

Upper Chipola River Paddling Trail



Access Point 1: Christoff Landing
N: 30.849918 W: -85.259389






Access Point 2: Florida Caverns State Park Take Out
N: 30.816502 W: -85.234094

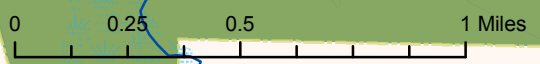
BUMP NOSE RD

Baltzell Springs

CAVERNS STATE PK RD

Florida Caverns State Park

-  Chipola River Paddling Trail
-  Springs
-  Canoe/Kayak Launch
-  Florida State Parks
-  Florida Conservation Lands
-  Wetlands





Upper Chipola River Paddling Trail Guide

The Waterway

The Upper Chipola River Paddling Trail is a shady, unspoiled waterway that meanders about 4.5 miles before ending in [Florida Caverns State Park](#) near Marianna. Several clear springs dot the river and colorful wildflowers adorn the banks in spring and fall. This remote stretch of the Chipola River is a site on the [Great Florida Birding and Wildlife Trail](#) with excellent wildlife viewing opportunities. Be sure to bring a camera and binoculars, and a fishing pole to try your luck catching the river's tasty freshwater fish. The original [Chipola River Paddling Trail](#) begins below Florida Caverns State Park at Yancey Bridge (SR 166) and flows 51-miles to its designated ending at Scotts Ferry on SR 71.

The Paddling Experience

This 4.5-mile paddling trail from [Christoff Landing](#) downstream to the Florida Caverns State Park is suitable for beginning to intermediate paddlers, depending on water levels and amount of downed trees. Portages may be necessary, especially after storm events. From Christoff Landing it may be possible to paddle about 1.5 miles upstream, to visit the historic [Bellamy Bridge](#), site of colorful local ghost legends. The Bellamy Bridge Heritage Trail is about a half mile walk and can be accessed from the parking area on CR 162. Accessing the river at SR 162 bridge is not recommended as the dirt road is rough and rainy conditions may require carrying boats and gear through thick muck.

The trail ends at a boat ramp near a small bridge on Blue Hole Drive inside Florida Caverns State Park. A short distance downstream of the boat ramp the river disappears into a submerged cave, re-emerging a 1/4 mile later. As a result paddling is not allowed past the bridge. The portion of the river that continues downstream follows a man-made cut that was made decades ago in order to allow logs to be floated downstream. This feature has since become clogged with downed trees and is now preserved as wildlife habitat. It is possible to rent canoes from the state park office at the entrance and paddle upstream and back. Be sure to visit Baltzell Springs, about 1.2 miles upstream from the park boat ramp on the east side of the river. Please avoid trespassing on private lands especially around springs please!

Access Points

#1, Start of the Trail, Christoff Landing

Historically, Christoff Landing was a location where a ferry carried passengers across the river. Primitive camping with picnic pavilions is available nearby on adjacent North Florida Water Management District property. No fees but [Reservations required](#). There is a single-laned paved ramp and ample parking.

Directions from Marianna: From intersection of US 90 and Pennsylvania Ave, turn right (north) on Bumposse Rd and drive 5.2 mi. Turn right (east) on Christoff Landing Rd; the launch site is 0.3 mi. ahead.

#2, Mile 4.5, End of the trail, Florida Caverns State Park



Native Americans and early Spanish expeditions used the 'natural bridge' at the paddling trail's end point as



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a crossing point on the Chipola River. It was also used by Andrew Jackson's troops in 1818 during the Seminole Indian Wars. The boat ramp is located between the park entrance station and the family camping area on Blue Hole Drive. There is an admission fee to enter the park. *Directions from Marianna: From intersection of US 90 and Jefferson St (SR 166/CR 167), head north (it becomes Caverns Rd); the park entrance is approx. 2.7 mi. on the left (west) side of the road*

Outfitters and Shuttle Service

[Bear Paw Outfitters](#) 850-482-4948

Canoe rentals from the Florida Caverns State Park office, 850- 482-9598

Base Camp

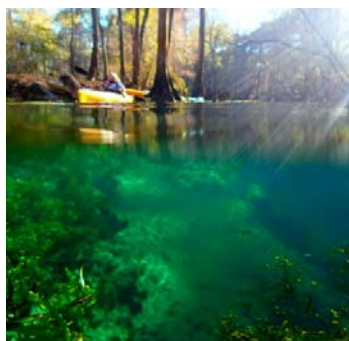
Florida Caverns State Park makes an excellent base camp for exploring Jackson County, an excellent wildlife viewing, cave diving and paddling destination. Stop by the Visitors Center and tour the caves that have a long and interesting geologic history. Beginning about 38 million years ago when sea levels were much higher and the southeastern coastal plain of the United States was submerged, shells, coral and sediments gradually accumulated on the sea floor. As sea levels fell, these materials hardened into limestone. During the last million years, acidic groundwater dissolved crevices just below the surface creating cave passages large enough to walk through. Dazzling stalactites, stalagmites, flowstone and other fragile cave-drip formations were formed by a similar dissolving process by the naturally acidic rainwater. The park's bluffs, springs and caves are referred to as karst terrain, and the caves provide habitat for the blind cave crayfish, cave salamanders and three species of cave roosting bats.

Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) and Florida Caverns State Park

The land that comprises a large part of Florida Caverns State Park was acquired on October 11, 1935. Work on the tour cave and structures within the park were completed by members of the Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) and the Works Projects Administration. Both groups emerged from President Roosevelt's New Deal, established in 1933 to provide jobs to men during the Great Depression. Tireless hours of work went into the development of the park, which included many aspects beyond the cave. Progress continued on the park until 1942, when the United States joined World War II and funding was cut to the CCC and Works Progress Administration programs. Florida Caverns State Park was officially opened to the public in 1942 and the men who helped develop this park unquestionably left their mark.



Christoff Landing



Baltzell Springs



Bellamy Bridge, Photos Liz Sparks