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Chapter 1 : Florida's Fabulous Trail Guide by Tim Ohr (, Paperback) | eBay

*Florida's Fabulous Trail Guide (Recreation Series) [Tim Ohr] on calendrierdelascience.com *FREE* shipping on qualifying offers. Presents a guide to hiking, biking, and equestrian trails in the state of Florida.*

Central Florida Road Trip by Kevin Barry Here are a few destinations that can be visited on a weekend or short vacation in central Florida. All are lightly photographed yet very worthwhile. At these locations, you will not be elbow to elbow with other photographers or have to contend with power-walkers mowing you down or talking about their recent gallbladder operation! However, you might need to work a little harder for your images. The variety of subjects to photograph at these places is vast, so bring every lens you own. For landscapes, you can use everything from ultra-wide angle to telephoto. Macro lenses are useful for close-ups of the numerous wildflowers, plants, butterflies, and other insects. The small, wary birds you are likely to encounter will require your largest telephoto. Johns River during the winter months, mid-November through March. They do this because the natural spring remains a constant 72 degrees. During the warmer months, the manatees disperse to the river. Because swimming, snorkeling, scuba diving, and boating with the manatees is prohibited from November 15 through March 1, photography should be done from the viewing platforms along the spring run. I was photographing the manatees with my wide-angle lens one chilly winter morning, when suddenly this researcher drifts into view. He was counting the population in the spring, and on this day, there were 47 of them. In this case, the human element really makes the shot. Besides manatees, other photo opportunities include eastern screech owls, downy woodpeckers, tufted titmice, and Carolina wren. Breeding birds include great-crested flycatchers, red-eyed vireos, and northern parulas. While on the river, look overhead and you may see osprey and bald eagle year-round and, in summer, swallow-tailed kites. A four-mile nature trail passes through sand pine scrub, pine flatwoods, and oak hammocks. The trail also passes around freshwater marsh and cypress swamp. Those interested in beautiful historic buildings can train their lenses on the Louis Thursby House, built in and now listed on the National Register of Historic Places. Camping is available in the park. Food and lodging are available in nearby Orange City. Blue Spring State Park is located about 30 miles north of Orlando. To reach it, take exit off Interstate 4 and follow the signs. Make a right onto West French Avenue. The park is open from 8 AM to sunset. In fact, during my trips, I have rarely seen another person. Located in eastern Polk County, Catfish Creek preserves sections of Florida scrub, sandhill, pine flatwoods, and shallow ponds. Animals include Florida scrub jays, bald eagles, gopher tortoises, and Florida scrub lizards. Many rare plants occur here such as scrub morning glory, scrub plum, pygmy fringe tree, and cutthroat grass. Catfish Creek offers six miles of hiking trails along with eight miles of equestrian trails through and around scrub, sandhill, flatwoods, and ponds. Magenta colors light the sky at dawn as the moon sets over the sandhills of Catfish Creek State Park. While hiking one afternoon I came upon this upside down shell of a gopher tortoise *Gopherus polyphemus* , a threatened specie. Tortoises sometimes do battle and can flip their rivals over, leaving them unable to right themselves and having to endure a slow death. Tortoises dig a burrow in sandy soil with their front feet. The burrows can be up to 40 ft. These include snakes, frogs, mice, burrowing owls, lizards, and many insects. Plants eaten by the tortoise include grasses, prickly pear cactus, and gopher apple. A Florida garden spider *Argiope* sp. Florida is home to four species of garden orb-weaver, more than any other state. They all spin their webs with white silken banners called stabilimentum. There are four theories as to just how the stabilimentum benefits the spider. First, it may help to strengthen or stabilize the web. Second, by making the web more visible, birds would be less likely to fly into it and thus destroy it. Third, the banners reflect ultraviolet light and may attract prey to the web. Lastly, the spider might use the stabilimentum as camouflage to escape detection from its intended prey. Biologists feel the last theory may be the most likely reason these spiders build something which makes their web more, not less, visible to prey. Gopher apple *Licania michauxii* , also called ground oak, is a low-growing plant that is commonly found in dry pinelands, scrub, and other areas with sandy soils. Gopher tortoises and other species of wildlife eat the

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fruit. Food and lodging are available in nearby Haines City. No camping is available in the park. Catfish Creek is located about 10 miles east of Dundee. In about 1 mile, take a right on to Hatchineha Rd. Go about eight miles to Firetower Road on the right. The parking lot is about 3 miles on the left. The park is open 8 AM until sundown. Kissimmee Prairie Preserve State Park This park preserves the largest contiguous expanse of Florida dry prairie, an extremely rare habitat that once stretched from Lake Okeechobee to Orlando. Much has been lost to cattle ranches and citrus groves. With its Florida dry prairie habitat, the park offers some special opportunities for photography. Uncommon bird species such as the burrowing owl, crested caracara, sandhill crane, wood stork, and white-tailed kite occur here. This park is one of the best places to build your file of sparrow images. Also occurring in good numbers is the endangered Florida grasshopper sparrow, a species most often observed from late March through mid-July. Kissimmee Prairie has a large butterfly population. To date, the total stands at 86 species, making it one of the top spots in Florida for the budding Lepidopterist or macro photographer. The prairie contains a diverse collection of species including swallowtails, sulphurs, hairstreaks, brushfoots, and milkweed butterflies. This was taken on a dead calm morning with a little fog thrown in for good measure, conditions a landscape photographer lives for: I liked the image in color, but also felt it would look good in black and white: Here is the same scene again, this time on a summer afternoon with some great cloud formations. Whenever I find a good landscape, I often return and shoot it at different times of day and year, with varying weather conditions. Photographing the same scene repeatedly may not sound as exciting as continually searching for new subjects, but it can result in some fantastic images. Kilpatrick Hammock Campground offers an excellent camping experience in an oak hammock. A bathhouse with laundry facilities is available. Should you camp in the park, you will have the opportunity to try some long exposure night photography. The park is among the best places in the region for stargazing because it is one of the most removed areas from light pollution, yet still very accessible. The preserve is located 5 miles north of the western terminus of County Road The town of Okeechobee has food and lodging. The park is open from 8 AM to sundown. Bird photography is not easy here, as most of the bird species are small and wary, so you will need your biggest telephoto for them. As the name implies, this forest is located along the Lake Wales Ridge, which runs north and south through the central Florida Peninsula. The ridge is an ancient strip of land that was left exposed when much of Florida was covered by prehistoric seas. As a result, plant species evolved resulting in the ridge having the highest concentration of rare and endangered plants in the continental United States. The forest contains 24 plants and 19 animals listed as threatened or endangered. Natural communities in the forest include Florida scrub, pine flatwood, sandhill, seepage slope, and bottomland forest. Many lakes are accessible from the forest. Reedy Creek is very photogenic, although not always easy to access. One of the largest species of silkmoths in Florida, the imperial moth *Eacles imperialis* is in the same family as the silk moth *Bombyx mori*, which is bred commercially for its silk. Trees and shrubs associated with this community include slash pine, saw palmetto, dwarf huckleberry, wax myrtle, fetterbush, gallberry, and St. Besides cutthroat, other grasses include chalky bluestem, toothache grass, pineland threeawn, as well as sedges and rushes. Several species of blazing star *Liatris* sp. This specie inhabits sandhills and scrub, and blooms from August to October. The forest is located in southeastern Polk County. The Walk-in-the-Water tract is located two miles east of the town of Frostproof on C. Nearby Avon Park has food and lodging. I recall that on the day I took this photo, as I was framing a scrub jay in my viewfinder, another one flew from behind me and landed on my head! The Florida scrub jay *Aphelocoma coerulescens* is the only bird specie endemic to Florida and lives in Florida scrub, an extremely dry habitat that occurs primarily in central Florida. Scrub jays eat a wide variety of things including acorns, seeds, insects, tree frogs, turtles, snakes, lizards, spiders, and young mice. One interesting behavior is that they cache thousands of acorns a year, burying them in the sand. The cached acorns that are not retrieved germinate, making the Florida scrub jay one of the top dispersers of oak trees.

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