

Florida Black Bear Scenic Byway

The Florida Black Bear Scenic Byway in north central Florida is filled with long, uninterrupted stretches of natural Florida and pine-scented air. See an array of wildlife, lush subtropical vegetation, and springs with clear, crystalline water. Be sure to take advantage of the many recreational opportunities like camping, hiking, biking, fishing, swimming, boating, kayaking, and canoeing.



Length: 123 miles / 196.8 km

Local Information

We do not have contact information for this Byway.

Visitor Services



Accessibility

All facilities built on public lands within the corridor since 1977 comply with the Americans with Disabilities Act.



Bicycle/Pedestrian Facilities

The corridor provides ideal bicycling conditions with long expanses of uninterrupted travel and a natural, scenic setting. While there are no designated bike lanes, there is a four-foot painted shoulder along much of the byway.



Camping

Camping facilities are more heavily utilized during the winter.



Gasoline

There is gas available along this byway.



Information

* The Ocklawaha Visitor Center, at 3199 NE CR 315, Silver Springs, is open 8-5 daily and has maps, books, and brochures. * The Salt Springs Visitor Center at 14100 N SR 19 in Salt Springs is open 9-4 Thursday - Sunday and has maps, and brochures. * The Pittman Visitor Center, at 45621 South SR 19 in Altoona is open 9-5 Wed-Sun and has maps, brochures, and permits. * The Marjorie Harris Carr Cross Florida Greenway Visitor Center East, at 200 Buckman Lock Road in Palatka is open 8-5 daily, and has historical displays, maps, books, and brochures.

Florida Black Bear Scenic Byway

Special Considerations

State Road 40 is a designated Hurricane Evacuation Route, and could be subject to restrictions in the event of a hurricane.

Seasons

Best Time to Drive

The cooler and drier seasons of fall, winter and spring are the best times to experience the majority of the byway's special qualities.

High Season

Camping facilities are more heavily utilized during the winter, while the water-based facilities are more heavily utilized during the summer.

Map and Directions



Legend:

 Point of Interest	 Campground	 Featured Byway	 Water	 State Border
 Park	 Picnic/Rest Area	 America's Byways	 Wildlife Refuge	 Urban Area
 Mountain	 Interstate	 Other Byway	 Wilderness Area	 Tribal Nation
 City	 U.S. Highway	 Other Road	 Other Federal Lands	 Military Base
 Capital	 State Highway	 Trail	 Other State Lands	

Driving Directions

The Florida Black Bear Scenic Byway consists of the byway itself, two spurs, and a loop.

To travel the SR 40 part of the byway (60.5 miles):

- Start the byway at the intersection of State Road (SR) 40 and SR 35 approximately one-half mile east of the city limits of the City of Ocala.
- From Ocala, travel east on State Road 40 into the Ocala National Forest.
- In the Ocala National Forest, State Road 40 turns into Fort Brooks Road.
- Leaving the Ocala National Forest, Fort Brooks Road turns back into SR 40.
- The byway ends near the intersection of SR 40 and Interstate 95 in the City of Ormond Beach.

To travel the northern spur of the byway (32.3 miles):

- Start at the intersection of SR 19 and SR 40 in Ocala National Forest.
- Travel north on SR 19 for 32.3 miles to the intersection of SR 19 and Buckman Lock Road, where the spur ends.

To travel the southern spur of the byway (2.5 miles):

- Instead of turning north on SR 19 at the intersection with SR 40, turn south.
- Follow SR 19 south through the Ocala National Forest.
- The terminus of the south SR 19 spur is located at the southern boundary of the Ocala National Forest.

To travel the Alexander Springs Loop of the byway (20.9 miles):

- Begin at the intersection of SR 40 and SR 19.
- Follow SR 19 south from SR 40 for 9.4 miles to the intersection with Lake County Road 445.
- Follow Lake County Road 445 east and north for 11 miles to the intersection with Lake County Road 445-A.
- Take Lake County Road 445-A northeast for 0.5 miles to the intersection with SR 40.
- The intersection of Lake County Road 445-A with SR 40 is located 4.8 miles east of the intersection of SR 40 and SR 19.

The 7.2 mile Fort Gates Ferry Spur is used to provide access to the historic ferry crossing on the St. Johns River. It is unpaved and consists of US Forest Service Road 43. The spur begins at the intersection of Forest Road 43 and the North State Road 10 Spur in Salt Springs, and runs north and east to the St. Johns River.

Getting to the Byway



Nearby cities

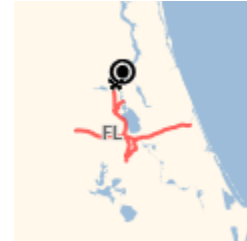
Palatka, FL (7 miles / 11.27 km, 10 minutes)

Start:  Intersection of FL-20 and FL-19
N 29.641° W 81.676° [?]


Directions:

- From the intersection of State Road 20 and State Road 19 in Palatka, head south on State Road 19 for seven miles to the intersection of State Road 19 and Buckman Lock Road.
- This is the northern terminus of the North State Road 19 Spur of the Florida Black Bear Scenic Byway.

Junction with byway: * Intersection of State Road 19 and Buckman Lock Road
N 29.559° W 81.733° [?]



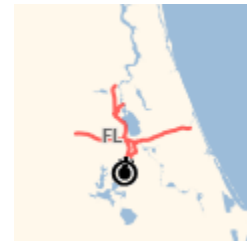
Umatilla, FL (4.75 miles / 7.64 km, 10 minutes)

Start:  Intersection of Lake County Road 450 and FL-19
N 28.931° W 81.667° [?]

Directions:

- From the intersection of Lake County Road 450 (Ocala St.) and State Highway 19 in Umatilla, proceed north on State Road 19 for 4.75 miles.
- You are now on the South State Road 19 Spur of the Florida Black Bear Scenic Byway.
- The location is marked with a Florida Scenic Highway sign.

Junction with byway: * Lake Rd and FL-19, Pittman
N 28.996° W 81.642° [?]



Road Trip: A Journey Across the Greater Ocala Ecoregion

Departure: Silver River State Park, Florida

Destination: Tiger Bay State Forest, Florida

Time to allow: 1 day

Journey through forests, parks and prairies and discover the extraordinary natural and recreational resources found along the Florida Black Bear Scenic Byway. While driving the byway, be sure to notice the long, uninterrupted stretches that are fronted by rare natural communities. This expedition is best in the cooler, drier months of fall, winter and spring.

Day 1

- **Start: Silver River State Park**



Suggested time at this stop:

2 hours

Located near the western terminus of the byway, the 5,000 acre Silver River State Park sets the tone for the rest of the journey with 10 distinct natural communities, numerous small freshwater springs, and the Silver River Museum and Environmental Education Center. Canoeing, hiking, biking, full facility camping and luxury cabins are available.

After leaving the Silver River State Park, follow the byway east across the Ocklawaha River and the Marjorie Harris Carr Cross Florida Greenway. Flatwoods featuring tall stands of longleaf pine and hardwood hydric hammock flank the byway. After a drive of 15 miles and 20 minutes, you will enter the Big Scrub in the Ocala National Forest, the largest sand pine forest in the world.

Continue through the Big Scrub until you reach the Juniper Springs Recreation Area.

- **Stop 2: Juniper Springs Recreation Area - Ocala National Forest**



From previous stop: 22 minutes / 16 mi (25.6 km)

Directions: Take the exit road from the Silver River State Park to State Road 35, then turn north on State Road 35. Follow State Road 35 for one mile to the intersection with State Road 40 (the western byway terminus), then turn east on State Road 40 (the byway). Follow the byway east for 15 miles and 20 minutes to the entrance of Juniper Springs Recreation Area.

Suggested time at this stop: 1 hour 30 minutes

The Juniper Springs Recreation Area is one of the oldest and most popular National Forest Recreation Areas. Enjoy the springs, or canoe or kayak Juniper Creek. Juniper Springs Recreational Area boasts semitropical scenery not found on any other national forest in the continental United States. Hike the 0.75 mile long interpretive trail along Juniper Creek to learn about and see the unique vegetation.

For another hike, head east on the byway to the North State Road 19 Spur, then head north on the Spur for six miles and 10 minutes. Here, you can experience the very rare xeric oak and sand pine habitat with just a few minutes walk on the Yearling Trail in the Juniper Prairie Wilderness Area.

- **Stop 3: Juniper Prairie Wilderness Area**



From previous stop: 14 minutes / 10.3 mi (16.5 km)

Directions: Exit the Juniper Prairie Recreation Area and turn east on the byway (SR 40). Follow the byway for 4.4 miles to the intersection of State Road 40 and State Road 19 (the North SR 19 Spur). Turn north for 5.9 miles to the Yearling Trail.

Suggested time at this stop: 3 hours

The Juniper Prairie Wilderness Area is home to the endangered Florida Scrub Jay, and even the least experienced birder should be able to spot entire families of the gregarious birds after only a short walk along the Yearling Trail, and often without having to leave the trailhead.

The Yearling Trail leads to Pat's Island, which is not an island surrounded by water but an island of slightly more fertile soil that supports longleaf pine and other plants not found in the surrounding sea of xeric oak and sand pine scrub.

Pat's Island was a 19th and early 20th Century farming community, now long gone, and was the setting for Marjorie Kinnan Rawling's novel *The Yearling*, as well as the location for the movie of the same name.

Hike for at least 15 minutes one way on the trail, and then head back to the trailhead. If you wish to experience Pat's Island, you should plan on a 5.5-mile hike, budget two to three hours, and be sure to bring plenty of water.

On the way to the Tiger Bay State Forest, you will pass through the remainder of the Big Scrub, cross over the lazy St. Johns River, and venture into miles of unbroken hardwood hydric hammocks and flatwoods which line the byway. If so inclined, have lunch at one of several restaurants on the St. Johns River in Astor or Volusia.

- **End: Tiger Bay State Forest**



From previous stop: 48 minutes / 35 mi (56.0 km)

Directions: Exit the Yearling Trail Head and turn south on State Road 19 to the intersection with State Road 40, a distance of 5.9 miles. Turn east on State Road 40 (the Florida Black Bear Scenic Byway) and travel 29.1 miles to the entrance of the Tiger Bay State Forest.

Suggested time at this stop: 45 minutes

The Tiger Bay State Forest is an important link in a wildlife corridor for species listed as endangered, threatened or of special concern. Park at the entrance from the byway and take a walk through pine and palmetto flatwoods, representative of the coastal plain pine forests found throughout the south. The forest also contains hardwood hammocks and hardwood swamps. The parking area is designed for horse trailers, and is the trailhead for an equestrian trail that includes an equestrian campground.

Totals for Day 1

Total Distance Traveled: 61.3 miles / 98.1 km

Total Travel Time: 1 hour 24 minutes

Total Stopping Time: 7 hours 15 minutes