



SPRING GUIDE *to Wakulla County*

All the seasons in Wakulla County are unique, but spring holds a special place in the hearts of many as the early morning temperatures warm, plants and animals spring to back to activity, and the waters become perfect for boating and fishing. Learn more about some of the exciting festivals and events happening in our area this spring, and find out how you can make the most of the extended daylight hours in the beautiful outdoors.

Events and Festivals



Panacea Blue
Crab Festival

Lion's Club St. Patrick's Day Celebration

Sponsored by Crawfordville Lions Club

Date: Saturday before St. Patrick's Day | **Time:** 10 a.m. to 3 p.m.

Location: 319 & Hudson Park in Crawfordville

The Lion's Club St. Patrick's Day Celebration is the perfect way to celebrate Irish pride, whether your family is rich with Irish heritage or you just like to don green and gold and yell your most enthusiastic, "Erin go bragh!" This festive event kicks off with a memorable parade through downtown Crawfordville, and features live Irish folk music, traditional Irish cuisine, and more.

Low Country Boil

Sponsored by Wakulla County Chamber of Commerce

Date: First Saturday of April | **Time:** 6 p.m. to 10 p.m. | **Location:** 3Y Ranch, Crawfordville

No one does a Low Country Boil quite like Wakulla County! This annual festival is easily one of the area's most popular events because of its wealth of live music and great food, featuring an enormous pot of a traditional low country boil -- with favorites like shrimp, sausage, crawfish, potatoes and corn on the cob -- for all to sample. Tickets are usually made available around the middle of January and sell out fast!

Sopchoppy Worm Gruntin' Festival

Date: 2nd Saturday in April | **Time:** 7 a.m. to 10 p.m. | **Location:** Downtown Sopchoppy

The Sopchoppy Worm Gruntin' Festival is one of Wakulla County's most unique celebrations, and it is beloved by many for its traditions and excitement. Gather round as experts demonstrate the age-old practice of worm gruntin', or using vibrations to coax earthworms to the surface so they can be used as fishing bait. You can also try it yourself then show off your best dance moves at the Worm Grunters Ball.



Events and Festivals

Stephen C. Smith Memorial Regatta

Sponsored by Shell Point Yacht Club and the Shell Point Sailboard Club

Date: Last weekend of April

Time: Sat. 8 a.m. to 8: p.m. and

Sunday from 8 a.m. to 3 p.m.

Location: Shell Point Beach

As Wakulla County's longest-running festival, the Steve C. Smith Memorial Regatta benefits the American Cancer Society and is held each year in memory of Stephen Smith, a local sailor who died from a rare form of leukemia at the age of 29. With hundreds of thousands of dollars raised for charity over the years, the nationally renowned event -- which began in 1973 -- features races for yachts, sailboats, catamarans, and windsurfers. The festival attracts local food and art vendors and is also highlighted by an enormous auction each year with prizes donated by local Wakulla County businesses.



Rock the Dock Fishing Tournament

Sponsored by Panacea Waterfronts Florida Partnership

Date: Last Weekend in April

Times: Captains' Meeting: Friday, 7:00 p.m.

Weigh-in: Saturday, 3pm to 6pm;

Sunday, 10am to 3pm.

Location: Rock Landing Marina in Panacea

The Rock the Dock Fishing Tournament has quickly become an annual spring classic in Wakulla County. Held in the gorgeous gulf waters just off the coast of Panacea, this celebration of angling is known for its fierce competition across a variety of categories and outstanding prizes. The Captain's Meeting that kicks off the action the night before is also a hit, with Happy Hour, great food, and live music.



Events and Festivals



Panacea Blue Crab Festival

Date: 1st Saturday in May | **Time:** 10:00 a.m. | **Location:** Woolley Park in Panacea

The Panacea Blue Crab festival is all about celebrating this crustacean, one of the most important and sought after marine animals in the Wakulla County ecosystem. The day begins with a crab-themed parade organized by the Coastal Optimist Club, a volunteer group that aims to enrich the lives of people throughout the community. The fun continues all day long with tasty crab dishes prepared by local chefs, great entertainment, and one-of-a-kind activities like the Crab Pickin' Contest.

Sharks & Chablis Fundraiser

Date: Contact Gulf Specimen for specific dates | **Time:** 2 p.m. - 7 p.m.
Location: Gulf Specimen Marine Lab | **Website:** www.gulfspecimen.org

This annual benefit for one of Wakulla County's most prized attractions, the Gulf Specimen Marine Lab, is a celebration fundraiser that also honors the life, work and activism of Dr. Anne Rudloe, co-founder of the Gulf Specimen who died of cancer in 2012. The event features a seafood buffet, wine tasting, silent auction and live music, as well as guided tours of the Gulf Marine Specimen Lab's aquariums.

Children's Fishing Tournament

Sponsored by the Wakulla County Sheriff's Office

Date: 3rd Saturday in May | **Time:** Weigh-in from 10 a.m. to 1 p.m.
Location: Woolley Park in Panacea

With nearly two decades of service to the children of Wakulla County, the Children's Fishing Tournament puts new rods and reels into the hands of hundreds of kids and gives them a chance to compete in either the freshwater or saltwater categories for prizes. Games, rides, exhibitions and food vendors are on hand in the park all afternoon prior to the weigh-in and trophy presentation.

Run for Wakulla Springs

Date: 3rd Saturday in May
Time: Registration Begins at 7 a.m. | 1 Mile Fun Run 8 a.m. | Grand Prix 5K Run 8:30 a.m.
Location: Wakulla Springs State Park | Visit www.wakullasprings.org

The Run for Wakulla Springs, organized by the Friends of Wakulla Springs, is a great way to stay in shape and see some of the exquisite natural beauty of Wakulla County firsthand. The race features a 1-mile and 5K division, and part of the course takes you through a section of Wakulla Springs State Park that is generally closed to the public.

Outdoor Activities



Boating

Imagine dropping your boat into the serene St. Marks River, riding it out to the marshy wetland along the coast, and then heading for the deep waters of the gulf. It's all possible in Wakulla County, which is famous for its diversity of waterways and marine life. Be sure to stop at one of our many marinas to make sure you are outfitted for your boating adventure.

Ochlockonee River State Park

The Ochlockonee River State Park is a perfect place to camp out or take an easy day hike. Nature trails that wind along the river and through pine flatwoods and oak thickets allow hikers to explore the park and see a diversity of wildlife especially in the early morning. The natural communities are home for deer, fox squirrel, bobcat, gray fox, and many species of birds including the endangered red-cockaded woodpecker. Wildflowers bloom in abundance during the spring and fall. Check the website for ranger-guided walks and campfire programs.

<https://www.floridastateparks.org/parks-and-trails/ochlockonee-river-state-park>

Hours & Details

Open 8 a.m. – sunset, 365 days a year.

Entrance Fee: \$4/vehicle | **Launch Fee:** \$4.

Type of Fishing: Freshwater and Saltwater. | **Parking:** Ample.

St. Marks River City Park

Dual-boat ramp that launches into the St. Marks River, which empties into the Gulf of Mexico. Adjacent to Fort San Marcos de Apalache State Historic Site and Museum; picnic area; hiking and biking trails; public restrooms; water fountain; fishing dock.

Hours & Details

Type of Fishing: Freshwater and Saltwater | **Parking:** Ample | **Launch Fee:** \$5, honor system

Mash Island Ramp

Dual-boat ramp that launches into the Gulf of Mexico.

Hours & Details

Type of Fishing: Salt water. | **Parking:** Ample. | **Launch Fee:** \$5, honor system.

Extras: Bathrooms; picnic area; fishing pier; small, sandy beach available for swimming.

Outdoor Activities

Hunting & Fishing

Teeming with rushing rivers, quiet streams, glistening lakes, and featuring access to the vast Gulf of Mexico, Wakulla County is truly a fishing paradise. There are several different fishing charters available if you are looking for a guide, or there are several self-service boat ramps located at various points throughout the county. Charming fishing towns such as Panacea and St. Marks offer you a chance to rest and refresh during your journey, and there are numerous tackle shops where you can stock up on supplies.

Apalachicola National Forest

The Apalachicola National Forest is the largest forest in the state spanning across four counties in the Florida Panhandle. It is a place of botanical and wildlife splendor, home to several endangered and threatened species, providing some of the best birding and botanical study in Florida. Virgin stands of towering pine and cypress, hardwood hammocks, titi swamps, and vast pitcher plant prairies all create a forest wonderland worth exploring. The expansive forest includes six watersheds including the Ochlockonee, Sopchoppy, Lost Creek, and Wakulla River basins that create a steady flow of fresh water which feeds the coastal nurseries of Ochlockonee Bay, and provides a vital link in the production of our renowned seafood.

Outdoor recreation in the forest includes a wide array of activities, from picnicking to kayaking and canoeing the waterways to mountain biking, horseback riding, hunting and fishing, ATV and motorbike riding, backpacking and camping. There are designated recreational areas and areas of special interest. Nearby Leon Sinks at the northern edge of the county is a geological marvel well worth the visit.

Tide Creek Charters

Tide Creek Charters is located in Panacea, Florida an historic fishing and tourist waterfront village located along Dickerson Bay. Capt. Chris Gouras calls Panacea, Florida, "Heaven On Earth" and can take you out fishing for Speckled Trout, Redfish, Triple Tail and Tarpon!

Capt. Chris Gouras, USCG Certified

Fish	Freshwater or Saltwater?	In-Season
Mullet	Saltwater	Year-Round
Grouper	Saltwater	June - December
Flounder	Saltwater	Year-Round
Soft Crab, Blue Crab, and Stone Crab	Freshwater and Saltwater	Year-Round
Scallop	Saltwater	June Through September
Shrimp	Freshwater and Saltwater	Year-Round

Outdoor Activities



Birding and Wildlife Watching

Wakulla County is home to an abundance of public lands and natural areas that many different species of birds call home, whether permanently or as part of a migratory pattern. Our diverse ecosystem is home to a variety of different waterfowl, songbirds, birds of prey, woodpeckers, and many others. Photograph them in their natural habitat this spring!

St. Marks National Wildlife Refuge

St. Marks Unit (Headquarters) - A premier nature location, the St. Marks National Wildlife Refuge, encompasses 68,000 acres of protected habitats and ecosystems, providing incredible opportunity for exceptional views of birds and wildlife. The north-south migratory bird flyway passes through the Refuge. There are numerous nature trails, some with wildlife observation decks. Butterfly viewing is excellent, especially during September and October when Monarch butterflies congregate here on their fall migration to Mexico. American Alligators, Bobcats, Northern River Otters, and Florida Black Bears all make their home here. The Refuge is winter home to endangered Whooping cranes introduced through Operation Migration. In the Spring you can view the eagles and osprey nesting. Visit the historic St. Marks Lighthouse located at the end of the Refuge road. Stop by the Visitor Center where maps and loaner optics are available.

Wakulla State Forest

The Wakulla State Forest is beautifully varied due to the unique and various natural community types perfect for exploration with superb views of the diverse ecosystems. Wildlife species in the area include white-tailed deer, feral hog, turkey, bobcat, gopher tortoise and a variety of resident and migratory birds. This recreation area features several different multi-use and hiking-only trails with one designated Trailwalker and one Trailtrotter trail. The Nemours hiking-only trail loop is a 1.75 mile trail that follows old jeep trail paths through mixed pine/hardwood forest and a hardwood/cypress slough. The Double Springs Trail loop is an amazing multi-use 4.5 mile trail that features low water crossings, inclines and winding trails. The Petrik Spur Trail is a 1.0 mile trail off of the Double Springs Trail. There are also over 15 miles of service roads closed to vehicle traffic, accessible to adventurous hikers and riders who like to explore off the marked trails.

The Trailhead is located along SR 267 with a picnic pavilion and parking that can accommodate horse trailers. Smaller parking areas are located along Rosa Shingles Road and off Cooperwood Road at the northeast boundary. Wakulla State Forest is part of the Big Bend Scenic Byway.

Mashes Sands County Park

Explore a unique coastal marsh belt ecosystem where marsh grass gives way to a coastal beach. This secluded beach is great for watching Bald eagles diving for food, Black Skimmers and other shorebirds. Tidal marsh pools and tidal creeks support several species of wildlife. Watch dolphins from the shore. At low tide, walk the flats to look for fish and other marine life.



Additional Activities

Palmetto Expeditions LLC

Wakulla County's premier booking service for Green Guide tours, including nature tours, heritage & sightseeing tours, guiding/outfitter services, accommodations and other guest-related services. Their friendly Certified Green Guides can lead specialized tours or create nature inspired art and allow visitors to share in Wakulla County's local treasures.

Wildwood Golf Course

Wildwood Golf Course is an 18-hole public golf course and driving range with membership opportunities. This championship golf course features a challenging layout which mixes water and sand traps to provide golfers a variety of challenges while rewarding smart play.

One of the friendliest in the Big Bend area, our par 72 layout is nestled among rolling hills and ancient oak trees. The course has four sets of tees to accommodate and entertain players of all ages and abilities. Wildwood Golf Course is open to both members and the public, perfect for an afternoon round after work or a weekend foursome.

For your convenience the Wildwood Inn is located right next door. Come for an overnight visit and enjoy golf, the swimming pool and tennis court too.

Membership at Wildwood Golf Course allows you to enjoy preferred tee times at our beautiful 18-hole golf course. In addition to our great membership rates, Wildwood Golf Course features competitive public rates for people who are not members and simply want to come out and play a round of golf.

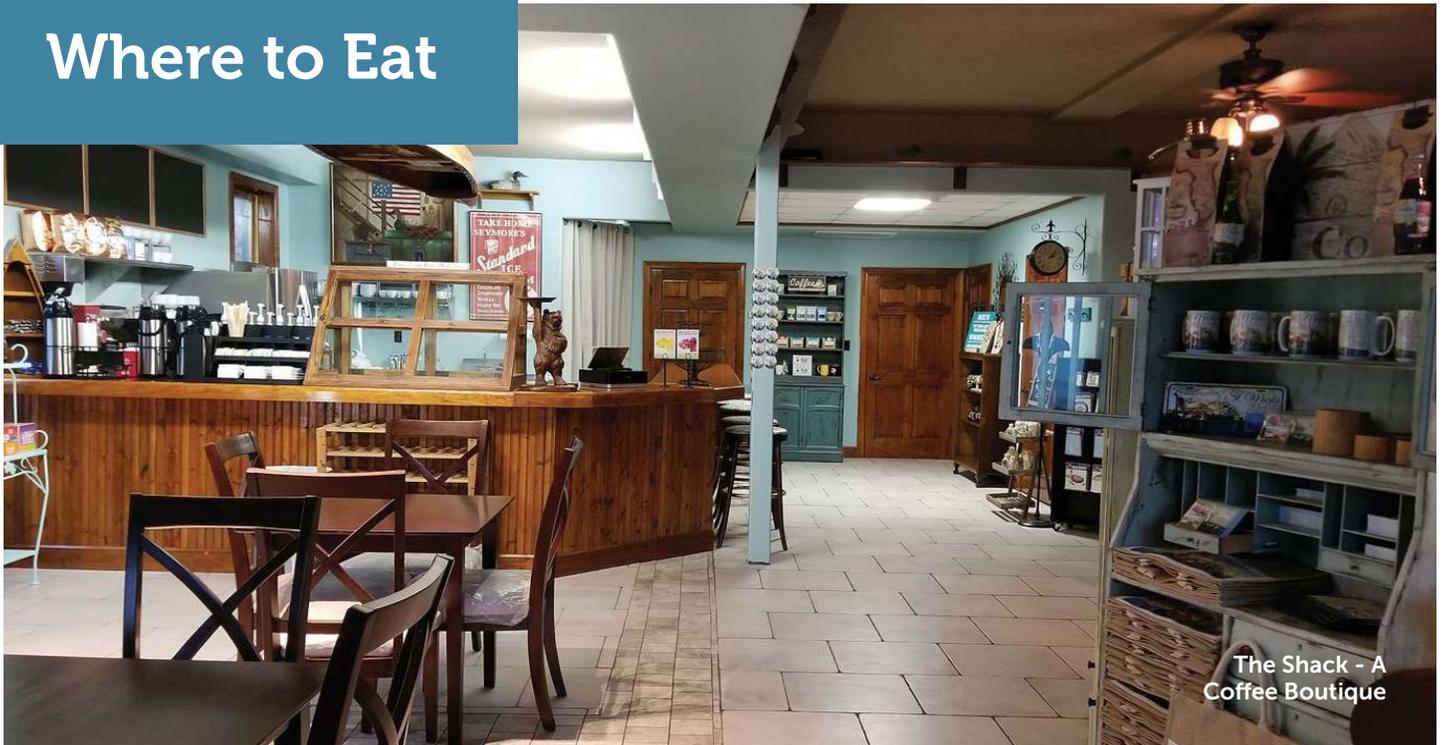
Please call for details on rates and tee times at 850-926-4653.

Cypress Run Farm

Offers a quiet nature oriented atmosphere that allows visitors relief from everyday stress amongst a completely fenced 38 acre paradise. Boarding facilities, riding instruction, trail rides, guide service, equine therapy programs, summer riding day camps, equine themed artwork.



Where to Eat



The Shack - A
Coffee Boutique

Crawfordville

Lindy's Fried Chicken

Family owned and operated since 1996, Lindy's Fried Chicken is now a household name around Wakulla County. The husband and wife duo of Jerome and Terri Robinson invested in the North Florida chicken franchise and are now going on nearly two decades at their Central Crawfordville location. Lindy's, of course, is famous for its secretly spiced fried chicken and delicious side dishes -- such as mashed potatoes and gravy, coleslaw, collard greens and potato salad -- but the Robinsons have made their hot wings equally famous, selling upwards of 700 pounds of their signature wings every week. Lindy's also sells livers, fried or steamed gizzards and offers white or dark meat choices on every dinner.

Specials/signature dishes: \$.50 wings on "Wacky Wing Wednesdays"; \$2.99 two-piece fried chicken box (dark meat) with one side.

Myra Jean's Restaurant

Crawfordville's oldest and arguably its most famous restaurant, Myra Jeans opened in 1985 and was one of the first dine-in establishments in the town to offer breakfast, lunch, dinner and dessert. Owned by Myra Jean Nutting, the restaurant has family-run -- by Myra Jean's husband and two sons -- and geared around families from Day 1. Myra Jean's is renowned for its handcrafted hamburgers and cheeseburgers, including the famed one-pounder. They also specialize in country, homestyle dinners such as chicken-fried steak and gravy, open-faced roast-beef sandwich and the grilled teriyaki chicken pita. And when you're done with your meal, slide over to Myra Jean's full-service ice cream parlor that specializes in any flavor of malt shake, banana splits and hot fudge sundaes.

Specials/signature dishes: "Behemoth Challenge" -- a four-pound burger and one pound of fries that's free if you eat the entire thing; breakfast buffet Saturdays and Sundays.

Where to Eat

The Shack - A Coffee Boutique

We pride ourselves on providing organic, fair trade tea, and coffee. Ethically sourced and sure to be the freshest, highest quality offerings. Sunny days guarantee that our patio will be full of guests enjoying a drink or treat. On not-so-sunny days, we also offer comfortable seating inside our Coffee Boutique with free wifi . . . or enjoy browsing through our many unique gift items. Although we offer a wide variety of hot and iced drinks, we also provide savory and sweet food options. So whether you're stopping for your morning coffee, lunch, or an afternoon snack, we've got you covered!

El Jalisco

The third establishment in this rapidly growing North Florida chain of locally owned Mexican restaurants opened in the center of Crawfordville in 2005. El Jalisco is the only Mexican restaurant in Wakulla County and is renowned for its fajitas, specialty tacos and burritos and daily lunch and dinner specials. With a full bar, El Jalisco also offers a 2-for-1 happy hour six days a week.

St. Marks

Riverside Cafe on the River

There might not be a better waterfront view in Wakulla County during a meal than Riverside Cafe on the St. Marks River. Family owned and operated since 1995, Riverside has an enormous menu selection, but they'll also cook any fresh catch that patrons bring in from the dock. They can accommodate 60 guests inside during the cold months and up to 160 with their outdoors, dockside seating during the rest of the year. They've become famous for their blackened grouper sandwich, fresh oysters from the raw bar and smoked mullet. Riverside has live music every weekend from Spring to Fall, and they founded and host the annual Stone Crab Festival every year. They also have 10 boat slips for dockside parking and are conveniently located at the end of the St. Marks Bike Trail.

Specials/signature dishes: Any type of blackened seafood with Riverside's secret seasoning blend.

Ochlockonee Bay

Tropical Trader Shrimp Company

The Tropical Trader Shrimp Company is one the newest additions to the Wakulla County seafood scene. Opened for two years, they're currently the only restaurant and retail seafood market in Wakulla County where patrons can order off the menu or select from an array of fresh seafood in the retail market to have cooked on site. The Tropical Trader Shrimp Company, which has its own fleet of boats and catches most of its fresh seafood locally, has indoor and outdoor seating and a raw bar for oyster lovers. They also offer several homemade salad dressings, smoked seafood dips and entrees like bacon-wrapped shrimp that are available for purchase for dine in or to-go.

Specials/signature dishes: Low country boil, featuring snow crab, blue crab, shrimp, oysters, crawfish, potatoes and corn; homemade shrimp and grits; brunch on Saturdays and Sundays.



Where to Stay

Ready to start planning your next trip to Wakulla? Now that you've got your list of spring activities, you just need to find the perfect place to stay and enjoy all Wakulla County has to offer.

Hotels

Shell Island Fish Camp and Motel

Overlooking the Wakulla River in St. Marks, Shell Island Fish Camp and Motel has been family owned and operated since 1962 and is the only lodging accommodation in Wakulla County that caters to fishermen and boaters. Located on a well-marked, easy-to-run channel of the Wakulla River, Shell Island can handle large or small groups, families, companies and tour groups, as well as accommodating RVs. They feature three types of lodging: a 24-room motel, four 2-bedroom cabins with full kitchens and 5 one-room cabins, all of which have daily maid service. Other amenities include a covered pavilion with picnic tables and free use of the boat ramp. The motel is also adjacent to Shell Island Marina, which is a full-service marina. Shell Island is convenient to many of the area's attractions, such as the St. Marks Wildlife Refuge, Wakulla Springs State Park and Fort San Marcos de Apalache.



The Magnuson Inn at Wildwood

Located on Coastal Highway and convenient to all of Wakulla County's waterways, beaches and attractions, the Inn at Wildwood also has a fitness center, pool and tennis court. Wildwood also has two large meeting and banquet rooms that can accommodate up to 200 people and an outdoor wedding area. They also offer free Internet wi-fi connections in every room, as well as Internet-ready community computer in the lobby, and provide guests with a free complimentary breakfast seven days of the week.



Where to Stay

Campgrounds

Newport Park

Conveniently located on the banks of the St. Marks River, Newport Park is small but cozy, offering five full RV hook-ups and 20 primitive campsites off scenic Coastal Highway. There are full bathrooms, a playground for the kids and several community grills for cookouts. Newport is also a fishermen's dream since the campground is adjacent to the Newport Bridge boat ramp and allows full access to the St. Marks River, which conveniently connects to the Wakulla River or the Gulf of Mexico. At the end of your fishing excursion, Newport Park has a large boat-cleaning and fish-cleaning area, complete with running water. Newport Park is also a block from Ouzt's Too Oyster Bar and Grille and directly across the street from the St. Marks Wildlife Refuge, which offers a wild range of amenities like hiking, biking, fishing, wildlife and bird watching and a chance to tour the Historic St. Marks Lighthouse.

Myron B Hodge City Park

This quaint and scenic park is located smack dab on the beautiful Sopchoppy river, which is home to some of Wakulla County's best freshwater fishing and ultimately leads to the Gulf of Mexico for those also looking saltwater angling. Myron B. Hodge City Park is 35 acres with 26 RV and primitive camp sites and bathroom and shower facilities. Visitors also have access to the boat launch for boats, kayaks, canoes or paddleboards, as well as a fishing pier, large playground, basketball courts and softball/baseball field. Located in the middle of the campground is a large picnic area, and adjacent to that is nature trails that take you on tours of some of Sopchoppy's oldest and most historic buildings, including the Sopchoppy Gym, which is constructed of native limerock and has been listed on the National Register of Historic Places.

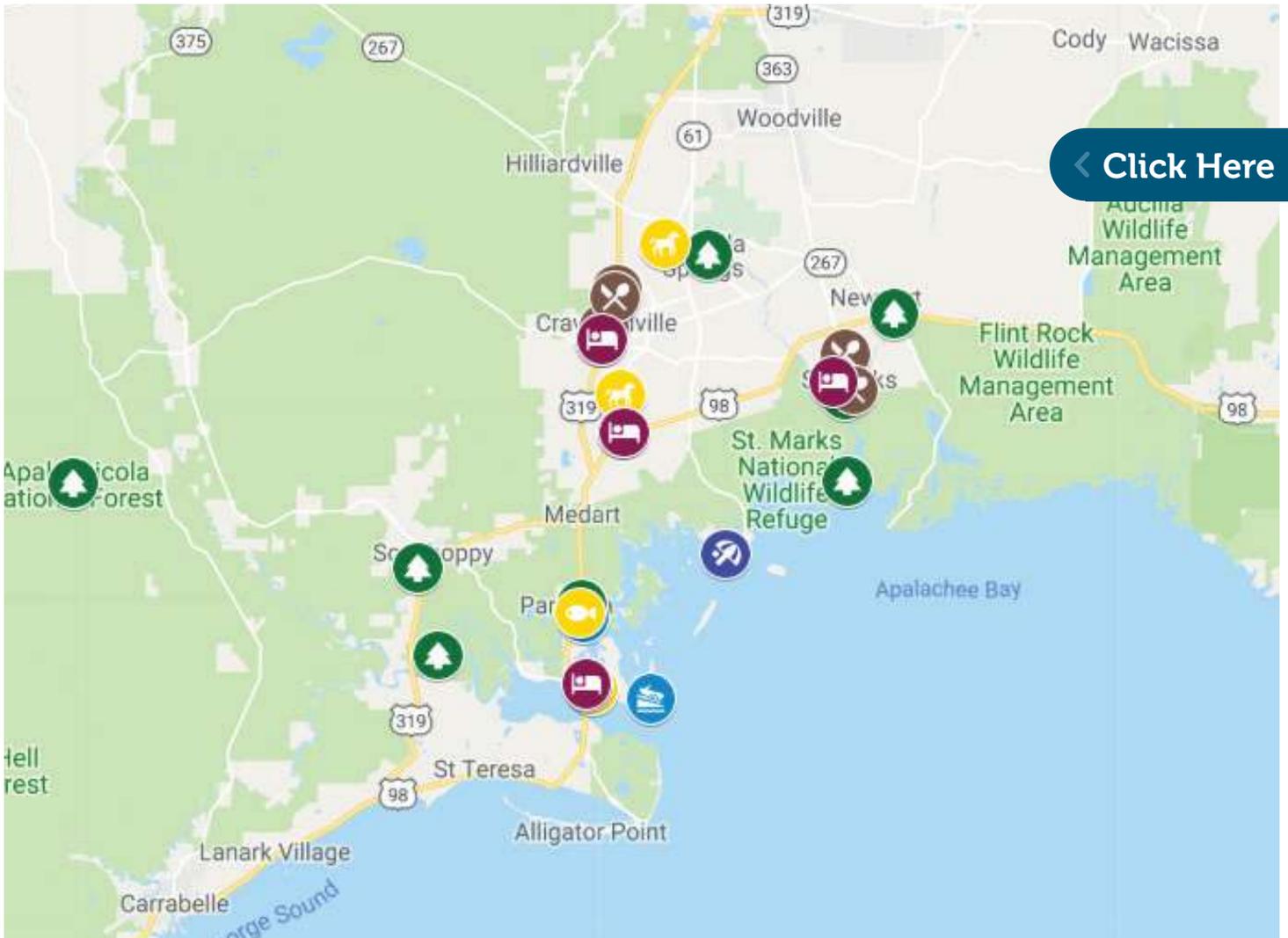
Vacation Rentals

Sopchoppy River House

Located on Florida's Nature Coast... fresh seafood at your fingertips, white sand beaches & relaxing ocean breezes. An area suited to the active nature lover. Biking, kayaking, fishing, birding, hiking & relaxing are all things that can be done without ever driving away from the Sopchoppy River House. Our vacation rental sits along 377ft of your very own secluded piece of the lazy Sopchoppy River. Drop in a line and pull in some dinner or spend a little time relaxing on our floating raft. Your getaway week takes place on 2 private wooded acres in the heart of the Apalachicola National Forest. Coming in by plane... we are about an hour drive from the Tallahassee International Airport.

Ochlockonee Bay Realty

Ochlockonee Bay Realty is pleased to offer a wide variety of vacation rentals. It also offers gulf-front beach home rentals, bayfront vacation rentals and riverfront vacation rentals. These fine vacation homes can be rented on a weekend, weekly or monthly basis in a beautiful outdoors atmosphere that offers sunny Florida beaches, great fishing, hiking, hunting, sailing, bicycling and much more.



[Explore our Interactive Map!](#)