

FAKAHATCHEE On / Off-Road Cycle Tour



Fakahatchee Strand offers several opportunities for both hiking and bicycling through its beautiful preserve. The first option is to cycle west on the Tamiami Trail (US41) to the Big Cypress Bend Boardwalk; the second is to ride up SR29 to the Fakahatchee Headquarters in Copeland and cycle off-road on Janes Scenic Drive where there are more off-road options.

BIG CYPRESS BEND BOARDWALK

Just north and west of Everglades City is the Fakahatchee Strand Preserve State Park. 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 McLeod Park in Everglades City cycle 4 miles north on SR29 to Carnestown (named for Barron Collier's wife Juliet Gordon Carnes and son Samuel Carnes Collier). Take a left on the Tamiami Trail (US41). Along this route, you will be traveling on shoulders with narrow bridges so take caution. As you ride along the canal, look for gators.

For the first 1½ mile there will be two airboat facilities and 5 miles from Carnestown there is a rest area with picnic tables.

Another two miles is one of the most popular hikes along the Tamiami Trail - the Big Cypress Bend Boardwalk in the Fakahatchee Strand Preserve State Park. An Indian Village with Native American crafts and gift shop is located at the entrance to the Fakahatchee and worth a visit.

Cycling is not allowed on the Boardwalk, but take time to hike through the cypress trees to the alligator pond at the end. You may see wildlife along the way with an eagle's nest high in the cypress dome. The area is a bird-watcher's paradise with red-bellied and pileated woodpeckers, catbirds, osprey, red-shouldered hawks, swallow-tailed kites, blue heron, egrets and wood storks. Future plans include an expansion of the Boardwalk with a new parking area, an interpretative center, shell pathways and an elevated walkway. For more information visit <http://orchidswamp.org/plan-your-visit/the-boardwalk>.

As you ride back to the Welcome Center in Carnestown, enjoy the open prairie land with nesting birds. Culverts under the road have provided more water to the south side of the Tamiami Trail, allowing for wading birds to return to the area. Look for roseate spoonbills, egrets, wood stork, ibis and herons. The round trip distance from Carnestown to the Boardwalk is 13 miles. Turn right for another 4 miles back to Everglades City to enjoy lunch.

JANES SCENIC DRIVE

At Carnestown cross over the Tamiami Trail (US41) and head north on SR29. In just 2½ miles, take the first left to Janes Drive.

After stopping at the Ranger Station (\$2 bicycle entrance fee), continue riding through the marl prairie to reach the sheltered canopy.

One of the best things about Janes Scenic Drive is that you have several off-road options.

The Fakahatchee is home to 44 species of native orchids and 14 species of native bromeliads as well as Florida black bears, white tail deer, alligators, and the endangered panthers to name a few of the wildlife. You will see a variety of resident and migratory birds and butterflies as you cycle along this drive. The Fakahatchee Strand is 20 miles long and just 3 to 5 miles wide, covers 85,000 acres and is the only place on earth where Royal Palms and Cypress trees occur together - a truly unique ecosystem.

Janes Scenic Drive is an old railway bed constructed in the 1940s to log out the old-growth Bald Cypress trees used during WWII to build flight decks for aircraft carriers. Smaller trails (called spurs) are also accessible for hiking and biking; the first is just 4.5 miles from the Ranger Station, known as west main or Gate 7 and two miles farther north is east main or Gate 12. Here you'll ride 4-miles round trip on a path leading to a private cabin, the "Fakahatchee Hilton", and adjacent to a lake full of gators. As with all wildlife, treat them with respect and give them a lot of space. For more information about Janes Scenic Drive, see <http://orchidswamp.org/plan-your-visit/janes-scenic-drive>.

Everglades City which is only a half hour drive from East Naples or Marco Island; it is an old Florida town with wide range of accommodations and restaurants (check the local newspaper www.mulletrapper.com).

Visitors to the area enjoy touring 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 cycling in the Everglades, visit www.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 4th 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

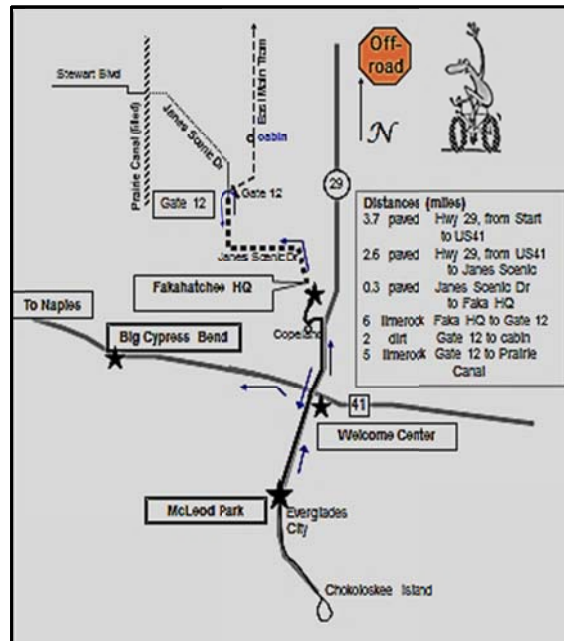
The Park is dominated by the world renowned "River of Grass" freshwater prairies, tree islands, and many rare and endangered species.

<http://alturl.com/n2q73>

Fakahatchee Strand Preserve State Park Cycle Tour

Distance: Big Cypress Bend
22 miles round trip
Janes Scenic Drive
27 to 31 miles round trip

Bicycle Type: fat tire or hybrid
Road Conditions: paved / dirt road
CAUTION: narrow bridges on US41
Level: beginner / intermediate
experience with 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

Fakahatchee 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

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