



Get Outdoors Florida! is a coalition promoting outdoor experiences to help Floridians have healthier lifestyles and develop an appreciation for our abundant natural resources.

For more Get Outdoors Florida! destinations and activities, visit www.getoutdoorsflorida.com

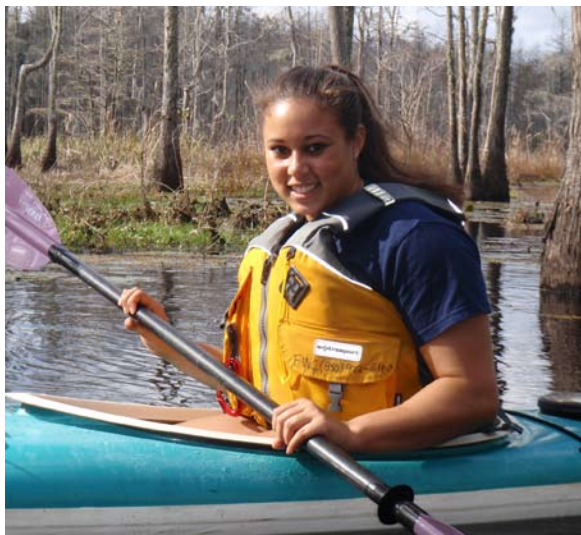
Cool Water Summer Fun

By Liz Sparks

When summer heat wraps us in a thick, steamy blanket, the idea of leaving the air conditioning can be daunting. Overcome summer inertia by inviting family and friends to join you paddling on a local spring-fed river with clear water and chilly temperatures. A visit to one of our area's many wonderful watery treasures can provide a welcome respite from the heat any time of day. If the temperature is sizzling, take a swim at the boat ramp before launching and keep comfortably cool while paddling. The Wakulla, Aucilla, St. Marks, and Wacissa Rivers are popular nearby destinations for those seeking outdoor fun guaranteed to chill the summertime blues.

Plan your trip early or late in the day when wildlife is more active and temperatures are cooler. Pack your camera - the molten colors of sunset or rising early morning mist on the water provide spectacular photo opportunities. The chorus of frogs, cicadas and birdsong provide summer theme music for a perfect outdoor adventure.

Remember to bring life jackets. Each person should wear one at all times while on the water and the law requires that children under the age of six must wear them. Life jacket technology has improved tremendously, and there are new inflatable life jackets which are comfortable. Pack plenty of ice water, sunscreen, a wide-brimmed hat, sunglasses, and a long-sleeved shirt for sun protection. Don't forget to apply sunscreen on top of feet and thighs to avoid that toasty red lobster look typical of forgetful canoeists. Freeze some fresh fruit for a snack or bring along a watermelon. No matter how much you drip and dribble, you can jump in the water after eating for easy cleanup.



Bring binoculars to get a close up look at wildlife and avoid approaching animals too closely. If they change their behavior as you approach, then you are too close and need to back off.

As Tallahassee settles in to a daily afternoon storm pattern, time your trip to end by early afternoon before the storms develop. If you get caught with lightning nearby, get off the water quickly, avoid being near tall objects, and crouch on the balls of your feet.

There are several local outfitters who offer kayaks and canoes to access our beautiful nearby rivers. Several of these outfitters also lead guided trips and provide full moon excursions, a wonderful way to enjoy a silvery summer evening. Create an unforgettable summer memory and visit one of these river treasures soon.

