



# CITRUS COUNTY FLORIDA

## ONE WEEK TRAVEL ITINERARY

Found just north of Tampa Bay and northwest of Orlando, our communities of Crystal River, Homosassa, Inverness and Floral City are easy to reach from Florida's major airports, and definitely worth the short drive! Here your family can experience endless aquatic adventures, small-town charm, and family fun beyond the bustle of theme parks and larger cities.

### **PLAN AHEAD**

Before you dive into the fun, settle into an accommodation ideal for your plans and family. Citrus County has accommodations to suit every taste—and budget. Enjoy quaint cottages or cabins to get away from it all, stay in one of many affordable hotels and motels or check into a full-service resort. And our vacation rentals offer plenty of room for large families or extended stays.

### **DAY ONE**

After breakfast, head on over to The Homosassa Springs Wildlife State Park. Experience this remarkable showcase for native Florida wildlife. The park offers visitors a rare opportunity to observe these animals, birds and plants in their natural settings. There is also an underwater observatory, known as the fishbowl, directly over the head spring of the Homosassa River where you can view hundreds of fish species and even manatees up close. Fascinating educational programs are offered daily, discussing West Indian manatees, Florida snakes, and alligators. After checking out the exhibits and scenic boardwalk, the Children's Education Center will entertain the little ones while Mom and Dad take a rest. Admission: Adults, \$13; Children 6-12, \$5; Children under 6, free.

Lunch after the park is easy as Homosassa offers several waterfront dining locations where you can take in the view while enjoying delicious, fresh caught seafood and cool off with a cold drink. Some local favorites to consider near the park include The Freezer and Crumps Landing.

After lunch, drive out to Fort Island Gulf Beach and enjoy the afternoon in the warm Gulf of Mexico water. The drive down to Fort Island Gulf beach is breath taking, with salt marshes stretching out for miles in either direction. Even though you feel as if you're out in the middle of nature, the beach had everything you need including restrooms, picnic tables, and BBQ grills. This west coast beach is perfect for an unforgettable Florida sunset so lay out the beach towels, or head over to the scenic fishing pier to watch the sun go down. You can even grab a sub at Sea Hagg Deli on your way down to the beach to enjoy while watching the sun sink down over the water.

## **DAY TWO**

Check out the charming downtown square in the City of Inverness and start your morning off right with a trip to Cattle Dog coffee Roasters for your favorite cup-O-Joe and a yummy breakfast. After you're fully caffeinated, check out one of our local bicycle rental shops and hit the road! By road we actually mean the beautiful 46-mile long stretch of the Withlacoochee State Trail that cuts through the east side of our county. Along this easy-going paved trail, you will pass amazing lake views, charming fruit stands, and tons of native woodlands.

The Withlacoochee State Trail passes straight through the Depot District, a lakefront city park featuring scenic boardwalks, a state-of-the-art playground, and regularly scheduled festivals and farmers markets. To check out festival dates, be sure to head over to our events calendar. Be sure to take a minute to step off your bike and enjoy this area.

After all that hard work, enjoy lunch downtown with a variety of options at your fingertips including fresh seafood at Stumpknockers and delicious pub food at Coaches or, if you prefer Asian flare, you can find mouthwatering authentic Korean food at Nine State Brewery, and a full menu of sushi rolls at Kawa Sushi House. It's not vacation without dessert, so be sure to save room for ice cream at one of two sweetshops downtown, Charlie's Creamery or Pinecones Ice Cream.

Round out your day with a visit to the Old Courthouse Heritage Museum for a look into the history of the area, including the rich Native American roots, and the time spent by Elvis himself at this courthouse while filming *Follow that Dream*. Many displays are geared toward and even created by kids, so it is a great family activity. Admission is free, but they accept donations for the Citrus County Historical Society.

## **DAY THREE**

Meet your captain riverside for a half-day or full-day fishing charter. All you need to bring is sunglasses, a hat, sunscreen, and lunch. Everything else is provided, including the expertise and licenses. Homosassa and Crystal River are known worldwide for the fishing adventures they provide. Use our helpful guide list to find a guide. Prices for a half-day are about \$250, and full-day charters cost about \$400 for up to four anglers. Be sure to make your reservations early!

Cruise to downtown Crystal River in the afternoon to check out some of the locally owned shops and galleries along Citrus Avenue. With everything from souvenir shops to clothing boutiques and manatee themed artwork, you are sure to find something to bring home to help you remember your trip!

After working up an appetite shopping, you can choose from one of the many restaurants located on Citrus Avenue. Steak lovers will feel right at home at Kane's Cattle Co. or, for lighter fare, check out KC Wine and Koffee Bar and enjoy a few drinks to finish off your night.

## **DAY FOUR**

Renting a pontoon boat is the perfect way to explore the natural side of Florida. The boats are simple to drive, usually hold up to 12 people and are easy on the wallet. At the mouth of the river, you can swim in the warm Gulf of Mexico saltwater. Then, at the head of the river, cool off in the 72-degree water of a crystal-clear spring. And lunch during this excursion is a breeze. You can pull right up to one of our many wonderful waterfront restaurants such as Waterfront Social or Crackers or you can pack your own. A full-day's rental is usually around \$150 which is less than admission to most theme parks. Most of the boat tour companies, marinas and resorts have rentals available.

## **DAY FIVE**

You've explored by motorized vessel. Now let's see nature from a different angle: Take a kayaking tour of the Withlacoochee or Chassahowitzka River with a guide and learn about the history of the river and its flora and fauna—all while exploring what feels like uncharted land as you travel the way the region's first Native American settlers did centuries ago. A half-day tour with an experienced guide will run between \$35 and \$55 per person and includes a kayak rental.

After your kayaking expedition, visit Copp Winery and Brewery to refuel on some of their classic pub fare, and enjoy the one-of-a-kind Old Florida brewery.

After lunch, take a break that costs absolutely nothing! Visit one of Citrus County's Parks or hike one of the Great Florida Birding Trails sites. Either way, you'll be communing with the beauty of the area while expending boundless kid energy.

## **DAY SIX**

We've saved the best for last. Today, we're going to do something you can't do anywhere else in the country—snorkel with endangered West Indian manatees. Hire a guide service to enjoy a half-day in the water with these sweet-tempered sea cows. The cost is minimal (around \$65 per person) and includes all the gear you'll need (wet suit, mask, snorkel). A manatee encounter in Citrus County is a fun and unforgettable way to meet these gentle giants up close.

## **FREE PLANNING ASSISTANCE**

Be sure to stop by and say hello at the Visitors Center on US 19 in Crystal River. For more information on any of these fantastic activities, contact the Citrus County Visitors & Convention Bureau at 352-794-5506 for free assistance. We look forward to helping you discover all that The Water Lover's Florida has to offer!