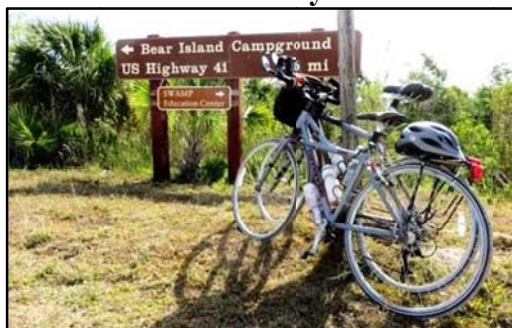


## BIG CYPRESS On / Off-Road Cycle Tour



Just north and east of Everglades City is the Big Cypress National Preserve. With the completion of the Tamiami Trail in 1928 anyone who could afford a Model-T would travel across the swamp between Naples and Miami. Today, over one million people explore the Preserve. Cycling the Everglades is the best way to truly enjoy the beauty, the wildlife, and the serenity of this area -- both on and off road.

From Everglades City cycle 4 miles north on SR29 to Carnestown (named for Barron Collier's wife Juliet Gordon Carnes and son Samuel Carnes Collier). Continue past the intersection at US41 for approximately another 4 miles alongside a canal. Turning right onto Wagon Wheel, your off-road journey on a hard packed dirt and gravel road will begin through Big Cypress. It may be very dusty and too sandy for hybrids (fat tires are recommended on many of the spur roads off the Tamiami Trail). Along this section there are many cabbage palm and cypress trees with only a few open spaces. After 2.7 miles at the end of Wagon Wheel you have the option of turning left and ride another 18 miles off-road to Bear Island or turning right on Birdon Rd for 4½ miles back to US41. The view along this section is beautiful with wide-open prairies, gators in the canal and pine forests.

Back on the Tamiami Trail (US41) take a left for .5 mile to the smallest Post Office in the United States. In bygone days when tomatoes were farmed here, this building was just a tiny shed; a fire destroyed the Ochopee general store in 1953 and the shed was converted into a Post Office which is still in use today. Along the Tamiami Trail, you will be traveling on shoulders so take caution at the narrow bridges.

In another half mile you'll discover the Skunk Ape Headquarters located at Trail Lakes Campgrounds (<http://www.skunkape.biz/>). You can't miss it with the large likeness of a panther and a skunk ape in front. You may want to pick up a few Everglades and Native American souvenirs in the gift shop and see their wild animal exhibit with its 22-foot python and talkative parrots. If you're in the Everglades overnight, check out the cottages and campsites on website: (<http://www.evergladescamping.net/>).

Continuing east on US41 for two miles the next stop (and our turn around area) is the H.P. Williams Roadside Park (on the north side) which has a boardwalk along a canal to spot the alligators and wildlife as well as picnic tables and restrooms. This small roadside rest area is named for Homer P. Williams, an engineer who worked for Barron Collier during the construction of Tamiami Trail in the 1920s.

After 20 miles you'll be ready to treat yourself to a cold drink and lunch. Cycle back 2½ miles back and on the north side of the Trail is the popular Joanie's Blue Crab Café offering "Swamp Combo:" 2 frog legs, gator nuggets, crab cake, Indian fry bread with salsa and a side of coleslaw. Raiford Starke may be playing the guitar and singing his Everglades country music. Call (239) 695-2682 or visit <http://joaniesbluecrabcafe.com> for up-to-date hours and days.

Continuing west in just a little over 1½ miles stop by the Big Cypress Swamp Welcome Center on the south side (be careful of traffic crossing the Tamiami Trail). Here you will learn about the natural and cultural history of the area. Facilities include a bookstore, gift shop, and public restrooms. Park rangers will provide information about the Preserve; visit <https://www.nps.gov/bicy/planyourvisit/big-cypress-swamp-welcome-center.htm>.

Back on US41 for another .7 miles you'll find one of Florida's oldest tourist attractions: Wooten's has a live alligator show and an animal sanctuary housing panthers, a tiger, otters, snakes, and over 100 alligators. Visit their website at [www.wootenseverglades.com](http://www.wootenseverglades.com).

As you ride back to the Welcome Center in Carnestown, look for more gators along the canal; the muhly grass is beautiful during the wet season. In two miles you'll arrive back at the corner of US41 and SR29, turn left for another four miles back to Everglades City.

Everglades City is only a half hour drive from East Naples or Marco Island; it is an old Florida town purchased from the Storter family by Barron Collier in the 1920s. There is a wide range of accommodations and restaurants (during the summer months many cafés close so check online at [www.mulletrapper.com](http://www.mulletrapper.com) for a complete list).

Visitors to the area enjoy visiting the original Collier County Court House (now City Hall), the Museum of the Everglades, the famous Rod & Gun Club, and the Smallwood Store & Museum in Chokoloskee as well as participating in the many outdoor recreational activities.

For more information about hiking and cycling in the Everglades, download a map at the Friends of the River of Grass Greenway website: <https://evergladesrogg.org/tamiami-trail/>.

## Trails along U.S. 41

There are many on and off-road options for hiking and bicycling through the various state and national parks.

### Collier-Seminole State Park

An original stand of native royal palm trees, coexisting with one of the world's largest mangrove swamps, distinguishes this park; it is also the site of the historic Tamiami Trail "Walking Dredge".

<http://alturl.com/s6nof>

### Ten Thousand Islands NWR

Established in 1996, this refuge protects important mangrove and marsh habitats and is the ultimate interface where land gradually gives way to the sea.

<http://alturl.com/dncvm>

### Picayune Strand State Forest

Comprised of 78,000 acres, this is Florida's 4<sup>th</sup> largest state forest and named after the largest of several cypress strands that once occupied its eastern portion.

<http://alturl.com/ezsm8>

### Fakahatchee Strand Preserve State Park

Swamps, prairies, tropical hardwood hammocks and pine rock lands with royal palms and bald cypress trees share the forest canopy with native orchids and bromeliad species.

<http://alturl.com/j9ckk>

### Big Cypress National Preserve

Big Cypress contains a mixture of tropical and temperate plant communities that harbor many protected species, including the elusive Florida panther.

<http://alturl.com/ma366>

### Everglades National Park

The Park is dominated by the world renowned "River of Grass" freshwater prairies, tree islands, and many rare and endangered species.

<http://alturl.com/n2q73>

## Big Cypress from Everglades City Cycle Tour

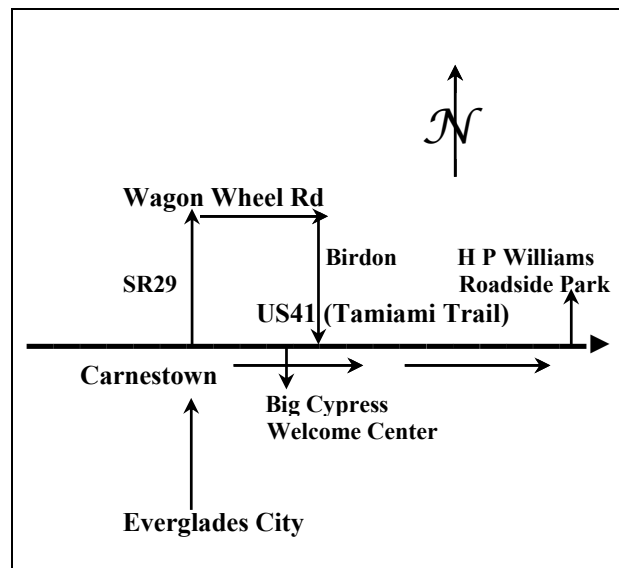
Distance: 14 to 30 miles

Bicycle Type: fat tire / hybrid

Road Conditions: paved road  
with shoulders and dirt road

**CAUTION: narrow bridges on US41**

Level: intermediate  
experience with heavy traffic



*This map illustrates a bike route (along the Tamiami Trail) through the Everglades area. While every effort is made to provide accurate and timely information, keep in mind the bike routes are intended for informational purposes only. No guarantee is made regarding the bike route safety because conditions change. In addition, we cannot guarantee anyone's safety by conforming to safety tips. Please use good judgment and be responsible for your own safety at all times.*

6/1/2017

## Big Cypress Cycle Tour from Everglades City



### Friends of the River of Grass Greenway

*FROGG, a non-profit organization, is committed to establishing the safe use by the general public of US41 across the Everglades between Naples and Miami, focusing on safety and environmental education and stewardship for those hiking, walking, and cycling through south Florida and the Everglades.*

[www.evergladesrogg.org](http://www.evergladesrogg.org)

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