



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



MALOT LANDING RD

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

GRADE 35

JEFFERSON

CALICO HILL RD

MAGNOLIA BOG RD

FLAT ROCK RD

BIG ISLAND RD

SAWDUST PILE RD

Calico Landing
N: 30.3060 W: -83.9822

Aucilla Wildlife Management Area

GRADE 34

GRADE 25

GRADE 26

TOOLE'S HAMMOCK RD

APALACHEE GRADE

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

N

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

Aucilla Wildlife Management Area

Goose Pasture
GOOSE PASTURE RD



Wacissa
Conservation Area

Slave Canal Entrance
N: 30.1816 W: -83.9682

SPUR RD

Aucilla River

TAYLOR

POWELL HAMMOCK GRADE

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

AUCILLA LANDING RD

98

Nutall Rise

Snipe Island Unit

Buckhorn

0 0.5 1 2 Miles

Wacissa River Paddling Trail



Camping



Canoe/Kayak Launch



Restrooms



Florida Conservation Lands



Wetlands

BOUNDARY RD

WESTERN SLOUGHS RD



Wacissa River Paddling Trail Guide

The Waterway

The Wacissa River is one of Florida's wildest and most diverse rivers, with numerous springs, clear water and abundant wading birds. The river is a magnet for wildlife and a recreation hub for swimmers, snorkelers, birders, nature photographers, boaters and anglers. This well-loved river offers rewarding excursions for beginning paddlers or families with children. The upper river can become crowded with boats and airboats on weekends; the lower river tends to be quieter. To avoid crowds, paddle during North Florida's pleasant winter months or plan your trip during weekdays.

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.

The limpkin, now absent from many of Florida's rivers because of poor water quality and habitat loss, is still found on the Wacissa. Apple snails are this wading bird's main food source and clusters of the snail's pink, pearly eggs cling to aquatic plants and tree trunks along the water's edge. In the spring, zephyr lilies and wild irises brighten the landscape. In late summer, scores of swallow-tailed kites gather in the cypress along the river before their migration to South America for the winter. Dozens of wading birds hunt small fishes and frogs at the water's edge. Eagles, wood ducks, coots and mergansers are commonly spotted in the cool months. Alligators are plentiful all year.

The Paddling Experience

The 15-mile long Wacissa River Paddling Trail begins as a wide marshy waterway, ideal for beginners for 10 miles downstream to Goose Pasture. Popular Big Blue Spring is only a mile downstream from the put-in and where the majority of paddlers go for a swim and then return to the county park. The 5 miles from Goose Pasture to Nutall Rise through the Slave Canal should be attempted by experienced paddlers only. Paddlers must be prepared to haul boats over numerous snags on the Slave Canal and take care to find the entrance to it in order to paddle to the take-out at Nutall Rise, a short distance upstream on the Aucilla River. For best paddling conditions in the Slave Canal and lower Wacissa River, median [water levels](#) should be around 7.5 feet at the USGS gauge at Nutall Rise. Order a detailed guide to the Aucilla, Wacissa and Econfinia rivers through the [Fish & Wildlife Foundation of Florida website](#).

Access Points

#1, Start of the trail, Wacissa Springs County Park



The headsprings are located at the Wacissa Springs County Park, a busy spot on weekends. The river may



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be crowded for the first mile or so down to Big Blue Spring, a favorite swimming hole. To experience the river's solitude and serenity, plan to visit on a weekday or during the pleasant winter months. Two remote public landings are found along the Wacissa River between the headsprings and Goose Pasture that can be good rest stops. The first is Calico Landing on river right about 2.5 miles below the headsprings (GPS N30.3060 W-83.9822). The second landing is Welaunee Landing along a side channel on river left almost eight miles below the headsprings (GPS N30.2343, W-83.9754). *From town of Wacissa, take SR 59 south. When SR 59 turns west, continue straight ahead until the road dead ends in the park.*

#2, Mile 10, Goose Pasture Recreation Area



Goose Pasture makes a great base camp for a weekend of exploration and good rest stop for a picnic on the way to the Slave Canal. There is a soft launch area in front of the campground for hand launching boats only. 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 W-83.9682). 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. *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.*

#3, Mile 15, End of the trail, Nutall Rise

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 way 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.

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.

Outfitters and Shuttle Service

[Wacissa River Canoe & Kayak Rentals](#), (850) 997-5023 or (850) 545-2895

[Jesse's Canoe & Kayak Rental](#), (850) 766-1250

[Harry Smith Outdoors](#) – 850-559-3400



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Mix up your adventure and take a hike along a popular segment of the [Florida National Scenic Trail](#). There is a kiosk and limited parking as the trail crosses Goose Pasture Road. Heading north from the kiosk, the Aucilla River Trail is draped along a picturesque portion of the river's east bank. The Aucilla Sinks Trail traces the river's mysterious disappearing act south of Goose Pasture Road. Sink holes reveal the underground course of the ink-black Aucilla River, framed by graceful palms in a rugged wilderness landscape. Orange blazes mark the tree-lined trail, making it easy for hikers to explore this geologic wonderland. Wear orange during hunting season.

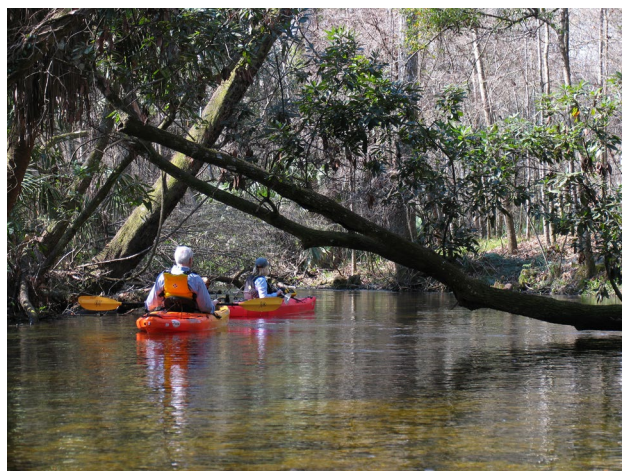


Base Camp

Plan on camping several days at the [Goose Pasture Group Campground](#) on the Wacissa River to explore this exceptionally scenic area. There is a group camp adjacent to the public campground with portable toilets, grills and covered pavilion. Neither campground charges any fees and both are closed during general gun season. Contact the Suwannee River Water Management District to make reservations and get the gate code to the group camp: 386-362-1001, 800-226-1066 (FL toll free) or email – recreation@srwmd.org.



Goose Pasture Campground, Edwin McCook



Slave Canal, Doug Alderson



Photo, Tommy Thompson



Big Blue Spring, Nigel Foster