

Apalachicola River Blueway

“The Apalachicola River is one of the most beautiful streams of North America, formed at the northern border of Florida by the junction of the Chattahoutchie and the Flint River; it crosses, making quite numerous turns, a region of great fertility, and empties near the town of Apalachicola.” The Comte de Castelnau, 1837

This early description of the 105-mile Apalachicola River still holds true today. From its formation at the Jim Woodruff Dam near the Georgia border, the river is undammed and largely wild, flowing past large tracts of public and protected lands. High bluffs, abundant wildlife, and rare animals and plants make this river among the most unique in Florida, and at the right water conditions, large sandbars make for ideal primitive campsites. The following data should provide information about the basic access points and other amenities found along the river that can contribute to a successful paddling trip.

Please note that the river can have the fastest current in the state, so it is not recommended for beginners. Mile markers along the shores, decreasing from 106 at the dam to 0 in Apalachicola, provide helpful navigational guides. Barge traffic and dredging are largely a thing of the past, but buoys, training dikes and large sand mounds are still visible. Numerous side streams, many of which are listed here, are worthy of exploration. Devon Creek, for example, (off Owl Creek) is a scenic watery tunnel beneath a thick canopy of cypress or tupelo gum trees.

One recommended side trip is to explore the Chipola River Dead Lakes area. This is a wide swampy area of both dead and living cypress trees originally formed by a naturally occurring levee that backed up the Chipola River. The area has stunning primeval beauty. From the Apalachicola River, it can be reached by taking the Chipola River cutoff just after Gaskin Park in Wewahitchka. After three miles, take a right onto the main channel of the Chipola River. A compass and/or GPS is recommended if venturing away from the main channel. GPS coordinates are provided in the data book if paddlers wish to stay at the Dead Lakes Sportsman’s Lodge (along the Chipola Cutoff just before the Chipola River on the right) or at the Dead Lakes Park Campground (along a side channel west of the main Dead Lakes area). The campground is about 6 miles from Gaskin Park.

While most of the ramps, campsites and points of interest in the data book can be easily spotted along the main Apalachicola River channel, GPS is recommended for finding the entrance to Owl Creek (mile 22) if you want to paddle the 1.5 miles to the Hickory Landing Campground.

There are two creek entrances just before Owl Creek—Kennedy and Brushy Creeks—that can cause confusion.

Most sandbars are accessible for camping/rest stops and are within the public domain, although access to land beyond the ordinary high water mark might not be allowed. Please respect private property rights and regulations pertaining to lands managed by Torreya State Park and the Nature Conservancy where water access is not allowed.

Water Levels: During low to moderate water levels, sandbars for rest stops and primitive campsites are numerous until Sand Mountain (mile 36), whereupon they are less prevalent as the ever-widening river flows past a more swampy floodplain. Most sandbars are under water during high water conditions. The USGS river gauge at Chattahoochee should be below 44 feet for best paddling and camping conditions:

http://waterdata.usgs.gov/fl/nwis/uv/?site_no=02358001&PARAMeter_cd=00065,00060; the

USGS gauge near Sumatra should be below 5.5 feet for best paddling and camping conditions:

http://waterdata.usgs.gov/fl/nwis/uv/?site_no=02359170&PARAMeter_cd=00065,00060.

For more information about the river and paddling, we recommend the following websites:

Northwest Florida Water Management District:

<http://www.nfwmd.state.fl.us/recreation/apalachicolariver.html>

Apalachicola Paddling Trails System in lower Apalachicola Basin:

http://myfwc.com/RECREATION/WMASites_ApalachicolaRiver_paddling.htm

Recommended gear and safety equipment:

http://www.dep.state.fl.us/gwt/paddling/Segments/Equip_list.htm

Trip tips and safety information:

http://www.dep.state.fl.us/gwt/paddling/Segments/Tips_Safety.htm

Wildlife viewing tips:

http://myfwc.com/recreation/View_Info_index.htm

Apalachicola River Paddling Data Book

If paddling downstream, the east side of the river would be on your left and the west side on your right.

PC = Primitive campsite

POI = Point of Interest/landmark

C = Campground

LA = Laundromat

W = Water

L = Lodging

I = Internet computer

PO = Post Office

R = Restaurant

S = Shower

G = medium/lg supermarkets

B = Bathroom

PI = Put-In

g = convenience/camp stores

| <i>River Mile #</i> | <i>Type of amenity</i> | <i>GPS # (decimal-degrees)</i> | <i>Directions</i> |
|---------------------|---|------------------------------------|--|
| 106 | POI—Jim Woodruff Dam | N30.7088 W84.8639 | Approach dam with caution |
| 105 | PI, B, W, C—Clyde Hopkins Park; R and g on Highway 90 .3 miles from landing; nearest motel 1 mile east on Hwy 90; PO .6 miles east. | N30.7007 W84.8575 | In Chattahoochee, turn south off Highway 90 onto River Landing Road just east of the Apalachicola River Bridge. The road will wind down to the landing after a short distance. |
| 105 | C, L, R, B, W, g—future site of Chattahoochee Landings | N30.6913 W84.8614 | East side of river; look for dock and sign. |
| 103 | POI, PI—Abandoned Jackson County Port | N30.6749 W84.8773 | West side of river; marked by large wood loading dock and pilings. Ramp on side channel before port. |
| 103 | POI—Scholz Power Plant | N30.6687 W84.8863 | West side of river; smokestacks, plant, intake canal and outflow visible |
| 100 | POI—I-10 Bridge | N30.6336 W84.9043 | |
| 100 | PI—Aspalaga Ramp | N30.6248 W84.9030 | East side of river |
| 98 | POI, PC (small site)—Aspalaga blue | N30.6141 | West side of river; can hike to spring |

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| | springs run | W84.9247 | where a large alligator lives |
| 96 | PC—high sandbar | N30.5925 W84.9462 | east side of river |
| 95 | POI—Gregory House/Torreya State Park | N30.5786 W84.9494 | East side of river; historic house and narrow clearing in front of house visible |
| 94 | PI, PC—Ocheesee Landing | N30.5820 W84.9651 | West side of river |
| 90 | POI—Sweetwater Creek | N30.5253 W84.9883 | East side of river; good flow |
| 89 | PI, PC—Red's Landing | N30.5197 W84.9942 | West side of river along canal. Great river view! |
| 88 | PI, PC—Harry Donar Landing | N30.5152 W84.9914 | East side of river |
| 84 | PC—Alum Bluff low sandbar | N30.4713 W84.9878 | West side of river—may not be visible at high water; Alum Bluff across river—no legal access |
| 80 | PI, B, W—Bristol Landing; L, R, PO about .6 miles from access road to Hwy 20; G another .6 east on Hwy 20. | N30.4403 W84.9865 | East side of river |
| 79 | POI—Hwy 20 Bridge | N30.4371 W85.0010 | |
| 78 | POI—Sutton Lake and Bayou | N30.4323 W85.0218 | West side of river |
| 77 | PI—Neal Landing | N30.4235 W85.0324 | West side of river |
| 77 | PC—long high sandbar | N30.4125 W85.0286 | East side of river. Another sandbar .5 on west side and at mile 74 on east side. |
| 71 | POI—Old River | N30.3785 W85.0333 | West side of river |
| 63 | PI, B, W, PC—Estifinulga County Park | N30.3083 | East side of river, camping allowed; large sandbar across river is also a good |

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| | | W85.0400 | primitive campsite. If this one is under water, a higher site is a quarter mile downstream on east side. |
| 58 | POI—Mary Slough/Lake Iamonia | N30.2729 W85.0631 | West side of river; potential side trip |
| 55 | PC—high sandbar | N30.2481 W85.0796 | east side of river |
| 47 | PC—high sandbar | N30.1780 W85.1361 | east side of river |
| 45 | PI—Iola Landing | N30.1629 W85.1412 | West side of river a short ways up slough |
| 43 | POI—Florida River | N30.1434 W85.1310 | East side of river |
| 42 | PI, B, W—Gaskin Park, Wewahitchka | N30.1318 W85.1423 | West side or river |
| 41 | POI—Chipola Cutoff | N30.1289 W85.1466 | West side of river. It is a total of almost 6 miles to Dead Lakes Campground. |
| 41A | L—Dead Lakes Sportsman's Lodge | N30.1270 W85.1744 | 3 miles up Chipola Cutoff on right bank just before Chipola River (850-639-5051) |
| 41B | POI—side channel entrance to Dead Lakes Park Campground | N30.1418 W85.1768 | Left side of main channel; large cypress marked with ribbons and reflectors |
| 41C | C, W, B, PI—Dead Lakes Park Campground | N30.1360 W85.1993 | Keep right in side channel but avoid first slough on right; about 1.5 miles to campground ramp. Secure kayaks and walk to campground. First-come, first serve for camping, although capacity has never been a problem. |
| 39 | PC—high sandbar | N30.1141 W85.1431 | East side of river; another sandbar about .5 miles on west. |
| 36 | POI—Sand Mountain | N30.0926 W85.1531 | West side of river; largest of the spoil disposal sites from dredging |

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| 35 | POI—River Styx | N30.0871 W85.1364 | East side of river |
| 29 | POI—Battle Bend | N30.0176 W85.1003 | East side of river |
| 26 | POI—Chipola River | N30.0125 W85.0885 | West side of river |
| 26 | POI—Kennedy Creek | N30.0045 W85.0623 | East side of river |
| 24 | POI—Brushy Creek | N29.9902 W85.0405 | East side of river |
| 22 | POI—Owl Creek | N29.9719 W85.0246 | East side of river; leads 1.5 miles to Hickory Landing Campground. Scenic creek worth exploring along with Devon Creek (N29.9799 W85.0186), which branches off to the south. |
| 22A | C, PI, W, B—Hickory Landing Campground | N29.9884 W85.0141 | 1.5 miles up Owl Creek on right |
| 19 | POI, B—Ft. Gadsden Historic Site | N29.9383 W85.0122 | East side of river; site of 1816 battle between United States and free blacks, runaway slaves and Seminole Indians. |
| 15 | POI, PI, PC—Bloody Bluff Landing | N29.8733 W85.0109 | East side of river; site of another 1816 battle between American soldiers and blacks and Indians. |
| 14 | PC—high sandbar | N29.8634 W85.0149 | West side of river |
| 13 | POI—Humphreys Slough | N29.8536 W85.0209 | East side of river; part of Apalachicola Paddling Trails System (FWC) |
| 12 | POI—Brothers River | N29.8453 W85.0330 | West side of river |
| 10 | POI—St. Marks River | N29.8243 W85.0204 | East side of river; empties into East Bay |

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| 6 | POI—Jackson River | N29.7790 W85.0505 | West side of river; leads to Lake Wimico |
| 4 | PI—Box-R Wildlife Management Area | N29.7684 W85.0433 | West side of river; limited hours |
| 4 | POI—Acorn lake Creek | N29.7660 W85.0291 | East side of river; part of Apalachicola Paddling Trails System (FWC) |
| 0 | PI—Apalachicola Battery Park; R, L, G nearby in downtown. | N29.7235 W84.9819 | Hug western shore; just past Hwy 98 Bridge, turn right into canal to landing |

Emergency Contacts for Apalachicola River region

Police/Medical emergencies: 911

Medical 24 Hour Emergency Services:

| County | Hospital | Phone & Address |
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| Calhoun | Calhoun Liberty Hospital | 20370 North East Burns Avenue Blountstown, FL 32424 |
| Franklin | Weems Memorial Hospital | 135 Avenue G Apalachicola, FL 32320 850-653-8853 |
| Jackson | Jackson Hospital | 4250 Hospital Dr Marianna, FL, 32446 850-526-2200 |
| Gadsden | Capital Regional Medical Ctr | 23186 Blue Star Hwy, Quincy, FL 32351 850-875-6000 |
| Gulf | Sacred Heart Hospital | 3801 E Hwy 98 Port St Joe, 32456 850-229-5600 |

Law Enforcement:

Franklin County Sheriff: 850-670-8500

Gulf County Sheriff: 850-227-1115

Calhoun County Sheriff: 850-674-5049

Liberty County Sheriff: 850-643-2235

Gadsden County Sheriff: 850-627-9233

Jackson County Sheriff: 850-482-9624

Report wildlife violations: Florida Fish & Wildlife Conservation Commission Hotline: 1-888-404-3922 or dial #FWC or *FWC on cell phone