Get Off 10!

Explore 15 Scenic Drives through Northwest Florida’s Beauty, Bounty, Culture, and Secret Places

Exit #5 120-130 South
Florida’s *RiverWay South* Country

Discover the land, people, and unforgettable places shaped by the Apalachicola and Choctawhatchee Rivers
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Additional Photographs were provided by: RiverWay South Member Counties, Northwest Florida Water Management District, Andy Wraithmell and Mark Keiser, Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission, and Eleanor Dietrich, Florida Wildflower Foundation
Drive Snapshot
Wolves, waterfalls, springs, and a lake with traces of Satsuma and Tung Oil

Distance/Time
84 miles/Allow 3-5 hours for the tour and more time to explore on horseback or kayak

Main Attractions
1. *Falling Waters State Park
3. Seacrest Wolf Preserve
4. Possum Monument
6. *Pitt Springs Recreation Area

Worth the Stop
2. Hard Labor Creek Plantation
5. Sunshine Riding Trails
7. Compass Lake Lodge & Olle’s Restaurant
8. Green Gate Olive Grove U-Pick
9. Barfield’s Country Store

Water Access
Econfina Creek Canoe Livery-Econfina River
Compass Lake

Trails
Econfina Creek Wildlife/Water Management Area
Florida National Scenic Trail
Spanish Heritage Trail
Great Florida Birding & Wildlife Trail (*)

Information Resources
Take Exit 120 to SR 77 South. To visit **Falling Waters State Park**, turn left in 1.1 miles onto State Park Road and follow it into the State Park. Continue south on SR 77 and turn right in 2.6 miles/mile 3.7 onto Clayton Road. **The Lodge at Hard Labor Creek Plantation** is at mile 6, around a curve on the left. Continue to SR 277 at mile 7.8 and turn right/north to access the **Hard Labor Creek Plantation Off-Road Park** on the right at mile 9.

To continue the tour to **Seacrest Wolf Preserve**, turn around and travel south of SR 277. At mile 12, bear left just after a small bridge onto CR 278 A/Bonnet Pond Road - a winding scenic drive past farms and fields. Cross Pioneer Road and continue to mile 18.6. Seacrest Wolf Preserve is at 3449 Bonnet Pond Road inside the Oaks Farm on the left. The metal gates with howling wolves are spectacular. Return north on 278 A to Pioneer Road at mile 21.5 and turn right towards Wausau, which was founded in 1889. At mile 24.8, turn right/south at the intersection with SR 77; the **Possum Monument** is on the left at mile 24.9. Continue south on SR 77. To visit **Sunshine Riding Trails**, turn left at mile 38.1 onto Rolling Pines Road and continue 2.5 miles. The stable is on the right.
Continue south of SR 77 and at the intersection with SR 20 at mile 40.8, turn left/east to visit resources around Econfina Creek. At mile 45.5, the **Econfina Creek Wildlife Management Area** is on the right with access to **Wolf Pond Equestrian Trail** and the **Florida National Scenic Trail**. Strickland Road is at mile 49. Turn left onto this dirt road to visit the **Econfina Creek Canoe Livery** as well as the multiple recreational resources of the **Econfina Creek Water Management Area**. Return east on US 20. A must stop is the newly opened **Pitt and Sylvan Springs Recreation Area**, located 0.1 mile on the left after Strickland Road, just before the Econfina Creek Bridge. Continue the tour heading east on SR 20.

At mile 56.4, turn left onto US 231 and continue north for 14.3 miles/mile 70.7. Turn right onto Lakepoint Road and left onto Compass Lake Drive at mile 71.8. **The Compass Lake Lodge and Olle’s Restaurant** is on the right at mile 72.3. To visit the **Green Gate Olive Grove U-Pick** (make sure to contact the owner in advance) return to Compass Lake Drive, then turn right at the second dirt road (mile 73.2), Nortek Blvd., and continue 1.3 miles. The farm is on the left. Return to Compass Lake Drive and US 231 North. The fresh produce/fruit stand, **Barfield Country Store**, is on the right at mile 79.6. I-10 Exit 130 is at mile 84.

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**The Great Florida Birding and Wildlife Trail (GFBWT)** is a program of the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission. At its core is a network of 515 sites throughout Florida selected for their excellent birdwatching, wildlife viewing, or educational opportunities. This 2,000-mile, self-guided highway trail is designed to conserve and enhance Florida’s wildlife habitats by promoting birding and wildlife viewing activities, conservation education, and economic opportunity.
Falling Waters State Park

Huge trees and fern-covered sinkholes line Sink Hole Trail, the boardwalk that leads visitors to Florida's highest waterfall. Falling Waters Sink is a 100-foot deep, 20-foot wide cylindrical pit into which flows a small stream that drops 73 feet to the bottom of the sink. The water’s final destination remains unknown. The park provides travelers with a quiet, serene stop on their journey. Visitors can see beautiful native and migrating butterflies in the butterfly garden, take a dip in the lake, or have a family picnic. Hikers can experience the verdant, gently sloping landscape of North Florida. Park rangers host interpretive programs in the amphitheater. Full-facility

Due to their constant year-round temperatures and stable discharges, Florida's springs support a variety of plant life, including ancient Cypress Trees, rare Orchids and Lilies, and lush underwater carpets of Eel Grass. Collectively, these plant communities nourish a freshwater food web that is among the most unique in all of North America.
campsites nestled in a shady pine forest provide the perfect excuse for an overnight stay at Falling Waters.

**Seacrest Wolf Preserve**

[Seacrestwolfpreserve.org](http://Seacrestwolfpreserve.org)

This is truly an unforgettable experience! Enter the large natural habitat enclosure that is home to Gray, Arctic, and British Columbia wolves, and be greeted by the pack. Nowhere else can one experience these majestic creatures one-on-one, up close, and personal. One can even test his or her howling skills and see how the pack responds. Founded in 1999 by Cynthia and Wayne Watkins, the work of Seacrest Wolf Preserve began as a quiet conservation effort and has evolved through the years into the largest wolf preserve in the Southeastern United States. This 430-acre facility is totally dedicated to wolf conservation and preservation.

Public tours are on Saturday, from 1:00 - 4:00 PM. The facility includes a gift shop, restrooms, and concession exits.

Gray Wolves range in color from grizzled gray or black to all-white. Once common throughout North America, most were killed by the mid-1930s. Today there are an estimated 7,000 - 11,200 wolves in Alaska and over 5,000 in the lower 48 states: Idaho, Michigan, Minnesota, Montana, Wisconsin, and Wyoming. Mexican wolves are found in New Mexico and Arizona. Thanks to the reintroduction of wolves in 1995, Yellowstone National Park is one of the most favored places to see and hear wolves in their native habitat.
stand. In addition to the wolves, visitors can have small animal encounters with Arctic, Silver, and Grey Fox, Coyotes, Raccoons, Skunks, and more. Group and VIP tours can be made by appointment. Visit the website to see clothing restrictions.

**Possum Monument**

On the side of State Highway 77 in Wausau stands what may well be Florida’s most unique roadside memorial - the Possum Monument. Unveiled in August of 1982, the inscription reads: Erected in grateful recognition of the role the North American possum, a magnificent survivor of the marsupial family predating the ages of the mastodon and the dinosaur, has played in furnishing both food and fur for the early settlers and their successors. Their presence here has provided a source of nutritious and flavorful food in normal times and has been an important aid to human survival in times of distress and critical need. The 1982 session of the Florida Legislature further recognized the possum by passing a joint
resolution proclaiming the first Saturday in August as Possum Day in the Great State of Florida.

**Pitt Springs Recreation Area**
Pitt and Sylvan Springs are just two of many springs along Econfina Creek and among the most popular. The 10-acre recreation area, managed by the Northwest Florida Water Management District, is in a natural setting of native forest that includes trails and access to other springs. The District recently completed restoration activities and recreational improvements, including an extensive trail and boardwalk system. One of the trails/boardwalks leads from Pitt Spring to the Sylvan Spring area, and includes an overlook and a tubing put-in dock. A tubing take-out dock has been constructed at the confluence of Pitt Spring run and Econfina Creek. Swimmers can access the water by stairway. Covered picnic pavilions and restroom are available in the uplands around Pitt Spring.
Hard Labor Creek Plantation
Hardlaborcreekoffroadpark.com, Floridaquail.com

This scenic Southern pinewoods plantation features a comfortable lodge overlooking an 85-acre lake, traditional southern quail hunting, bass fishing, archery, wildlife viewing, hiking, skeet shooting, and more. In addition, Hard Labor Creek has an Off Road Park for dirt bikes and ATVs/4-wheelers along with camping, RV hook-ups with showers, private flush toilets, and dressing areas. Contact the websites for details and fees.

Sunshine Riding Trails
Sunshineridingtrails.com

Enjoy horseback riding along 10,000 acres of forest trails through Florida’s sandhills astride beautiful Tennessee Walking Horses. This family-owned business offer rides from one to four hours as well as overnight camping packages.

Compass Lake Lodge & Olle’s
Restaurant, Compass-lake.com, Ollesrestaurant.com

Compass Lake offers a charming lodge with rustic guest cottages that overlook the 600-acre natural
spring-fed lake. The facility features a complete equestrian center with stables, horses, riding trails, and instruction, along with boats, a dock, a championship disc golf course, pool, and lake-side pavilion. Guests can enjoy Compass Lodge boats to explore the lake, waterski, fish, and swim. A special treat is in store for those who stop by the restaurant where Olle and Riina create European-inspired dishes and outrageous desserts.

**Green Gate Olive Grove U-Pick**

[Greengateolivegrove.com](http://Greengateolivegrove.com)

Planted in 1999, Don Mueller’s olive grove is the first meaningful producer of olives and olive oil from its own trees in Florida. He produces table olives and olive oil the old-fashioned way. Many varieties of olives are planted with long vernalization periods, to enable the trees to remain dormant during spring cold snaps. The Green Gate Olive Grove has three fully mature varieties of olives and approximately 400 trees. Harvests have always been a fun time for those who U-Pick. Call in advance (850-596-4963) to assure access.
Prior to World War I, most of land around Compass Lake was owned by The German American Lumber Company, which was confiscated by the U.S. government during the war. After the timber was cut, Satsuma Orange groves were planted and two packing houses built. By the late 30’s, Tung Oil, a strategic item for defense, became the principal crop. All ammunition was “coated” and ships “painted” with Tung Oil products. In 1948, a Tung Oil Mill was operating and crops shipped north by rail. By 1968, Tung Oil production closed, due to increased foreign competition. The Growers then pooled their lands for development, now known as Compass Lake in the Hills.

Barfield’s Country Store
1738 US 231
Customers have a unique opportunity to travel back in time and can’t resist the old-fashioned country store atmosphere, offering local-sourced fresh fruits and produce, jams, peanuts, souvenirs, candy, cold sodas, toys, souvenirs, and beach supplies. The store is open 7 days a week.

Water Access

Econfina Creek Canoe Livery
Econfina River
Canoeeconfinacreek.net
Spend a day along this popular 7.5 mile trip. Cabbage palms drape over the water’s edge along with blooming wildflowers scattering the banks with color during this journey. Steep, fern-covered limestone walls prevail along the paddle where the creek slices into the ancient limestone of the Floridan Aquifer. Enjoy the lush sub-tropical vegetation, unique honeycomb limestone banks, and six major spring areas that combine to make this Florida’s most beautiful canoe trail! Debbie Gay, her husband Cliff, and their family run the livery, which offers canoe/kayak rentals and shuttle service.
They are open 7 days a week. So, pack a lunch and bring your snorkel. Econfina Creek Canoe Livery is located one mile north of SR 20, eight miles east of Hwy. 77. Take Strickland Road to Porter Pond Road in Youngstown, Florida. Call 850-722-9032 for more information.

**Compass Lake**
Access is provided from Compass Lake Lodge.

**Trails**

**Econfina Creek Wildlife Management Area**
The Northwest Florida Water Management District owns 43,770 acres along Econfina Creek, including 2,155 acres along the Sand Hill Lakes. A portion of the Florida National Scenic Trail crosses the property and can be accessed off Strickland Road. The District developed the Pine Ridge Equestrian Campground and saddle clubs developed equestrian trails (yellow or blue blazes) to help riders stay on designated trails. The Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission (FWC) manages the area as the Econfina Creek Wildlife Management Area. Motorized vehicles and bikes are allowed on designated roads, which are dirt/graded, but ATV’s are prohibited. Activities include hiking, biking, horseback riding, wildlife viewing, camping, picnicking, restrooms, boating, fishing, canoe launch, canoeing, and seasonal hunting.
RiverWay South
Contributing Partners

West Florida Electric
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The power of human connections
A publication of RiverWay South Apalachicola Choctawhatchee, a dynamic river-based rural tourism organization serving Calhoun, Franklin, Gadsden, Holmes, Jackson, Walton, and Washington Counties.

#Explore Our Florida
RWSFL.org

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