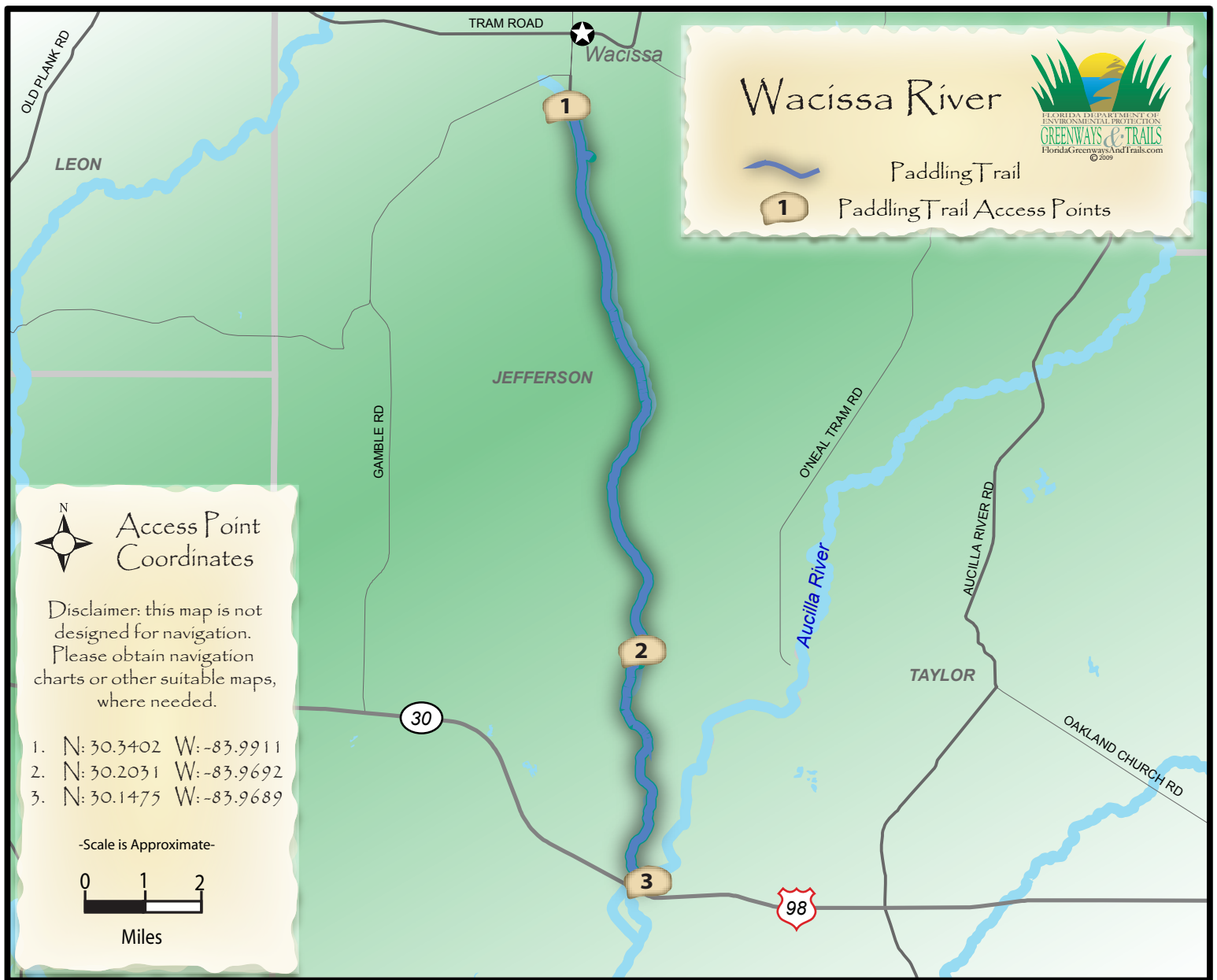


Wacissa River Paddling Trail



Wacissa River Trip Planning

Counties: Jefferson

Nearest towns: Wacissa

Trip length: 1) Miles

Difficulty: Moderate

Skill level: Intermediate

Mileage: Mile 0--Wacissa Springs
Mile 0.5--Goose Pasture Recreation Area
Mile 1)--Nutall Rise Landing

**The provided mileage data is approximate (rounded to the nearest 0.5 mi) and shouldn't be relied upon for navigation.

Access Point 1 Put-in: Wacissa

Nearest town to put-in: Wacissa

Miles from put-in: One

Directions to put-in: Wacissa Springs – From town of Wacissa, take SR 59 south. When SR 59 turns west, continue straight ahead until the road dead ends in the park.

Access Point 2 Put-in/take-out: Goose Pasture Recreation Area

Directions to take-out: From town of Wacissa, take SR 59 fourteen miles south to US 98. Turn left (east) onto US 98 traveling for about 8.5 miles and turn on the third road on the north side of US 98 (Powell Hammock Grade) after crossing the Aucilla River. Take this road north for about four miles to a graded limestone road, turn left, and follow signs to Goose Pasture.

Access Point 3 Take-out: Nutall Rise

Directions to take-out: Nutall Rise Landing – From town of Wacissa take SR 59 fourteen miles south to US 98. Turn left (east), onto US 98 and after crossing the Aucilla River turn left (north), onto first graded road.

Driving distance from put-in to take-out: About 22 miles

Topo maps (USGS quads): Wacissa, Nutall Rise

Gazeteer page: 51

Outfitters within 20 miles of trail:

Blue Water Scuba (850)656-3483 (Tallahassee)

Wilderness Way (850) 877-7200 (Wakulla Station)
<http://www.thewildernessway.net/>.

Shuttle service offered: Call outfitters

USGS link (water level info): <http://waterdata.usgs.gov/fl/nwis/uv?02326550>

Break / Lunch areas: Goose Pasture, Calico Landing, Welaunee Landing (see Notes)

Camping options: Camping is free at Goose Pasture on a first-come, first-serve basis and there is also a gated group campsite just south of Goose Pasture which may be used free of charge for groups. Call the Suwannee River Water Management District at (386)-362-1001 or 1-800-226-1066 (Florida only) to get the gate combination and permission to use the group facility. Both camps are closed during the general gun hunting season from mid-November through mid-January.

Area Lodging:

Tallahassee:

<http://www.visittallahassee.com/places-to-stay/accomodations-hotels/>.

Monticello/Jefferson County (bed and breakfasts)

<http://monticellojeffersonfl.com/members.cfm>

Perry/Taylor County:

http://www.taylorcountychamber.com/index.php?option=com_mtree&task=listcats&cat_id=77&Itemid=130.

Wakulla County:

<http://wakullacountychamber.com/business-directory/categories/sub/?id=28&cat=Hotels%20%26%20Campgrounds>.

Food/Beverage restrictions: None

What to Expect on the river:

Tidal influence: None

Pull-overs: Can be numerous on the Slave Canal

Low branches: Possible on the Slave Canal

Narrow water: Possible on the Slave Canal with low water

Shallow water: Possible on the Slave Canal with low water levels

Strong currents: Possible strong currents if the water level is high when paddling upstream on the Aucilla River to the take-out at Nutall Rise

Rocks: Yes

Houses: Very few at the start of the river, and at the take-out at Nutall Rise

Shoals: One small 'spillway' sill to cross at old dam site on the Wacissa about five miles below the headsprings.

Tight turns: No

Open water: No

Springs: There are numerous springs on the Wacissa but many can be choked with vegetation during the warm months.

Potable water sources: No

Wildlife: Abundant birds and wildlife: limpkin, various heron species, ibis, moorhen, anhinga, alligators, turtles, snakes.

Natural communities: Outstanding scenery with floodplain forest, river marsh, springs.

Portages: Variable number of pull-overs on the Slave Canal.

Swimming: The Wacissa spring head is a popular swimming spot. Big Blue Spring, a mile south on the river on the east side (river left) is also a popular swimming spot.

Motorboats: There can be heavy motorboat use on weekends and holidays. Airboats also use the river, mostly on the upper stretch of the Wacissa

Expect at parking Wacissa Springs:

- **Parking fee:** None
- **Bathrooms:** Portable toilets
- **Hours of operation (gates close):** Not gated
- **Camping:** No
- **Camping fees:** No
- **Crowds:** Can be crowded weekends and holidays
- **Boat Ramp:** Yes
- **Potable water source:** No
- **Canoe/kayak launch:** Use boat launch

Expect at parking at Goose Pasture:

- **Parking fee:** None
- **Bathrooms:** Portable toilets
- **Hours of operation (gates close):** Not gated
- **Camping:** Primitive camping is allowed all year, except during the general gun hunting season at Goose Pasture. For more information contact the District at (386)-362-1001 or 1- 800-226-1066 (Florida only).
- **Camping fees:** None
- **Crowds:** Can be busy holidays and weekends
- **Boat Ramp:** Concrete
- **Potable water source:** None
- **Canoe/kayak launch:** Use boat ramp

Expect at parking at group camp:

- **Parking fee:** None
- **Bathrooms:** None, walk to Goose Pasture camp nearby for portable toilets
- **Hours of operation (gates always locked):** Call the Suwannee River Water Management District at (386)-362-1001 or 1-800-226-1066 (Florida only). for gate combination and permission to camp
- **Camping:** Primitive camping with covered picnic shelter and large grill
- **Camping fees:** None, but you must call the SRWMD to get gate combination and permission
- **Crowds:** No
- **Boat Ramp:** None
- **Potable water source:**
- **Canoe/kayak launch:** Launch from bank

Expect at parking at Nutall Rise:

- **Parking fee:** None
- **Bathrooms:** Portable toilet
- **Hours of operation (gates close):** Not gated
- **Camping:** None
- **Camping fees:** N/A
- **Crowds:** No
- **Boat Ramp:** Concrete
- **Potable water source:** No
- **Canoe/kayak launch:** Use boat ramp

Cultural and historical features along the trail:

Wacissa is a Timucuan Indian name and its meaning has been lost.

The Wacissa Slave Canal was constructed in the 1850s using slave labor in an attempt to connect the Wacissa to the Aucilla River so cotton barges could be floated to the Gulf. For several miles below Goose Pasture, the Wacissa diffuses into impassable swamp. It reforms again just where the Aucilla River pops up after miles of rising above the surface and dipping below to disappear in fascinating geological formations known as karst. The canal scheme didn't work well as the canal was too shallow, and after the Civil War the canal was abandoned. The hard edges are gone, and somehow the decades of rain, wind and water did not fill in the canal. Except for some boulders along the banks you'd never suspect it was not a natural waterway.

Notes:

The Wacissa River is one of Florida's wildest and diverse rivers, with numerous springs and abundant wading birds. The upper river can become crowded with boats and paddlecraft on weekends; the more remote lower river tends to be quieter.

Two lesser known public landings are found along the Wacissa River between the headsprings and Goose Pasture, but access roads may require an all terrain vehicle. Nevertheless, they can be good rest stops. The first is Calico Landing on river right about 2.5 miles below the headsprings (GPS point: N30.3060 W83.9822). The second landing is Welaunee Landing along a side channel on river left almost eight miles below the headsprings (GPS point: N30.2343 W83.9754).

The Wacissa River ends in a confusing braided marsh area and paddlers must take care to find the entrance to the Slave Canal to be able to continue to the take-out at Nutall Rise on the Aucilla River. When leaving Goose Pasture, head straight across the river to the opposite bank and look for an opening on the right bank that looks clogged with aquatic plants. There may or may not be a sign posted there depending on if vandals remove it (GPS point: N30.2018 W83.9713). Continue to bear right. The waterway will open up after a short distance and paddling will become easy in a wider channel. Continue to watch for the Slave Canal opening on the right bank, about 1.5 miles downstream from Goose Pasture. You will know you are in the correct waterway if you see limestone rocks piled along the banks within the first 0.25 miles. Again, a sign may or may not be present at the entrance but there is red blazing on several trees at the entrance. (GPS point: N30.1816 W83.9682) If you paddle more than .25 miles on what you think is the Slave Canal and do not see limestone rocks piled along the edges – turn around! The waterways

in this area can be extremely confusing and many paddlers have become lost in the swamp.

Several snags that require pull-overs are likely on the Slave Canal, depending on water levels. Severe storm events often result in many more trees blocking the channel. Consult with local outfitters about current conditions.

At the trip's end the Slave Canal merges with the Aucilla River just north of the US 98 bridge and one must paddle upstream (north) on the Aucilla for a short segment to reach the take-out. The total distance between Goose Pasture and the take out at Nutall Rise is about 5 miles. A high or rising tide will make the last stretch of the canal easier to paddle. For best paddling conditions in the canal and lower Wacissa River, median water levels should be around 7.5 feet at the USGS gauge at Nutall Rise: <http://waterdata.usgs.gov/fl/nwis/uv?02326550>.

The Florida Trail passes through this area with a popular segment of the trail running along the beautiful Aucilla River and sinks with its unusual geological formations.

You can order a more detailed guide to the Aucilla, Wacissa and Econfinia rivers through the Wildlife Foundation of Florida website:
http://shop.wildlifeflorida.org/default.tpl?pageID=1&page=full&cart=1307990394206368&--eqskudatarq=AWE_BOOK_GUIDE.