



Wekiwa/St. Johns River Ramble

December 5-8, 2014

Start: Kings Landing on Rock Springs Run in Apopka

End: Blue Springs State Park in Orange City

Total Distance: 30.5 miles

Cost:

--Trip Fee: \$200/person

--Meal Plan: \$100 (3 meals daily)

--Shuttle: \$25/person + \$25/boat

Registration Deadline: November 21, 2014

Official Outfitter: [Adventures in Florida](#)

Shuttle Details: Paddlers can choose a pre- or post-trip shuttle for themselves and their boats. If you choose a pre-trip shuttle, you'll need to report to Blue Springs State Park in Orange City by 1PM on December 5. After having your boats loaded onto one of our trailers, you will be shuttled to Wekiwa Springs State Park in Apopka to check in for the trip. You may also leave your vehicle at Wekiwa Springs State Park and be shuttled back to it at journey's end.

Trip Itinerary:

| DAY | Lunch Stop | Lunch GPS | Lunch Miles | Camp Site | Campsite GPS | Daily Miles |
|---------------------|------------------|--------------------|-------------|------------------------------|-------------------|-------------|
| 1 | N/A | N/A | N/A | Wekiwa Springs State Park | 28.7128, -81.4610 | 0 |
| 2 | N/A | N/A | N/A | Wekiwa Springs State Park | 28.7128, -81.4610 | 8.5 |
| 3 | N/A | N/A | N/A | Wilson's Landing | 28.8092, -81.4168 | 9 |
| 4 | Highbanks Marina | 28.89033, -81.4209 | 8 | End: Blue Springs State Park | 28.9459, -81.3426 | 13 |
| Total Miles: | | | | | | 30.5 |

- **Day 1/Friday, December 5: Wekiwa Springs State Park**

Paddling Miles: 0

Click [here](#) for a map overview of the trip.

Paddle Florida participants will arrive at Wekiwa Springs State Park mid-afternoon. For the first two days of this trip, we will be staying in the cabins within the youth group area and eating breakfast and dinner in the dining hall. For the duration of the trip, a buffet-style dinner will be served at 6PM with an evening program following at 7PM. Our first night's program will include an orientation for the paddling adventure to come. Evening entertainment ranges from local musicians to educational speakers who will provide insights regarding the flora, fauna, and ecology of the region we're paddling through. Be sure to bring cameras to capture and preserve some great moments.

Located at the headwaters of the Wekiwa River, the beautiful vistas within Wekiwa Springs State Park offer a glimpse of what Central Florida looked like when Timucuan Indians fished and hunted these lands. It's easy to forget that we're just minutes away from the major metropolitan area of Orlando.

The crown jewel for which the park is named is the second magnitude Wekiwa Spring. You can swim or snorkel in the crystal clear, pool where the water is a refreshing 72 degrees year-round. There are also

several hiking trails in the park, ranging in length from 1/8th of a mile to 13 miles. The shortest trail has a boardwalk that provides an excellent view of the river hammock. Longer trails provide an opportunity to see several plant communities ranging from river swamp to dry sandhill. Some of the animals you may encounter include the Florida black bear, white tailed deer, bobcat, gopher tortoise, turkeys and many other bird species.

- **Day 2/Saturday, December 6: Kings Landing to Wekiwa Springs State Park**
Paddling Miles: 8.5

Paddlers can leave their camping gear in their cabins today as we'll be returning to them for a second night tonight. After a hearty breakfast in the dining hall, we will shuttle you up-river to Kings Landing for a paddle 8.5 miles down Rock Springs Run back to Wekiwa Springs State Park. Rock Springs Run is one of the most picturesque paddling streams in all of Florida, teeming with wildlife. Once you reach the state park, grab your mask and snorkel and refresh yourself with a jump into Wekiwa Spring. Park shuttles will be on hand to transport paddlers from the head spring back to their cabins in the youth area.

So is it "Wekiwa" or "Wekiva?" Both, actually. "Wekiwa" was the word Creek Indians used to describe the bubbling water of the *springs*. "Wekiva" was associated with the flowing water of the *river*.

Early Native Americans are believed to be the first to live in this area, beginning around 8500 BC and continuing until they were forced out in the 1800s. They left a number of mounds that are still visible today. In the mid-1800s, this area was used primarily for farming and milling. After the Civil War, tourism arrived and a hotel and other attractions were constructed at the spring, operating until the Great Depression.

The collection of turpentine was an important economic activity in the late 1800s and continued until the late 1930s. The grooves these harvesters cut into the tree to make their extractions resemble a cat's whiskers. Look for these "cat faces" on some of the very old pine trees. The area was heavily timbered in the 1930s. You can still see old logging roads and railroad grades left by the logging companies.

Day 3/Sunday, December 7: Wekiwa Springs State Park to Wilson's Landing County Park
Paddling Miles: 9

Today we'll pack up and leave Wekiwa Spring State park for good and paddle down the Wekiva River to Wilson's Landing, a riverside park in Seminole County. From open pasture to hammocks with majestic southern magnolias, it is a serene location ideal for tent camping. (No more luxury living in cabins!) Both the boardwalk and large pavilion atop the bluff provide beautiful views of the river. Today's paddle will also offer opportunities to stop at riverside restaurants and soak in the local color.

- **Day 4/Monday, December 8: Wilson's Landing County Park to Blue Springs State Park**
Paddling Miles: 13

Our final day will take us down the majestic St. Johns River for our longest daily journey of 13 miles. We'll break up the day with an optional rest stop at Highbanks Marina, about 8 miles downriver. In addition to the usual lunch snacks provided by Paddle Florida, there is a good restaurant at the marina. Don't eat too much though, as we'll be concluding the trip just five more miles downriver at Blue Spring State Park where we'll host an end-of-trip BBQ before sending you on your way home (or shuttle back to Wekiwa Springs State Park, if you parked your vehicle there).

Blue Spring State Park covers more than 2,600 acres, including the largest spring on the St. Johns River. Blue Spring is a designated Manatee Refuge and the winter home to a growing population of West Indian manatees. The spring and spring run are closed during manatee season, mid-November through mid-March. You won't be able to swim with manatees. But if chilly weather lures manatees into the spring run to keep warm, you'll get an opportunity to see and photograph dozens of them from the riverside boardwalk. The photo below was taken on Paddle Florida's trip to this park in December 2010.

