

BLACKWATER RIVER STATE FOREST

Lush forests. Thick pinelands. Towering trees. Freshwater streams. Winding rivers. These probably aren't the images that come to mind when one thinks of Florida. Well, think again.

Blackwater River State Forest, located in Santa Rosa County, yields all of these and more. As a matter of fact, with more than 190,000 acres of woodlands, lakes, and waterways, it is the largest state park in the entire state of Florida. It is a dream come true for hikers, campers, kayakers, mountain bikers, horseback riders, and nature lovers.

Along with its neighboring areas – Conecuh National Forest and Eglin Air Force Base – Blackwater River State Forest boasts the largest population of longleaf pine trees in the world. Other vegetative species include southern red oak, water oak, dogwood, persimmon, wiregrass, and wax myrtle, to name a few. Several species of the uncommon carnivorous pitcher plant are also found in abundance in the forest's water-rich soil.

Visitors can enjoy the park by land or by water, taking advantage of one of the many hiking or canoe trails. They are encouraged to step back in time and experience the outdoors as early settlers once did, to explore the wilderness surrounding them, and to connect with nature.

In doing so, perhaps the backdrop tourists will enjoy most is the collection of beautiful streams that meander throughout the forest. The most notable of these waterways include Blackwater River, Juniper Creek, and Sweetwater Creek. Offering hundreds of miles of canoe trails, Blackwater River State Forest and its bordering communities have earned Northwest Florida the title, "Canoe Capitol of Florida."

The rivers are among the purest sand-bottom rivers in the world. Their dark tannin waters contrast with beautiful white sand bars that offer the perfect setting for soaking up the sun. And, whether floating down the river, picnicking on a stretched out blanket, or galloping through the forest, guests should keep their eyes peeled for wildlife such as the white-tailed deer, wild turkey, bobwhite quail, Sherman's fox squirrel, and a variety of songbirds.

The Division of Forestry manages Blackwater River State Forest under the multiple-use concept balancing environmental, recreational, and resource use needs and reflecting Santa Rosa County's overall commitment to protecting and enhancing its natural treasures.

PR CONTACT: Angela Smith, idgroup, 850.934,7823, angela@idgroup.us