



## **WINTER GUIDE** *to Wakulla County*

Although it lacks the spring blooms, long summer days, and changing leaves of autumn, there is still plenty to love about the winter season in Wakulla County. Whether you're looking for quiet sightseeing, thrilling outdoor adventures, or special festivals, this is your go-to guide for all of the exciting things happening in Wakulla County during the winter months.

# Events and Festivals

Each season in Wakulla County brings its own unique festivals and celebrations that honor the time of year and commemorate the season's place in the greater natural world. Winter is no exception, and during the coolest months of the year, you still have plenty of opportunities to gather together with locals and visitors and partake in some winter fun.



Stone Age and Primitive Arts Festival

## St. Marks National Wildlife Refuge Wildlife, Heritage, and Outdoor Festival

The St. Marks National Wildlife Refuge is one of the most precious resources in Wakulla County, and in early February they host the Wildlife, Heritage, and Outdoor (WHO) Festival. This beloved event celebrates the connection that people in the Florida panhandle area have had to the native flora and fauna for centuries. When you attend the WHO Festival you can expect live entertainment, educational wildlife displays provided by various outdoor organizations, and games and activities including the famous Youth Duck and Turkey Calling Contest.

## Stone Age and Primitive Arts Festival

Long before European immigrants established permanent settlements in Florida, Stone Age humans were living off the Gulf Coast land and transforming the environment with the help of tools. The annual Stone Age and Primitive Arts Festival in late February aims to recognize the contribution of these early inhabitants to the history of this area and educate attendees on some of their common practices and traditions. The Stone Age and Primitive Arts Festival is held at Ochlockonee River State Park, and some of the popular activities include demonstrations of flint knapping, deer hide tanning, atlatl throwing, and primitive archery competitions.

## Crawfordville Arbor Day Celebration & Tree Giveaway

Wakulla County's Arbor Day Celebration, organized by the Wakulla County Garden Club since 2005, provides over a thousand free trees for Wakulla County residents to choose from. Master Gardeners will be on hand to answer any questions. This annual event is held on the third Saturday in January at Hudson Park, and includes food vendors, artisan & craft vendors, as well as live music.



## Christmas in Wakulla

We're not trying to brag when we say that every season in Wakulla County is beautiful in its own way, but there is something that's extra special about the time when fall turns to winter and the Christmas lights begin twinkling throughout the longer nights. You can bask in the beauty of the season at Christmas in Wakulla, which is held every year in December throughout Wakulla.

## Christmas in the Park

This event put on by the Wakulla County Sheriff's Office (WCSO) is a way to give back to the children in the community. From 3 to 8 p.m. on the second Saturday of December, an arrangement is made by the WCSO for Santa Claus to pop by Hudson Park for pictures with children and to accept gift wish-lists. There will also be games, prizes, and train rides, as well as a host of vendors with holiday-themed products.



## Christmas in Panacea

What started in 2005 after the town of Panacea was rocked by Hurricane Dennis as a way to lift spirits has grown into an annual affair. The Panacea Christmas celebration includes man-made snow to play in, children's activities and a bounce house, vendors and entertainment, free admission to the Gulf Specimen Marine Lab, and the annual parade down U.S. Highway 98 from 4 to 6 p.m. Complete with decorated boats sponsored by local businesses and civic organizations, this parade is a true holiday wonder. Local homeowners and businesses also participate in bringing the Christmas spirit to life by decorating their homes and storefronts for this cheerful event.

## Christmas in Sopchoppy

Downtown Sopchoppy opens its doors for the holidays when this festival gets underway every year. From 9 a.m. to 4 p.m., local arts and crafts retailers with festive seasonal merchandise, food vendors, and live Christmas music come together to make the town of Sopchoppy extra bright and merry. And, of course, Santa Claus pops in for a few hours for a visit each Christmas to spend time with area children.



# Outdoor Activities

After you visit some of the festivals and community events, take advantage of the gulf coast winter weather to participate in some fantastic outdoor activities in Wakulla County. The average temperatures and lower humidity during these months typically create great conditions for a variety of outdoor experiences.



## Birding

In addition to the year-round avian residents of Wakulla County, winter brings some species of migratory birds to sunny Florida that you won't find here in the warmer months. You can find great bird-watching spots in the St. Marks National Wildlife Refuge, Wakulla Springs State Park, Apalachicola National Forest, and other areas throughout the region.

## Fishing

We all love a hot day on a boat with a rod and reel in hand, but many species of fish spend the summer deep in the cooler waters away from the blistering sun. That's all the better for winter anglers in Wakulla County, who have an opportunity to catch several different types of freshwater and saltwater fish as they feed closer to the surface. There are numerous ramps and boat launches that can take you to small streams or into the vast Gulf of Mexico for superb fishing, and our area is home to numerous outfitters and tackle shops where you can get everything you need for a day on the water.

## Biking

An abundance of cooler, drier days, good road conditions (we rarely get snow here), and reduced traffic all add up to a perfect time for biking through Wakulla County. You can ride down historic routes like the Tallahassee to St. Marks Historic Railroad Trail, breeze through sections of the Florida National Scenic Trail, or simply enjoy a leisurely stroll through many of our charming communities.

## Additional Activities

That only scratches the surface of all the great outdoor activities that you can comfortably enjoy during a Wakulla County winter. Several different types of game are in season for hunters through February, and the low winter light often creates perfect wildlife photography conditions. Or, you can simply enjoy a walk on the less-crowded gulf beaches. However you choose to spend the season, there's no doubt that Wakulla County is an outdoor winter wonderland.

# Where to Eat

The towns of Wakulla County are home to numerous family-owned restaurants that offer delicious dishes at reasonable prices. Whether you're looking for a traditional southern barbecue or the freshest Gulf seafood around, the dining options of Wakulla County have you covered. Here are a few of the great restaurants you can visit during your stay:



## Ouzt's Too Oyster Bar and Grill - St. Marks

Ouzt's Too and its predecessor, Ouzt's Oyster Bar, are mainstays in Wakulla County that go back decades. As you would expect, you can find delicious and perfectly-shucked oysters by the bucketful here, but the menu also features some excellent versions of other gulf coast classics like gumbo and mullet dip.

## Angelo and Son's Seafood Restaurant - Panacea

Established in 1945, Angelo and Sons is one of the original Wakulla County dining destinations, and it still draws in crowds for its spectacular view of the Ochlockonee Bay. What keeps the restaurant thriving is that the food is just as good as the views, with specialties like seafood pasta dishes and seafood au gratin.

## Hamaknockers BBQ - Crawfordville

Accept no substitutes: Real southern barbecue is a labor of time, technique, and love, and all of those are on display in the succulent offerings at Hamaknocker's BBQ. Pair their slow-smoked meats with some of the 11 delicious homemade sauces for the perfect taste of the south.

## Spring Creek Restaurant - Spring Creek

Spring Creek Restaurant put the quaint village of Spring Creek on the dining map. Their take on fresh seafood dinners can't be missed, but carnivores will find plenty to love as well thanks to an excellent selection of steaks.

## Sopchoppy Pizza Company - Sopchoppy

Sopchoppy Pizza Company delivers the goods with hand-made pies featuring a variety of fresh toppings, as well as vegetarian and gluten-free options. Their open-air patio looks directly out into charming downtown Sopchoppy and makes for great people-watching while you dine.



## Where to Stay

### Shell Island Fish Camp and Motel St. Marks

The Shell Island Fish Camp is a quaint haven for anglers, but birdwatchers will also find themselves right at home thanks to the close proximity to prime viewing locations and friendly accommodations.

### Best Western Wakulla Inn and Suites Crawfordville

The Best Western in Crawfordville blends the convenience of a national chain—including free WiFi—with the natural uniqueness of Wakulla County.

### The Magnuson Inn at Wildwood Crawfordville

When you stay at the Magnuson Inn at Wildwood you won't have to go far for great birdwatching opportunities. This serene property is located amidst 1,000 square miles of protected land.

### Wakulla Springs Lodge - Crawfordville

The Lodge is located within Wakulla Springs State Park, and it is a full-service hotel featuring dining options, conference facilities, and easy access to numerous birding hotspots.

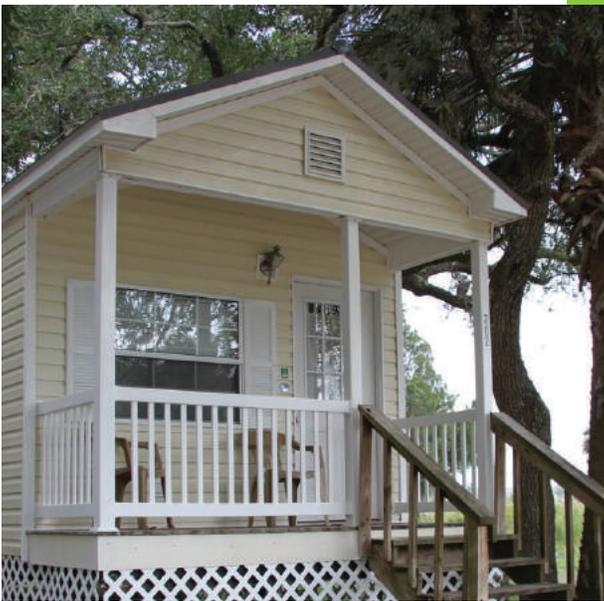
### Vacation Rentals - Panacea

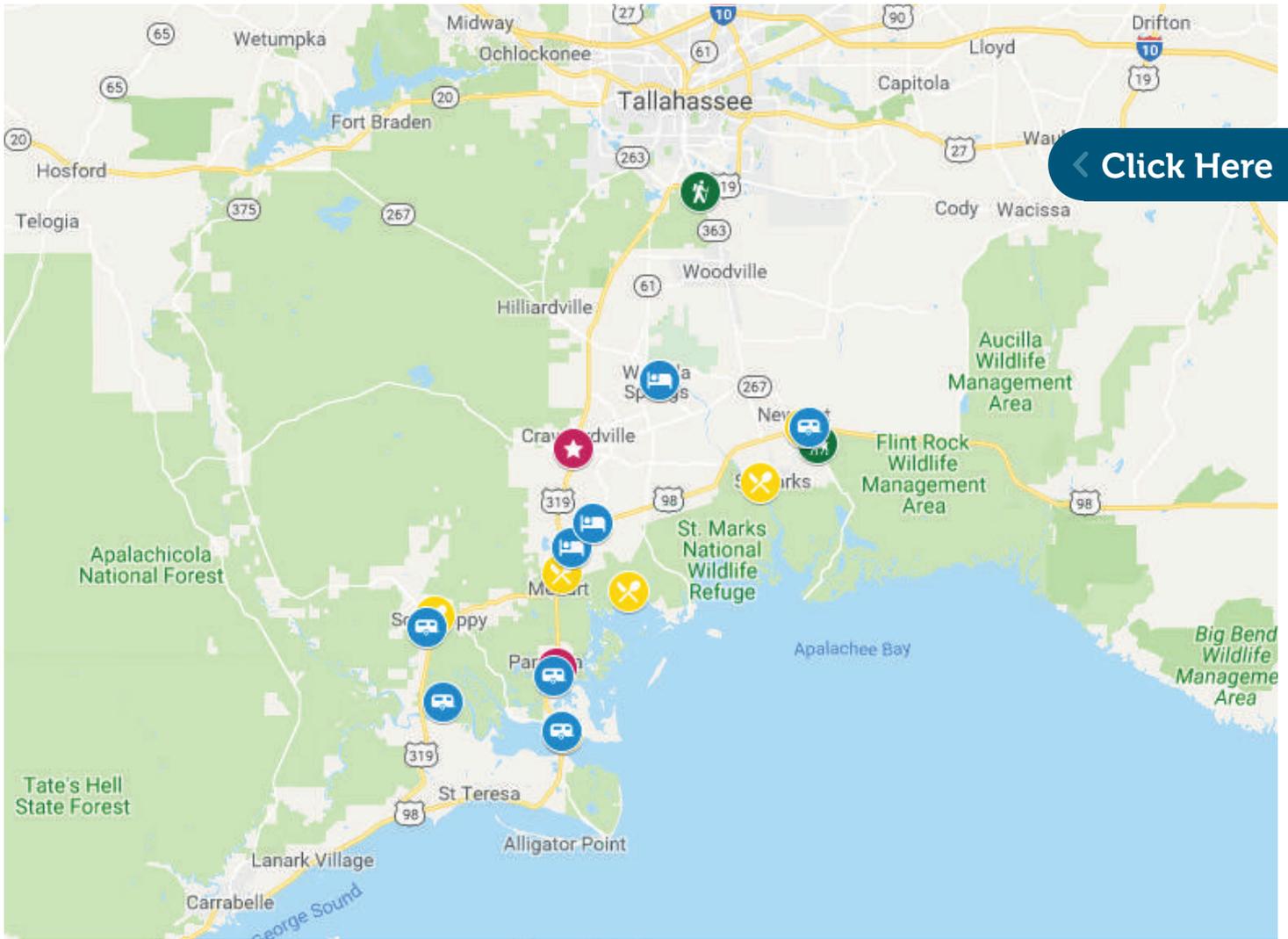
One of the professional agents at Ochlockonee Bay Realty will be happy to help you find a private rental house that you can call your own during your visit.

### Campgrounds

Wakulla County is also home to several places with camping facilities that accommodate tent campers and RVers, including:

- Ochlockonee River State Park—Sopchoppy
- Myron B. Hodge City Park—Sopchoppy
- Panacea RV Park—Panacea
- Holiday Park and Campground—Ochlockonee Bay
- Newport Park—Crawfordville





[Explore our Interactive Map!](#)