everglades National Park Dedication Dec 6, 1947 Everglades City

Most national parks preserve stunning geographic scenery. Everglades National Park was the first created to protect a fragile wetland ecosystem.

- 36 threatened or protected species inhabit the park, including Florida panther, crocodile, and manatee.
- Also 350 species of birds, 300 species of fresh and saltwater fish, 40 species of mammals, 50 reptiles.

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.

The section of US-41 we're looking at today goes through Big Cypress National Preserve.

After the Dade line, you're in Everglades National Park.

To recap, we've looked at all this along US-41:

- Marco Island and Isles of Capri.
- Rookery Bay.
- Marsh Trail – Ten Thousand Islands.
- Ochopee. Collier-Seminole State Park.
- Big Cypress Boardwalk.
- Fakahatchee Strand State Park.
- H P Williams Park and Turner River Road.
- Kirby Storter Park.
- Oasis Visitor Center.
- Building the Tamiami Trail and Loop Drive.
- Everglades National Park.
- Big Cypress National Preserve.