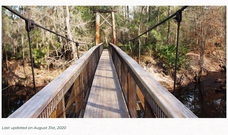
Trek Through Cool Trails: Top 5 Family-Friendly and Dog-Friendly Shaded Hikes



Last updated on August 31st, 2020

Spending time in nature has been proven to benefit the mind, body and spirit, so round up the kids, find the dog, or go solo and reacquaint yourself with the outdoors on Alachua County's nature trails.

To get you started, we have compiled a list of shaded, family and dog-friendly nature trails for all skill levels. From the Lubber park in the middle of Gainesville to the natural wonders at Florida's First state park, there is truly something for everyone.

Remember to bring water and bug spray, and binoculars if you have them to spot wildlife. Take time to reconnect with nature, it's good for you!

Click here to check out more parks and trails to explore in Alachua County.

#gainesville #alachuacounty #floridahikes #floridestatepark #getoutside #thisisfloryoo

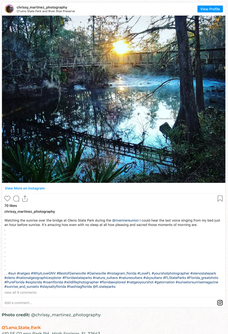


Photo credit: @chrissy_martinez_photography

O'Leno State Park

410 SE O'Leno Park Rd., High Springs, FL 32643

O'Leno State Park and the neighboring River Rise Preserve State Park have over 20 miles of hiking trails and are known for having some of the most beautiful and diverse hiking in Florida. O'Leno's Limestone Trail is a 17.1 mile loop that has a reputation for being the prettiest hike in the park. Take the mile and a half walk on the River Trail and get the opportunity to cross over the Santa Fe River on their wooden suspension bridge. Make sure to stop and relax at one of the pavilions located along the water's edge. Admission is $5 per vehicle.

Insider Tip: Book a cabin to get the true wilderness experience. And make sure to bring your fishing pole.

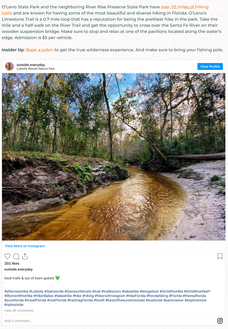


Photo credit: @outside.everyday

Lubbly Weeds

335 NW 5th Ave., Gainesville, FL 32607

Lubbly Weeds has a 2.7 mile loop trail tucked away in the middle of Gainesville. Although so close to all the city amenities, it feels so far away. Lubbly has well-defined trails and boardwalks, with the bonus of the Hogtown Creek water feature.

Parking: Small, secluded lot located on the east side of 5th Street, between University Ave. and 8th Street.

Insider Tip: Take your time and look up, this stretch of woods is known to be one of the best birding spots in the county.

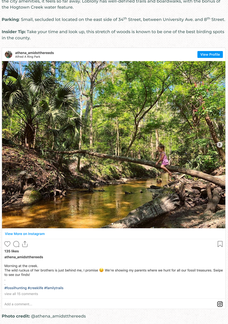


Photo credit: @athena_amidstthetreeds

Alfred A. Ring Park

1801 NW 23rd Blvd, Gainesville, FL 32605

Located in the heart of Gainesville, Ring Park is a scenic 1.5 mile loop trail that winds alongside Hogtown Creek. Visit the scenic overlook to see where the clear water of Glen Springs mixes with the tannic water of Hogtown Creek. And make sure to visit the koi pond, and allow enough time to relax on a bench and take in nature.

Parking: Park in the Elks Lodge parking lot. The trailhead is on the southwest side of the parking lot.

Insider tip: Pick up a beef or veggie patty from Caribbean Spice (4 minutes away) to enjoy at the pavilion or on a park bench.

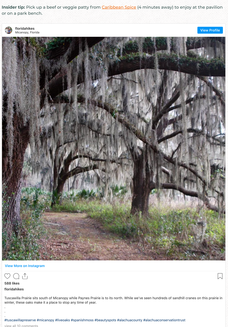


Photo credit: @florinkatrina

Tuscawilla Preserve

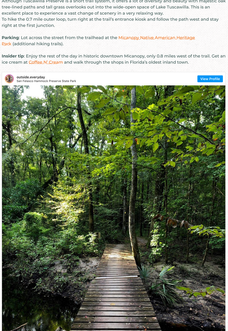
406 SE Tuscawilla Road, Micanopy, FL 32667

Although Tuscawilla Preserve is a short trail system, it offers a lot of diversity and beauty with majestic oak tree-lined paths and tall grass overlooks out into the wide-open space of Lake Tuscawilla. This is an excellent place to experience a vast change of scenery in a very relaxing way.

Start at the Lake Trail loop, turn right at the trail's entrance kiosk and follow the path west and stay right at the first junction.

Parking: Lot across the street from the trailhead at the Micanopy Native American Heritage Park (additional hiking trails).

Insider tip: Enjoy the rest of the day in historic downtown Micanopy, only 0.8 miles west of the trail. Get an ice cream at Coffee N' Cream and walk through the shops in Florida's oldest inland town.



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San Felasco Hammock Preserve State Park

11101 Millhopper Road, Gainesville, FL 32653

San Felasco Hammock Preserve Park has several hiking trails in a variety of lengths and skill levels. For beginners, or someone looking to hike a shorter trail, try Moonshine Creek Trail, a 1.2 mile loop. This trail starts off on a wide pine-forested path then transitions into a narrower winding trail surrounded by hickory, gum, and magnolia trees. Click here to view the map of all San Felasco trails. Admission is $4 per vehicle.

Parking: Lot located on State Road 232 at 11101 Millhopper Road.

Insider tip: Keep an eye out for sinkholes and wildlife like Whitetail Deer.

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