



Trip Summary

Paddling the Okefenokee

TRIP AT-A-GLANCE

Dates: February 26 – March 2, 2011

Location: Okefenokee National
Wildlife Refuge, GA

Cost: \$ *995

Rating: 3

Activities: canoeing

Meeting

Place: Jacksonville Airport (JAX)
or Stephen C Foster State
Park

Arrive: by 11 am JAX; 1 pm State
Park

Depart: After 12pm at JAX

* Deduct 5% if you are one of the first 5 to register (by 11/26/11) and 3% of the entire trip fee when the balance is paid by check.

WHAT'S INCLUDED

- experienced guides
- four nights double occupancy lodging
- all meals from lunch on Saturday though breakfast on Wednesday
- round trip transportation from the Jacksonville, FL airport
- canoe rental and instruction
- entrance fees

What's Not Included

- Transportation to Jacksonville
- Guide gratuities
- Alcoholic beverages

Trip Highlights

- Learning about the natural history and the equally fascinating human history of this unique primitive habitat
- Paddling among huge old cypress trees that have lived there for hundreds of years
- Watching sluggish alligators sunning themselves
- Stopping often to take pictures and investigate the early blooming wildflowers
- Enjoying quiet cabins and hearty meals after active days

Trip Overview

The Okefenokee National Wildlife Refuge in Southern Georgia is unique, wild, and visually incredible. From the ancient Cypress trees hung with Spanish moss to sleepy alligators and numerous birds, this primitive environment is like no other. The human history here is also fascinating: starting with the earliest, aboriginal inhabitants (the Ouaquaphenogaw or Yamases) through the Native American Seminoles to the earliest European inhabitants, the Swampers, and the Suwannee Canal Company timber harvesting, this unique environment has challenged and shaped many lives.

We travel via canoe among the various waterways, paddling among ancient and towering Cypress trees, lily pads, and other water plants. Sluggish alligators sunning themselves or perhaps slipping in the water to avoid human contact are a common sight. We stop often to take pictures of this magnificent and wonderful environment. And we return knowing we have seen one of the most truly special places on earth.

Our Itinerary

Saturday: We meet at the Jacksonville, FL airport at 11:00 AM (if you plan to arrive that morning, please make sure your plane arrives by 10:30). Our drive to Stephen C. Foster State Park in Georgia, the westernmost access point of the Okefenokee and our home for the next three days, will take about 2 hours. We enjoy a picnic lunch, start getting to know each other, and then have some time to hike the trails and boardwalks around the park. There is

CANCELLATION POLICY

In the unfortunate event that you must cancel your trip, your refund will be determined by the following formula:

Days Prior to Trip	Refund
90 + days	All but \$50
90 – 61 days	50% of deposit
60 – 30 days	50% of trip fee
29 days or less	No refund

Adventures in Good Company reserves the right to cancel or alter a trip due to unforeseen weather, unsafe conditions, low registrations or other circumstances.

On the rare occasion when Adventures in Good Company must cancel a trip, all payments received to date will be refunded, including the non-refundable portion of your deposit.

Adventures in Good Company is not responsible for expenses incurred in preparation for any canceled trips, including airplane tickets.

TIPPING GUIDELINES

Tipping at the end of the trip is optional. If you feel your guide(s) did an outstanding job and would like to reward them for their efforts, a suggested rule of thumb is US \$7 to \$12 per person, per day. Oftentimes, trip members organize a group envelope (this makes it anonymous) and present it at the last shared meal.

Our Itinerary Continued

excellent bird viewing and we will probably see our first gator. We will have an early dinner in our cottages and then walk to the ranger station for an excellent overview of the area geologic, natural, and human history from one of the park rangers.

Sunday: 8.6 miles to Minnies Shelter, 13 miles to Floyds Prairie (total, not one way) After picking up our canoes we start with a short instructional paddling and safety session. We then head out from Stephen Foster east into Billys Lake, a long narrow depression in the swamp. We see alligators sunning themselves if the sun is out and a variety of birds, as well as starting to see the ancient Cypress trees. This portion of the swamp, the Orange Trail, is characterized by the still, dark waters of Billys Lake and the overhanging Cypress trees. We will set a very leisurely pace so we can explore the various nooks and crannies of this long narrow lake while watching for alligators, turtles, Ibis, Egrets, Herons and the unique water plants of the swamp. After 2.2 miles of paddling we reach Billys Island, home to much of the swamps history. We take the walking trail from the dock to the northernmost part of the island. At various times Billys Island was used as a refuge for remnant bands of Seminoles, a homestead for early Swampers, and the site of a booming lumber town complete with a movie theater. All of that is gone now, leaving only burial mounds, cemeteries, and the steel framework of cars and equipment.

After eating lunch on Billys Island we head north to Minnies Lake and the edge of Floyds prairie. This water path winds and twists amongst the Cypress trees, giving us an up close and intimate view of the most mature and aged Cypress trees in the swamp. After a break to stretch our legs at Minnies Shelter at the southern portion of Minnies Lake we will decide whether to continue on to Floyds prairie (2.2 miles one way). This portion of the trail again becomes narrow and winding until it reaches the southern portion of Floyds Prairie, dominated not by Cypress trees, but by low lying water plants and watery bushes. A prairie, not of dirt, but of water. Regardless of how far we go, we backtrack the way we came, returning to our cabins for an excellent meal.

Monday: 9.2 miles to Suwanee River Sill (total, not one way) Today we head the opposite way on Billys Lake, west towards the Suwanee River Sill on the Brown Trail. After leaving Billys Lake we travel the wooded path of the ancient Suwanee River again watching for alligators, Ibis, Egrets, Osprey, Anhingas and aquatic turtles. Our paddling will be exciting during this portion of the watery trail called The Narrows as it twists and turns and goes every which way but straight. Leaving the Narrows the trail again widens and curves less until we reach the Suwanee River Sill, an earthen dam used to control an earlier wildfire. We will stop along the Sills bank

Our Itinerary Continued

for lunch and a chance to stretch our legs.

After lunch we backtrack along our path, returning to our cabins for hot showers and another excellent dinner.

Tuesday: 13.8 miles to Monkey Lake, or 9.6 miles to Mizell Prairie (total, not one way) Today we pack up and then ride in our van to the East Entrance, the Suwannee Canal Recreation Area (approximately 1.5 hours). This location contains the Okefenokee Wildlife Refuge headquarters, a visitor center with excellent exhibits, several foot trails, a restored homestead and a 4000 foot boardwalk with an observation tower.

After exploring the Recreation area we pick up our canoes and head out for a completely different experience of the swamp. The east side of the Refuge has fewer, and younger, Cypress trees and provides excellent examples of the swamp prairies. The prairies are dominated by water lilies, sedges, grasses, beakrushes, yellow-eyed grasses, and Neverwet, as well as young Pond Cypress and Hurrah Bush.

Depending on how much time we take exploring the recreation area, we will either head north on the Yellow trail to Mizell Prairie or head south along the White trail to Monkey lake. Both trails offer the possibilities of seeing migratory sandhill cranes and a variety of waterfowl. Of course, alligator sightings are likely as well. Both of our trail choices first begin by heading west on the Suwannee Canal. This canal was dug by the Suwannee Canal Company in the 1890s in an attempt to drain the Okefenokee for timber and agriculture - fortunately for us and wildlife, they were unsuccessful! The canal is wide, long and straight and although person-made, provides excellent scenery and spectacular reflections in the still water when the sky and light conditions are right. After exploring the trails to either Mizell Prairie to the north, or Monkey Lake and Chesser Prairie to the south, we backtrack on the canal to the Suwannee Canal Recreation Area. We spend tonight in the nearby town of Folkston and after a hot shower, we will go out for our final farewell dinner featuring some down home southern cooking.

Wednesday: After breakfast we'll visit the Okefenokee Wildlife Refuge headquarters, a visitor center with excellent exhibits, several foot trails, a restored homestead and a 4000 foot boardwalk with an observation tower. We will have a couple of hours there this morning before driving back to the Jacksonville airport. The drive is only about an hour and we will have you back there by 12 PM for a flight out after 1:30 PM. Unless of course, you can join us for Sea Kayaking Cumberland Island...

Cumberland Island is the most accessible of Georgia's "wild" barrier islands and wild it still is. Cumberland Island was established as a national seashore in 1973 to preserve the island's scenic, natural and historic qualities. During our trip we'll explore a mixture of island environments including a saltwater marsh, a maritime forest, and beaches along the Atlantic coast of the island. And if we're lucky, we'll get a glimpse of the Island's feral horses, left over from earlier times.

Packing List

FOOTWEAR

- 1 pair shoes for canoeing and walking. For winter neoprene paddling booties/shoes are ideal. However, you can also wear: Solomon or Keen water shoes, Teva/Chaco sandals, lightweight hiking boots, or athletic shoes. These most likely will not get wet, but you should be prepared that they will.
- 1 pair of comfortable shoes for wearing around the cabin (e.g. crocs, wool clogs, slippers)
- 2 pairs hiking socks (these should fit comfortably in your paddling shoes, you may need to wear them if the weather is cold)
- 1 pair neoprene socks (optional, but nice to wear with sandals if the weather is cold)

CLOTHING

- 1 pair comfortable, lightweight pants (light wool or Supplex/nylon material). Zip offs work well.
- 1 pair of shorts (optional)
- 2 T-shirts or short-sleeved shirts, preferably synthetic or lightweight wool
- 1 long-sleeved, lightweight shirt for protection from sun and bugs, button up is ideal
- 1 pair lightweight long underwear top and bottoms: silk, wool or synthetic equivalent (Capilene, Thermastat, MTS, or polypropylene)
- medium-weight top layer: wool shirt/pull-over or synthetic equivalent (“expedition weight” long underwear, microfleece). A fleece or wool vest can work for this layer as well.
- 1 fleece jacket
- 1 rain parka and rain pants: coated nylon or a **waterproof**/breathable fabric like Gore-tex. Some people like a a rain hat as a substitute for wearing their hood while paddling.
- Underwear/nightwear
- 1 wide-brimmed hat for sun and high fashion!
- comfortable clothes to wear around the cabin (sweats, jeans, sweater, shirt)
- 1 pair paddling gloves (padded bike gloves work well)

TOILETRIES (small everything)

- Toothbrush, toothpaste, dental floss, shampoo, contact lens paraphernalia, and sanitary supplies
- Sunscreen and lip protection with sunblock of at least SPF 15
- personal “patch kit”: Band-Aids, 1 safety pin, moleskin, , cloth athletic tape, ibuprofen, personal medications, if any. **Individuals allergic to insect bites must bring an anaphylactic kit.** Please consult your pharmacist.

ESSENTIALS

- Sunglasses (100% UV protection) w/ retention strap
- 2 one-quart water bottles or hydration system
- headlamp or flashlight with fresh batteries
- 1 daypack (lined with a garbage bag) or medium sized dry bag - large enough to hold your supplies for the day (water, snacks, raingear, extra layer, etc.)
- Insect repellent
- Bandana(s)
- Binoculars (highly recommended)

OPTIONAL

- Your favorite snack (we will also provide snacks during the day)
- Book, notebook, journal, pencil/pen
- wristwatch with an alarm or travel clock
- Ear plugs (for a good night’s sleep!)
- Playing cards
- Camera (extra battery) and film/memory card
- waterproof or neoprene paddling gloves (will be good if the weather is cold)

Notes on the Packing List

CLOTHING: Layering is the most practical and efficient method of insulating the body. Several layers of varied weight materials provide better insulation than one thick layer of clothing. Also, adding or subtracting layers allows you to adjust to the temperature at your particular level of activity. The layering procedure begins with a BASE LAYER of silk or “lightweight” synthetic long underwear and liner socks. These materials draw moisture away from the skin (this is called “wicking”) and help keep you dry and therefore warmer. Some synthetic materials that we find work well include Capilene, Thermastat, polypropylene, Driclime, Helly Hansen, and Ultrawick. Over the base layer wear a second, MEDIUM-WEIGHT layer on your upper body such as “expedition-weight” Capilene or Polartec, and wool pants or a synthetic equivalent such as Polartec or Capilene fleece. Over the second layer, add a third HEAVY-WEIGHT layer. This should be a thick material such as wool, or fleece. The fourth and final layer is called the OUTER LAYER. This layer is for protection from wind and rain. Put it on over your layers, can you still move your arms for paddling? Lastly, the rain pants. They should also be comfortable, allow enough room for your layers, and permit free movement of your legs (for example, can you crouch comfortably?).

FABRIC NAMES: There are many other patented brand names used by different manufacturers, which can make it all seem even more complicated.

Basically, they all have one thing in common: The synthetics do not absorb much water compared to cotton—thus, they continue to provide warmth when wet. The specific fabric name is not as important as having material with these qualities and having a variety of weights available to you as your layering system. They really *are* miracle fabrics. Wool is also a very good choice, especially some of the new clothing made by Ibex or Smartwool. It is 100% merino wool, keeps you warm and dry and is not itchy. It also doesn’t absorb the odors the way many synthetic materials do. You can also buy less expensive wool clothes at a second hand or Army/Navy store Cotton is not! **Wet cotton (even heavyweight sweats) will rob you of your body heat faster than if you were wearing no clothing at all.**

RAIN GEAR: This could be your most treasured clothing. We recommend a **two-piece rain suit**. Vinyl, coated nylon, or a waterproof/breathable fabric (such as Gore-Tex, HellyTech, Ultrex, E-vent, etc.) will do fine for this canoe trip. The advantage to having a waterproof/breathable rain suit is that as you paddle and work up a sweat, your body’s moisture is able to escape through the fabric to the outside. This will keep you much drier than a non-breathable rain suit (vinyl, nylon). If your rain gear is breathable it can double as your wind proof layer. We do not recommend a poncho because it flies about in the wind and lets water run down your paddling arms. Before making this important purchase, be sure that it fits you properly. It should be large enough to fit over all your layers. In particular, the hood needs to be effective. It should shield your face from the rain and turn with your head. Movement of your arms must not interfere with the hood. Partial or full-length leg zippers are useful for easily putting your rain pants on over your boots.

SHOES/BOOTS: Bring shoes or boots that can possibly get wet and we recommend ones that can protect your toes when we hike, such as Solomon or Keen water shoes. Lightweight hiking boots or athletic shoes are also an option, as are Teva/Chaco sandals (though it may be cool weather, so bring socks). Aqua socks could work well for this trip, as the hiking we do is mostly flat and short in duration, but they don’t offer as much support.

Items on your packing list can be purchased through a number of outdoor outfitters including:

Recreational Equip. Inc (REI)
800-426-4840
www.rei.com

Eastern Mountain Sports (EMS)
603-924-7231
www.ems.com

Sierra Trading Post
800-713-4534
www.SierraTradingPost.com

Also check out the websites on the Affiliate page of our website (under Resources)

Additional Trip Preparations

HELPFUL WEBSITES

<http://www.okefenokee.com/>

Okefenokee swamp home page with information about paddling, camping and alligators.

<http://www.fws.gov/okefenokee/>

US Fish and Wildlife services' home page for the Wildlife refuge. Lots of great information to get ready for your visit to the Swamp.

WEATHER

The weather in the area at this time of year is typically lovely winter weather. Highs are usually in the 60s during the day, with lows in the 40s. Rain is common at this time of year. Occasional cold fronts can cause the temperatures to drop into the 20s and it could snow. Bringing the proper clothing will add greatly to your enjoyment and your safety.

EMERGENCY CONTACT INFORMATION

The Phone number for Stephen Foster Park is **Park** (912) 637-5274. The office is open 8am to 5pm EST. The cottages do not have phones in them. It is best to leave the Adventures in Good Company office number (877/439-4042) and we will do our best to get in touch with you. Cell phone reception is spotty in the park.

CONDITIONING

Additional aerobic conditioning is unnecessary for anyone who already exercises regularly. If you don't, you will probably find that you have more energy during the trip if you start a moderate exercise program a couple of months before your trip. For example, you might start walking 3 or 4 times a week for half an hour, at a pace that is brisk enough to make you breathe deeply. Hills are good for this. Other options are working out at a health club on a stairmaster or treadmill, aerobics classes, cross country skiing or any activity that makes you breathe deeply.

This trip does include significant paddling mileage, and you will also need some shoulder and arm strength. Weight training with lightweights will be useful. Focus on building endurance rather than strength, meaning that more repetitions with light weights is preferable to fewer with heavy weights. Yoga can also be an added benefit for overall strength and stamina. Give us a call if you need more specific guidance.

RECOMMENDED PRE-TRIP READING

A Naturalist's Guide to the Okefenokee Swamp by Taylor Schoettl 2002. Describes the ecology, geology and natural history of the Okefenokee Swamp and surrounding pinelands.

Queen of the Okefenokee by Lois Barefoot Mays and Richard H. Mays, 2003. Describes the life and times of Lydia Smith who built a business empire of 20,000 acres of timber land and farms during the great depression.

Settlers of the Okefenokee: Seven Biographical Sketches by Lois Barefoot Mays, 1975; Describes the life and experiences of seven early, hard working people who settled in and around the great Okefenokee Swamp.

Paddling Okefenokee National Wildlife Refuge: A Falcon Guide. David O'Neill and Elizabeth A. Dominique. For those who like to read the trail descriptions and view the maps, along with information on the flora and fauna.

Deep in the Swamp by Donna M Bateman. This stunning children's book spotlights the flora and fauna of Okefenokee Swamp. The text is a version of the familiar poem "Over in the Meadow."

Jo Beth Sidden Mysteries, by Virginia Lanier. Jo Beth is a feisty southern feminist who trains bloodhounds and uses them to perform search-and-rescue missions in the Okefenokee. Lanier started writing at age 63, and still lives in the South Georgia wilderness with her husband at age 77.

Getting There

OUR TRAVEL AGENT

If you need assistance with making your travel plans, call Sara Schuitemaker at Scan East West Travel. Her toll-free number is 800-727-2157 and her email is sara@scaneastwest.com.

TRAVEL INSURANCE

We highly recommend travel insurance. We know that women never want to cancel their trips, and the reasons for doing so are always excellent. Occasionally it's a sudden illness; even more frequently it's the illness of someone they care about. Trip insurance at least minimizes the disappointment and expense during what is often a difficult time. In addition insurance covers the cost of lost baggage; medical expenses during your trip, including emergencies, repatriation, and evacuation; and trip delay. If you decide to purchase insurance, you can secure a policy through your own insurance company or enroll with the company we use, Travelex Insurance. Call 1-800-228-9792 or visit www.travelexinsurance.com. The location code is 20-0016.

TRAVEL

Jacksonville Airport (JAX) is served by many of the major airlines, including Continental, United, American, Delta Airlines. Depending on where you are traveling from, low cost competitors you might consider include Air Tran Airways (800/247-8726), JetBlue (800/538-2583), Song (800/221-1212), and Southwest (1-800-435-9792).

In order to make the meeting time at 11 am on the 26th, your flight needs to arrive no later than 10:30 am. You can fly out anytime after 1:30 pm on March 2.

LODGING

Depending on your connections, you may be able to fly into JAX the morning of the trip. If not, here are some possible lodging options. Prices were current at the time, but may have changed, and do not include taxes. AAA rates may be lower. Let us know if you're interested in finding someone on the trip to share a room with and we'll try to hook you up.

If you have a gambling spirit, the cheapest way to find a hotel room is to go through Priceline (www.priceline.com). When you have a choice of area, choose the airport area. All, or almost all, of the hotels in this area offer an airport shuttle. Our guides have stayed at very nice places for \$25 or \$30 a night, a bit more with service fees and taxes but still a bargain).

If you prefer to know what you're getting into, the following are a sample of the possibilities:

Hampton Inn and Suites Airport (904/ 741-4001)

13551 Airport Court

Avg Price: \$84-\$99

Amenities include: free airport shuttle, complimentary breakfast, pool, fitness facilities.

Microtel Inn & Suites Jacksonville Airport (904/741-4911)

13200 Intl Airport Blvd

Avg Price: \$55 - \$85

Amenities include: free airport shuttle, complimentary breakfast, pool, fitness facilities

Springhill Suites Jacksonville Airport (904/ 741-8002)

13550 Airport Circle

Avg Price: \$89-\$109

Amenities include: free airport shuttle, complimentary breakfast, pool, fitness facilities, and free wifi..

Getting There Continued

WHAT TO DO

1. Jacksonville Historical Center

100-B Warfside Way, Southbank Riverwalk, Jacksonville, FL 32207 · 904-398-4301

The captivating hands-on exhibits provided by this museum afford children and adults alike numerous opportunities to learn about their city's history. Displays begin with the time of Timucuan Indians and move forward through time, chronicling important events that have taken place in the Jacksonville area.

2. Jacksonville Zoo

8605 Zoo Pkwy, Jacksonville, FL 32218 · 904-757-4462

An exciting and educational place to visit, this zoo features over 800 birds in the enchanting aviary and over 160 animals representing approximately 20 species of reptiles and mammals. Enjoy the company of great apes, silverback gorillas, bonobos, chimpanzees, and siamangs. If the kids are with you, be sure to head for the petting zoo where a pinewood trail leads you to a variety of friendly animals. Before you leave, ride the Okavango Railroad and visit the gift shops.

3. Metropolitan Park

4110 Gator Bowl Dr., Jacksonville, FL 32202 · 904-630-0837

While hosting the Jacksonville Jazz Festival every year, this riverfront park turns into a hopping venue alive with live jazz. Other music concerts are held throughout the year as well. Guests enjoy the public docking space, playground, picnic areas, landscaped gardens and riverfront walk that this charming plot of nature offers. Located near ALLTEL Stadium.

4. Jacksonville Maritime Museum

1015 Museum Cir, Unit 2, Jacksonville, FL 32207 · 904-398-9011

Situated along the Southbank River Walk, this museum offers excellent displays publicizing the maritime history of Jacksonville and North Florida. In addition to an extensive collection of paintings, photos and artifacts, popular highlights include models of naval ships and an award-winning to-scale replica of the Titanic. The museum, licensed as a non-profit organization, first opened its doors to the public in 1985.

5. Museum of Science and History

1025 Museum Cir, Jacksonville, FL 32207 · 904-396-7062

Found on Jacksonville's Riverwalk, this museum provides numerous hands-on exhibits that encourage adults and children to actively learn about many different aspects of science and history. A planetarium featuring over 8,000 stars, a series "Kidspace" exhibits, and a display that illustrates life during the pre-Columbian era are among the informative exhibits offered.

6. Museum of Southern History

4304 Herschel St, Jacksonville, FL 32210 · 904-388-3574

The Antebellum South is commemorated here via memorabilia and artifacts relating to politics, medicine, local history, weapons and fashion, as well as artifacts from the Civil War. Don't miss the phenomenal 3,000-volume research library, which includes genealogical research assistance at no charge.