

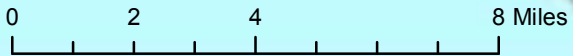


Florida Designated Paddling Trails
Wacissa River

Map 1
Thomas City

Map 2

- Designated Paddling Trail
- Wetlands
- Water
- Designated Paddling Trail Index



Wacissa River Paddling Trail Map 1



TRAM RD

Wacissa

259

Thomas City

Limestone

LIMESTONE RD

GAMBLE RD

PINHOOK RD

WACISSA SPRINGS RD

WALKER SPRING

59

Headwaters of the Wacissa River



Access Point 1: Wacissa Springs
N: 30.3402 W: -83.9911

Big Blue Spring
N: 30.3278 W: -83.9848

BRITTLE CAMP RD

Big Blue Spring

N: 30.3278 W: -83.9848

GRADE 31

JEFFERSON

GRADE 35

CALICO HILL RD

MAGNOLIA BOG RD

FLATROCK RD

BIG ISLAND RD

GRADE 33

NASTY BLOCK RD

SAWDUST PILE RD

Calico Landing
N: 30.3060 W: -83.9822

Aucilla Wildlife Management Area

WILLIAM'S CAMP RD

MAGNOLIA BOG RD

GRADE 34

GRADE 25

TOOLE'S HAMMOCK RD

APALACHEE GRADE

GRADE 26

GRADE 19 1/2

0 0.5 1 2 Miles

Wacissa River Paddling Trail



Canoe/Kayak Launch



Restrooms



Florida Conservation Lands



Wetlands

Wacissa River Paddling Trail Map 2



Welaunee Landing
N: 30.2343 W: -83.9754

Hells Half Acre

WELAUNE LANDING RD

Cow Creek

ONEAL TRAIL

Middle Aucilla Conservation Area

Access Point 2: Goose Pasture Rec Area
N: 30.2031 W: -83.9692

Main River Channel
N: 30.2018 W: -83.9713

Goose Pasture
GOOSE PASTURE RD



Wacissa Conservation Area

Aucilla Wildlife Management Area

JEFFERSON

Aucilla River

Slave Canal Entrance
N: 30.1816 W: -83.9682

SPUR RD

TAYLOR

POWELL HAMMOCK GRADE

Access Point 3: Nutall Rise Landing
N: 30.1475 W: -83.9689

AUCILLA LANDING RD



Nutall Rise

Buckhorn

Snipe Island Unit



- Wacissa River Paddling Trail
- Camping
- Canoe/Kayak Launch
- Restrooms
- Florida Conservation Lands
- Wetlands

Wacissa River Paddling Trail Trip Planning

Overview: Spring-fed and rich in wildlife, the Wacissa River has lured paddlers for thousands of years, beginning with Florida's earliest Native Americans and their dugout canoes. The river begins as a wide marshy waterway, ideal for beginners, but the current quickens as the river narrows in the middle stretch. Wading birds, alligators, otters, and various raptors can often be spotted. The lower Wacissa spreads out into several braids through a swamp called Hell's Half Acre. Paddlers must take care to find the entrance to the Slave Canal in order to paddle to the take-out at Nutall Rise on the Aucilla River.

Counties: Jefferson

Nearest towns: Wacissa, Monticello,
Tallahassee

Trip length: 15 Miles

Mileage: Mile 0—Wacissa Springs
Mile 10—Goose Pasture Recreation Area
Mile 15—Nutall Rise Landing

*The provided mileage data is approximate (rounded to the nearest 0.5 mile).

Difficulty: Easy (upper section) to Moderate (middle and lower)

Skill level: Beginner to Intermediate

Access Points

Access Point 1 Put-in: Wacissa

Nearest town to put-in: Wacissa

Miles from put-in: 1

Directions to put-in: From town of Wacissa, take SR 59 south. When SR 59 turns west, continue straight ahead until the road dead ends in the park.

Access Point 2 Put-in: Goose Pasture Recreation Area

Nearest town to put-in: Wacissa

Miles from put-in: 30

Directions to put-in: From the town of Wacissa, take SR 59 fourteen miles south to US 98. Turn left (east) onto US 98 and travel for about 8.5 miles, turning left onto the third road (Powell Hammock Grade) after the Aucilla River Bridge. Take this road north past a limerock mine for about 4 total miles. Turn left onto a graded limestone road and follow signs to Goose Pasture another 3.7 miles.

Access Point 3 Take-out: Nutall Rise

Nearest town to take-out: Wacissa

Miles from take-out: 22

Directions to take-out: From town of Wacissa, take SR 59 fourteen miles south to US 98. Turn left (east), onto US 98 and travel 6 miles, turning left onto the first

graded road after the Aucilla River Bridge. In less than a quarter mile, the landing will be on the left.

Driving distance from put-in to take-out: About 22 miles

Topo maps (USGS quads): Wacissa, Nutall Rise

Gazeteer page: 51

Outfitters within 20 miles of trail:

Blue Water Scuba (850)656-3483 (Tallahassee)

Wilderness Way (850) 877-7200 (Wakulla Station)
<http://www.thewildernessway.net/>.

Shuttle service offered: Call outfitters

USGS link (water level info): <http://waterdata.usgs.gov/fl/nwis/uv?02326550>

Break / Lunch areas: Goose Pasture, Calico Landing, Welaunee Landing (see Notes)

Camping options: Camping is free at Goose Pasture on a first-come, first-serve basis and there is also a gated group campsite just south of Goose Pasture which may be used free of charge for groups. Call the Suwannee River Water Management District at (386)-362-1001 or 1-800-226-1066 (Florida only) to get the gate combination and permission to use the group facility. Both camps are closed during the general gun hunting season from mid-November through mid-January.

Area Lodging:

Tallahassee:

<http://www.visittallahassee.com/places-to-stay/accomodations-hotels/>.

Monticello/Jefferson County (bed and breakfasts)

<http://monticellojeffersonfl.com/members.cfm>

Perry/Taylor County:

http://www.taylorcountychamber.com/index.php?option=com_mtree&task=listcats&cat_id=77&Itemid=130.

Wakulla County:

<http://wakullacountychamber.com/business-directory/categories/sub/?id=28&cat=Hotels%20%26%20Campgrounds>.

Food/Beverage restrictions: None

What to Expect on the river:

Tidal influence: None

Pull-overs: Can be numerous on the Slave Canal

Low branches: Possible on the Slave Canal

Narrow water: Possible on the Slave Canal with low water

Shallow water: Possible on the Slave Canal with low water levels

Strong currents: Possible strong currents if the water level is high when paddling upstream on the Aucilla River to the take-out at Nutall Rise

Rocks: Yes

Houses: Very few at the start of the river, and at the take-out at Nutall Rise

Shoals: One small 'spillway' sill to cross at old dam site on the Wacissa about five miles below the headsprings.

Tight turns: No

Open water: No

Springs: There are numerous springs on the Wacissa but many can be choked with vegetation during the warm months.

Potable water sources: No

Wildlife: Abundant birds and wildlife: limpkin, various heron species, ibis, moorhen, anhinga, alligators, turtles, snakes.

Natural communities: Outstanding scenery with floodplain forest, river marsh, springs.

Portages: Variable number of pull-overs on the Slave Canal.

Swimming: The Wacissa spring head is a popular swimming spot. Big Blue Spring, a mile south on the river on the east side (river left) is also a popular swimming spot.

Motorboats: There can be heavy motorboat use on weekends and holidays. Airboats also use the river, mostly on the upper stretch of the Wacissa

Expect at parking Wacissa Springs:

- **Parking fee:** None
- **Bathrooms:** Portable toilets
- **Hours of operation (gates close):** Not gated
- **Camping:** No
- **Camping fees:** No
- **Crowds:** Can be crowded weekends and holidays
- **Boat Ramp:** Yes

- **Potable water source:** No
- **Canoe/kayak launch:** Use boat launch

Expect at parking at Goose Pasture:

- **Parking fee:** None
- **Bathrooms:** Portable toilets
- **Hours of operation (gates close):** Not gated
- **Camping:** Primitive camping is allowed all year, except during the general gun hunting season at Goose Pasture. For more information contact the District at (386)-362-1001 or 1- 800-226-1066 (Florida only).
- **Camping fees:** None
- **Crowds:** Can be busy holidays and weekends
- **Boat Ramp:** Concrete
- **Potable water source:** None
- **Canoe/kayak launch:** Use boat ramp

Expect at parking at Goose Pasture group camp:

- **Parking fee:** None
- **Bathrooms:** None, walk to Goose Pasture camp nearby for portable toilets
- **Hours of operation (gates always locked):** Call the Suwannee River Water Management District at (386)-362-1001 or 1-800-226-1066 (Florida only). for gate combination and permission to camp
- **Camping:** Primitive camping with covered picnic shelter and large grill
- **Camping fees:** None, but you must call the SRWMD to get gate combination and permission
- **Crowds:** No
- **Boat Ramp:** None
- **Potable water source:**
- **Canoe/kayak launch:** Launch from bank

Expect at parking at Nutall Rise:

- **Parking fee:** None
- **Bathrooms:** Portable toilet
- **Hours of operation (gates close):** Not gated
- **Camping:** None
- **Camping fees:** N/A
- **Crowds:** No
- **Boat Ramp:** Concrete
- **Potable water source:** No
- **Canoe/kayak launch:** Use boat ramp

Cultural and historical features along the trail:

Wacissa is a Timucuan Indian name and its meaning has been lost.

For several miles below Goose Pasture, the Wacissa diffuses into several braids. It re-forms again just before flowing into a long sinkhole known as Half Mile Rise, part of the Aucilla River chain of sinks. The Wacissa Slave Canal was constructed in the 1850s using slave labor in an attempt to connect the Wacissa to the lower Aucilla River so cotton barges could be floated to the Gulf. It largely followed a small natural

stream. The canal scheme didn't work well as the canal was too shallow, and after the Civil War it was abandoned for more efficient railroads. The hard edges are gone, and somehow the decades of rain, wind and water did not fill in the canal. Except for some boulders along the banks you'd never suspect it was not a completely natural waterway.

Notes:

The Wacissa River is one of Florida's wildest and diverse rivers, with numerous springs and abundant wading birds. The upper river can become crowded with boats and paddlecraft on weekends; the lower river tends to be quieter.

Two remote public landings are found along the Wacissa River between the headsprings and Goose Pasture, but access roads may require an all terrain vehicle. Nevertheless, they can be good rest stops. The first is Calico Landing on river right about 2.5 miles below the headsprings (GPS point: N30.3060 W83.9822). The second landing is Welaunee Landing along a side channel on river left almost eight miles below the headsprings (GPS point: N30.2343 W83.9754).

The Wacissa River ends in a confusing braided marsh area and paddlers must take care to find the entrance to the Slave Canal to be able to continue to the take-out at Nutall Rise on the Aucilla River. When leaving Goose Pasture, head straight across the river to the opposite bank and look for an opening on the right bank that looks clogged with aquatic plants. There may or may not be a sign posted there depending on if vandals remove it (GPS point: N30.2018 W83.9713). Continue to bear right. The waterway will open up after a short distance and paddling will become easy in a wider channel. Continue to watch for the Slave Canal opening on the right bank, about 1.5 miles downstream from Goose Pasture. You will know you are in the correct waterway if you see limestone rocks piled along the banks within the first 0.25 miles. Again, a sign may or may not be present at the entrance but there is red blazing on several trees at the entrance. (GPS point: N30.1816 W83.9682) If you paddle more than .25 miles on what you think is the Slave Canal and do not see limestone rocks piled along the edges – turn around! The waterways in this area can be extremely confusing and many paddlers have become lost in the swamp.

Several snags that require pull-overs are likely on the Slave Canal, depending on water levels. Severe storm events often result in many more trees blocking the channel. Consult with local outfitters about current conditions.

At the trip's end the Slave Canal merges with the Aucilla River just north of the US 98 bridge and one must paddle upstream (north) on the Aucilla for a short segment to reach the take-out. The total distance between Goose Pasture and the take out at Nutall Rise is about 5 miles. A high or rising tide will make the last stretch of the canal easier to paddle. For best paddling conditions in the canal and lower Wacissa River, median water levels should be around 7.5 feet at the USGS gauge at Nutall Rise: <http://waterdata.usgs.gov/fl/nwis/uv?02326550>.

The Florida Trail passes through this area with a popular segment of the trail running along the beautiful Aucilla River and sinks with its unusual geological formations.

You can order a more detailed guide to the Aucilla, Wacissa and Econfinia rivers through the Wildlife Foundation of Florida website:

[http://shop.wildlifeflorida.org/default.tpl?pageID=1&page=full&cart=1307990394206368&--eqskudatarq=AWE BOOK GUIDE.](http://shop.wildlifeflorida.org/default.tpl?pageID=1&page=full&cart=1307990394206368&--eqskudatarq=AWE BOOK GUIDE)