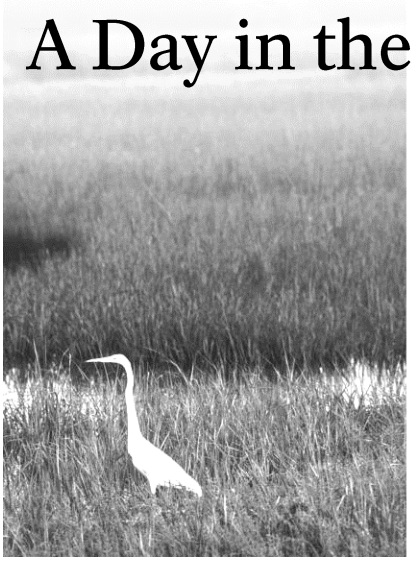
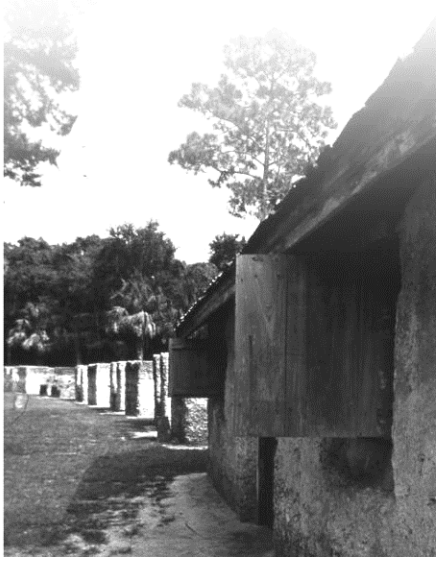
A Day in the Park





About This Guide

Whether you're interested in learning about history or the environment, going on a hike, a bike ride or a kayak trip, exploring this area's natural beauty, the Timucuan Preserve provides a day full of activity. This guide will lead you to several sites to visit and things to do for people with a variety of interests. See the last page for contact information.

These stops and activities are catered to those who have an entire day (9:00 am to 5:00 pm) to explore the Preserve. Activities within the Preserve are free with the exception of the entrance fee for Little Talbot Island State Park and any equipment rentals from concessioners. Most Preserve areas are open daily with the exception of Thanksgiving Day, December 25, and New Years Day.

Note: *There is no food available at any of the park sites. Picnicking is permitted. Picnic facilities are available at Fort Caroline and the Ribault Club. Dogs are permitted in outdoor areas and must be on a 6-foot leash.*

Stop 1
Fort Caroline National Memorial

Time: About 1.5 to 2 hours. Park operating hours 9:00 am to 5:00 pm daily.

- **Visitor Center**
  Inside the Preserve Visitor Center are exhibits about the natural history, environment, European exploration and settlement, and the Timucua Indians (including the only owl totem found east of the Mississippi River). The visitor center also houses a small bookstore.

  Remember to pick up a map of the Preserve in the Visitor Center.

- **Timucuan Hut and Shell Mound**
  This exhibit can be found along the walk to the fort exhibit.

- **The Fort Exhibit**
  The constructed fort exhibit provides a glimpse into what the actual French fort may have looked like. The exhibit serves as a memorial to the French who attempted to establish a colony in the New World.

- **For Kids – Optional Extension**
  Ask the ranger at the desk in the visitor center how you can become a Junior Ranger for the Timucuan Preserve.

- **Hiking – Optional Extension**
  Walk the Hammock Trail (1 mile). The Hammock Trail is a circular trail that explores several different Florida ecosystems, with many explanatory signposts along the way.

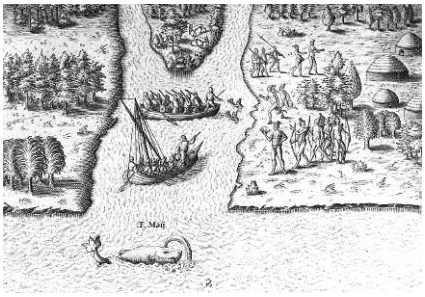
  This is the first of five trail systems included in this guide. Take a moment now and read through the rest of this booklet to decide which trails you might want to hike. Look for "Hiking – Optional Extension" designations. Approximate trail lengths are given for each trail.

- **Hiking – Optional Extension**
  Spanish Pond – Visitors can travel the boardwalk trail, see the pond and read exhibits. Spanish Pond is located directly across from Fort Caroline National Memorial. Length of boardwalk round-trip is 3/4 mile. (Note: this trail is not a loop. You must backtrack to return to your car.)

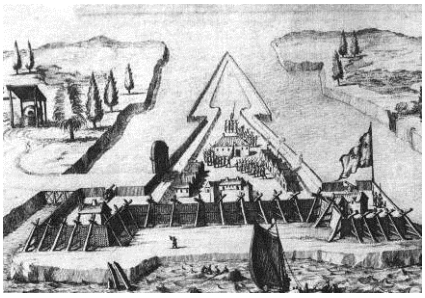
What is the Timucuan Preserve?

This 46,000-acre Preserve is operated under a partnership agreement by the National Park Service, Florida State Park System, the City of Jacksonville, and more than 300 private and corporate landowners. It was created as a National Park unit in 1988 and is named for the Timucua, the native people who lived along the waterways in northeast Florida.

Much of the Preserve is undeveloped salt marsh accessible only by boat, but there are several sites in the Preserve open to visitors wishing to learn more about this area's natural and cultural history. The ecosystems within the Timucuan Preserve are among the most productive in the world, and provide a glimpse of what "Old Florida" was like.



An encounter between the French Huguenots and the Timucua on the River of May



Fort de la Caroline, built near the mouth of the River of May (now the St. Johns River)

Tabby slave cabins at Kingsley Plantation.

Stop 2
Theodore Roosevelt Area (Hiking – Optional Extension)

Time: About one hour. Park operating hours 9:00 am to sunset daily. Hiking trails and signs only – no Visitor Center. Restrooms available.

The Theodore Roosevelt Area offers visitors five different Florida ecosystems in one hike. Visitors can experience miles of thickly wooded peaceful nature trails, vast grassland that supports both water and land animals, ancient piles of discarded oyster shells which yield clues about an extinct culture, and the legacy of preservation bequeathed to all by this property's last private owner, Willie Browne.

The trailhead is located off Mount Pleasant Road. Pick up a trail map from the bulletin board before heading out.

- **Birding Platform** – There is a bird observation platform that looks out over Round Marsh located at the end of the Willie Browne Trail. From the parking lot to the platform and back is about 1.5 miles. (Note: this trail is not a loop. You must backtrack to return to your car.)

Crossing the St. Johns River

The remaining tour stops are north of the St. Johns River. The St. Johns River, originally called the River of May by French explorer Jean Ribault, has been crucial to the peoples inhabiting this area for thousands of years. It is also one of the rivers in the world that flows north.

There are two ways to cross the river. One is to cross via the St. Johns River ferry. This ferry carries vehicles and pedestrians across the river between Mayport and Fort George Island. The ferry runs daily every thirty minutes. There is a fee. Once across, turn right onto A1A.

The river can also be crossed via the Napoleon Bonaparte Broward Bridge, (I-295 North), then east (right) on Heckscher Drive.

It takes approximately 45 minutes to reach the next stop, the Ribault Club on Fort George Island.

Stop 3
The Ribault Club
Fort George Island Visitor Center

Time: 45 minutes to one hour. Park operating hours 9:00 am to 5:00 pm, Wednesday through Sunday.

The Ribault Club houses the Fort George Island Visitor Center which is open Wednesday through Sunday and is part of the Talbot Islands State Parks. The building is a recently-restored 1920s golf and country club. Inside are interactive exhibits about Fort George Island's natural and cultural history. Spend some time looking at the exhibits inside. Then walk outside and enjoy the peace and quiet of the island. Sit on a rocking chair or a bench and relax. This building is available for weddings and other events, but the exhibits remain open during normal park hours.

The Ribault Club today as managed by the Florida Park Service

Stop 3 (Continued)
The Ribault Club
Fort George Island Visitor Center

Ask at the front desk to see video clips of life at the Ribault Club in the 1920s, 1930s and 1940s.

There is a primitive boat ramp at the Ribault Club from which you can launch small boats, canoes and kayaks.

- **Hiking – Optional Extension**
  A 3.5-mile nature trail loop on the island travels through manmade and natural landscapes. This is also a bike trail. Begins at the Ribault Club.

- **Segways – Optional Extension**
  See Fort George Island from a Segway. Call Kayak Amelia to reserve a place for their unique tour of island historic and natural attractions. Call for information at 904-251-0016. There is a fee.

- **Virtual Tour – Optional Extension**
  Rainy day? Want to do some driving? Check out the Virtual Ranger Tour of the Saturiwa Trail (the road that circles Fort George Island). Insert the tour CD into your car's radio and learn about this island's history. The CD is available at Little Talbot Island State Park, Kelly Seahorse Ranch, and the Ribault Club. The tour lasts about 1 hour and begins and ends at the Ribault Club. Text of this tour is also available.

Time: 1.5 hours. Park operating hours 9:00 am to 5:00 pm daily.

Interactive exhibits inside the Ribault Club.

Stop 4
Kingsley Plantation

Kingsley Plantation is a historic Sea Island cotton plantation. Visitors explore this place where enslaved men, women and children lived and worked more than 200 years ago. The site includes the oldest standing plantation house in Florida and a unique semicircular row of tabby slave cabins.

The plantation grounds are set up to be self-guiding. Interpretive exhibits can be viewed throughout the grounds, at the slave quarters, inside the barn, and in the first floor of the Kitchen House. Make sure to leave plenty of time for exploring the grounds and viewing the exhibits.

The main plantation house at Kingsley Plantation, built in 1798.

Other available features include an interpretive garden, a self-guided Grounds Tour brochure, and a bookstore and visitor contact station. In the bookstore, ask to see and touch a sample of Sea Island cotton.

The main plantation house is currently closed and undergoing structural work during the week. Please call for weekend house tour reservations.

- **For Kids – Optional Extension**
  Ask a ranger how you can become a Junior Ranger. Children of all ages can complete a workbook and earn the Timucuan Preserve Junior Ranger badge.

- **Audio Tour – Optional Extension**
  A free audio tour is avaliable everyday until 3:30 pm. It takes an hour to complete and is entitled "The Lion's Storyteller".

Kayaking in the Timucuan Preserve

- **Optional Extension**

Kayaking is a great way to experience the Timucuan Preserve. You can see plants and animals in the salt marshes and waterways that cannot be seen from land.

There are many kayak routes in the Preserve north of the St. Johns River. Kayaking in this area requires a map and a knowledge of local tides. Tide forecasts may be found in local newspapers or on NOAA weather radio.

Kayakers should bring drinking water, sunglasses, insect repellent, and a survival and first aid kit.

Kayak Amelia is the kayak concessioner for the state parks within the Preserve. They provide rental kayaks and guided tours. *Kayak Amelia* is located near the bridge to Big Talbot Island on A1A.

Launch sites include Cedar Point, the Ribault Club, Huguenot Park, Alamacani Boat Ramp, and Sisters Creek Park Boat Ramp.

A detailed kayaking brochure is available at Preserve park sites.

Stop 5
Talbot Islands State Parks

Time: Open. Park operating hours 8:00 am to sundown daily, including holidays.

There are seven state parks that together are referred to as the Talbot Islands State Parks. Many of these parks are within the Timucuan Preserve. Included here are three of these park sites. Depending on how much time you have, you can visit one or all three.

- **Little Talbot Island State Park** is one of the few remaining undeveloped barrier islands in Northeast Florida. Maritime forests, desert-like dunes, and undisturbed salt marshes on the western side of the island allow hours of nature study and relaxation. It is a good spot for wildlife and bird watching. Other popular activities are hiking the trail loop, fishing, swimming, canoeing, and surfing. The park has camping facilities. Beachside picnic pavilions are available for visitors to the park. There is an entrance fee. The park is located on the east side of A1A just north of Fort George Island.

- **Big Talbot Island State Park** is primarily a natural preserve, a premier location for nature study, bird-watching, and photography. The park's famous Blackrock Beach is covered with the skeletons of live oak and cedar trees that once grew near the ocean. Visitors can picnic at the Bluffs access overlooking the water, then take a stroll down the Shoreline Trail to walk the beach or sunbathe. There is a fee. The park is located on A1A just south of Amelia Island.

- **Pumpkin Hill Creek Preserve State Park** protects one of the largest contiguous areas of coastal uplands remaining in Duval County. Equestrians, hikers, and off-road bicyclists can explore five miles of multi-use trails. The park has a canoe/kayak launch accessible by a 500 foot portage to the marshes. To reach Pumpkin Hill, head west on Heckshere Drive, turn north on New Berlin Road, then east on Cedar Point Drive. Turn north on Pumpkin Hill Road. Trailhead parking is approximately one mile on the left. There is no fee.

- **Programs – Optional Extension**

Visit the state parks' website or call for the schedule of ranger programs.

Boardwalk at Little Talbot Island State Park. Photograph courtesy of the Florida Park Service

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National Park Service
U.S. Department of the Interior

Timucuan Ecological and Historic Preserve
13165 Mount Pleasant Road
Jacksonville, FL 32225

Phone

Visitor Information
904-641-7155 –Fort Caroline
904-251-3537-Kingsley Plantation

Preserve Administration
904-221-5568

Website
www.nps.gov/timu

Take only photographs and leave only footprints – do not disturb or remove any natural or cultural objects.

The National Park Service cares for the special places saved by the American people so that all may experience our heritage.

Contact Information for Other Park Areas and State Park Concessioners within the Preserve

Kayak Amelia – At Long Island Outfitters
www.kayakamelia.com
904-251-0016
1-888-30-KAYAK

Kelly Seahorse Ranch
www.kellyranchinc.com
904-491-5166

Talbot Islands State Parks
www.floridastateparks.org/littletalbotisland/
www.floridastateparks.org/bigtalbotisland/
www.floridastateparks.org/pumpkinhill/
904-251-2320 Big and Little Talbot Islands
904-696-5980 Pumpkin Hill Creek Preserve

St. Johns River Ferry
www.stjohnsriverferry.com
904-241-9969

Cape Leisure –Ribault Club Events
904-251-2802