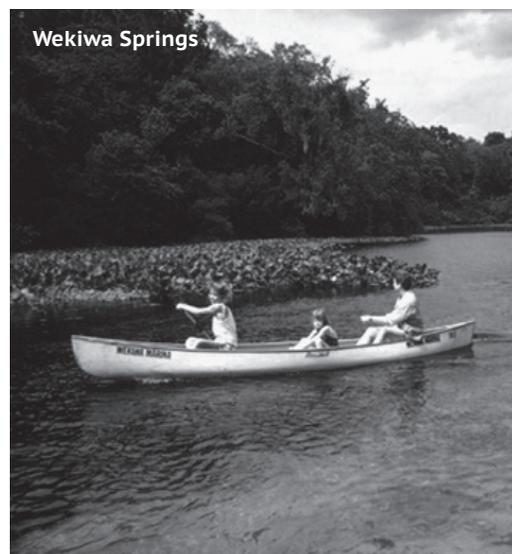


ON THE RIVER

River Road Trip!

BY KELLY SAVAGE

Happy summer my friends! I know in my last column I told you about some great Stay-cations. Well I am going to follow that up this month with some wonderful road trips! There is nothing I love more than turning off my cell phone and hopping in my car and finding a new place to explore. Luckily we have a lot of cool places hidden around the St. Johns River watershed. Whether you want to go see the headwaters of the river in Fellsmere (near Vero Beach) or explore the springs and rich history of the central portion of the watershed, you will have a great time and you just never know what you will see!



that happen! It is a beautiful portion of the river where the boat will weave through the marsh.

Fort Christmas Historical Park
1300 North Fort Christmas Road,
Christmas, Florida

On December 25, 1837, a force of 2,000 U.S. Army Soldiers and Alabama Volunteers arrived near this spot to construct a fort which was aptly named, Fort Christmas. This fort was only one of over 200 forts built during the Second Seminole Indian War, 1835 - 1842. The fort houses exhibits and a video presentation on the Seminole Indian Wars. The park is large and very informative, so enjoy it before or after your air boat ride!

MIDDLE BASIN

The area near Orlando, about 2.5 hours south of Jacksonville on I-4.

HEADWATERS ROAD TRIPS

Want to see where the St. Johns River begins? Well, pack up the car, leave early, and head south on I-95 for about 4 hours. Take exit 156 to the small town of Fellsmere, which is just north of the Everglades. Look for the expansive St. Johns Marsh that collects enough rain water to push northward to form the St. Johns River!

Stop 1 - Blue Cypress Lake

This is one of most pristine portions of the river, almost entirely surrounded by protected wetlands. The 6500 acre lake gets its name from a unique optical illusion, in which the morning sun's rays, reflecting of the surface of the water, cause the cypress trees surrounding the lake to appear a bluish color.

Middleton's Fish Camp

21704 73rd Manor, Vero Beach, Florida
(800)258-5002, middletonsfishcamp.com

If you want to immerse yourself in the area, look no further than this great fish camp! You can schedule a wildlife tour, rent a boat or kayak, and stay the night in a furnished cabin! There is no restaurant in the area though, so pack a cooler.

Stop 2 - Christmas

Yes that is right, there is a town by the name of Christmas in the river's watershed!

Midway Air Boat Rides!

28501 E Colonial Drive, Christmas, Florida
(407)568-6790, airboatridesatmidway.com

Always wanted to take an air boat ride? Well for about \$35 our friends in Christmas can make

Stop 1 - Wekiwa Springs State Park

1800 Wekiwa Circle, Apopka, Florida

Located at the headwaters of the Wekiwa River (a tributary of the St. Johns), the beautiful vistas within this park offer a glimpse of what Central Florida looked like when Timucuan Indians fished and hunted these lands and waters. Camp, kayak, hike or snorkel at the headwaters of the beautiful Wekiwa River.

Stop 2 - Enterprise, Florida

Just before the Sanford exit off I-4, this quaint town is nestled beneath billowing cypress trees and blowing moss on Lake Monroe. It is just beautiful to drive around the lake through the town. Along the way you can stop at the Lake Monroe Boat Dock and take pictures. Then take a beautiful hike at Green Springs Park.

Stop 3 - Sanford, Florida

Located on Lake Monroe, the historic downtown strip is everything you would expect it to be. The architecture is beautiful, and the historic buildings are occupied with a variety of shops and restaurants.

LOWER BASIN OF THE RIVER

Roughly DeLand to Jacksonville, on the East side of the River.

Stop 1 - St. Johns River Cruises at Blue Springs State Park

2100 W. French Avenue, Orange City, Florida
sjrivercruises.com

July – What to do with the kids now that school's out? **Tree Hill** has lots of exciting programs for the family in July. While they're closed on July 2 in observance of Independence Day, they will be offering a tour on July 9, an egg carton caterpillar craft on July 16, a seed necklace craft on July 23, and an egg carton spider craft on July 30. Remember that thanks to Jaxport, every Saturday is \$5 for families! Visit www.treehill.org for more information. Also, connect with them on Facebook, and see all their great pictures and funny captions on Flickr at www.bit.ly/eRTBY5.

July 2 – The **Kids Environmental Stewardship Class**, presented by Sustainable Springfield, starts this Saturday at 9 am at the Springfield Community Garden (1425 N Laura Street). The 30-minute classes will run for 6 weeks and will be hosted by a different NE Florida group every week. The first week will be hosted by the Riverkeeper. The classes are free and are open to children ages 6-12. If your child is interested, please download the enrollment form from www.tinyurl.com/3gjr3ag and bring it with you on Saturday.

July 5 – The Sierra Club of Northeast Florida creates suspense by presenting an as-yet-unnamed **environmental film** at the Ponte Vedra Library at 6:30 pm. Snacks will be provided, but bring your own drink. Everyone is welcome, including children. Makes you want to go just to find out what the film is! Or you could keep checking their Meetup page: www.meetup.com/Sierra-Club-Northeast-Florida-Group.

July 14 – **The Girls Gone Green** is hosting a party at Zaitoon Mediterranean Grill on Atlantic Blvd. from 6:30-9:30 pm. Come out and enjoy free veggie appetizers and drink specials and the chance to win great raffle prizes. Among other things, they will be raffling a \$1700 electric bike donated by A1A Eco-Transport! Come by and find out what the Girls are up to next and share your own stories of personal accomplishments. Contact Julie Watkins at julie@thegirlsgonegreen.com for more information, and visit their website: www.thegirlsgonegreen.com.

July 16 – Join master yoga instructor Susan Byrne Lee for **Yoga Under the Trees** at the Arboretum at 10 am. Bring your mat and \$10 and meet at the picnic tables. Contact director@jacksonvillearboretum.org to verify availability, and visit the Arboretum's website: www.jacksonvillearboretum.org.

July 16 – Kayak Amelia's monthly **Groove 'n' Grub** takes place from 7-10 pm. Join them for live music and great food at the Heckscher Road location. Visit their website (www.kayakamelia.com) or call 251-0016 for more information. Also, get the skinny on all their events, wildlife sightings and more by liking their page on Facebook.

July 23 – Get out for a **Trail Walk** at the Arboretum. There are two different walks. At 8 am, the Fitness Walk is a 2-mile brisk hike along the Arboretum's trails with biologist and naturalist Rachel Sulkers. At 9:30 am, a more casual walk with Rachel focuses on the ecology of the Arboretum. Contact director@jacksonvillearboretum.org to verify availability, and visit the Arboretum's website: www.jacksonvillearboretum.org.

July 29 – The Riverkeeper presents **Bluegrass & Barrels** at the Southlight Gallery on Laura Street from 5-9 pm. Celebrate their rain barrel campaign with live music by killer local group Grandpa's Cough Medicine. Enjoy beautiful art, beer, wine, hors d'oeuvres and awesome people. Bid on one of their beautifully wrapped and artist-painted rain barrels to take home with you! See www.stjohnsriverkeeper.org for more information and directions to the gallery.

July 30 – The Sierra Club of Northeast Florida makes a trip out to beautiful **DeLeon Springs State Park**. Meet at the park at 9:30 am. There is lots to do there, and an RSVP indicating which activities you want to participate in is required. So visit their Meetup page at www.meetup.com/Sierra-Club-Northeast-Florida-Group.

Please email listings for consideration to anna@eujacksonville.com by the 15th of each month.

BY ANNA RABHAN

ECO EVENTS