



# HEART & SOUL

A GLIMPSE OF OLD TIME FLORIDA

BY JULIE GARRETT



THERE IS THE FLORIDA OF MICKEY MOUSE AND THERE IS THE FLORIDA OF SOUTH BEACH. THEN AGAIN, THERE IS THE FLORIDA OF LUSH GREENERY, FRESH AIR AND HIDDEN PLACES.

### ORIGINAL, OLD-TIME FLORIDA

Here, you'll discover small historic towns hugging hypnotic, slow-moving rivers. Art galleries and restaurants nestled in tiny fishing villages.

Charming antebellum towns packed with Classical and Greek Revival architecture. And some of the best art, science and natural history museums in the southeastern United States.

But if it's city life you crave, try two of Florida's most pleasant: Tallahassee, Florida's gracious state capital, and Gainesville, a vibrant, cultured city that is home to Florida's largest university and crisscrossed with bike trails.

For decades, "Florida" meant North Florida, a land rich in history, with a cultural mix braided from the interactions of the Spanish, Indians and early Florida settlers. Florida "Crackers" were the hearty early settlers who tamed the state before air conditioning.

You can easily partake of Florida's cultural heritage as you travel through towns that have preserved the past and visit such historical sites as Stephen Foster Folk Culture Center State Park and Marjorie Kinnan Rawlings' homestead.

Look for the brown heritage highway signs that point out cultural landmarks all across the region.

### TALLAHASSEE

Tallahassee is a city that blends politics with academics amidst lush rolling hills. It's nearer in culture and geography to Atlanta than Miami.

Start your visit here by taking a walking tour of Tallahassee's pleasant downtown.

Don't miss the Old Capitol Museum, featuring exhibits showcasing Florida's political history and constitutions. The Election 2000 exhibit explores how Floridians helped elect George W. Bush to the presidency by a 537-vote majority.

A few blocks from the Old Capitol sits the three-story Mary Brogan Museum of Art and Science (MOAS). The hands-on Eco-Lab Science Center offers touch tanks to delight young learners, while the first and third floors of the museum feature traveling world-class art and interactive science exhibitions such as light sculptures and musical robots.

The nearby Museum of Florida History will open your eyes to Florida's past. This is the state's official history mu-

# Hidden Treasures

## BIG BEND GHOST TRACKERS

Founded in spring of 2000, the Big Bend Ghost Trackers believe Monticello is the South's most haunted small town. This belief was affirmed when ABC News designated Monticello as such in October, 2003. The group has investigated and researched many historical and other sites in the community, documenting sightings with photographs. Dressed in period clothing and carrying lamplights, the group conducts ghost tours of "haunted" locations several times each year.

[www.bigbendghosttrackers.homestead.com](http://www.bigbendghosttrackers.homestead.com) 850-562-2516

## NICHOLSON FARMHOUSE

Hidden down a dirt lane a few hundred yards north of State Road 12, three miles west of Havana, stands a house that has sturdily endured the test of time and weather, the Nicholson Farmhouse. Also nestled within the 45 acres are four other restored homes for dining. In addition to dining, you will find a gift shop, a barn, shed with antique farm implements, and a gazebo, all for your enjoyment.

## TALLAHASSEE'S DOWNTOWN MARKETPLACE

Saturdays are happening in downtown Tallahassee. Local musicians, authors, poets and artists gather to show and sell their wares. Add to the mix local farmers offering Mother Nature's best and you have a great way to spend your morning. Downtown Marketplace. Every Saturday 8 am – 2 pm March – November. Ponce De Leon Park.

## TALLAHASSEE'S CANOPY ROADS

Low sprawling oaks, draped with Spanish moss create dramatic emerald tunnels of dancing sunlight on these specially protected roads: Miccosukee, Centerville, Old St. Augustine, Meridian and Old Bainbridge – our version of Sleepy Hollow.

seum and includes displays about buried treasure, native people, turpentine makers, the citrus industry, and an early steamboat replica.

If you time your visit between March and November, be sure to check out Downtown Marketplace in Ponce de Leon Park. On Saturday mornings in this tranquil setting, artisans display their crafts while musicians croon and poets and authors give readings. Local farmers offer nature's best, and kids can participate in different arts and crafts activities.

Representatives from local restaurants sell their yummy specialties. This is a great place to eat breakfast or purchase a picnic meal before setting out to sightsee.

Moving out of downtown, don't miss the Tallahassee Museum of History and Natural Science, where you can see a real live Florida panther, the state's official animal, and other native wildlife.

On its beautiful, 52-acre lake-side setting, the museum combines a natural habitat zoo, a collection of historical buildings and artifacts, and an environmental science center — all linked along lovely, shaded paths.

It's worth it to rent the self-guided audio tours that take you back in time to an authentic 1880s Cracker farmstead, replete with farm animals and a veggie garden, and often the site of living history demonstrations.

Tour the 1924 Florida East Coast Railroad caboose, the 1890s Concord schoolhouse established to educate the children of former slaves, and an 1840s manor home moved here from a cotton plantation. Lastly, check out the B.O. Wood Turpentine Commissary, once a "company store" where turpentine workers shopped.

To glimpse life on the other end of the historical social spectrum, visit the Goodwood Museum and Gardens. This perfectly preserved plantation house, built circa 1840, is beautiful to behold. Huge velvet-draped windows, crystal chandeliers, gilt mirrors, marble fireplaces, European antique furniture, delicately painted ceilings and lofty canopied beds give you a feel for the luxuries of yesteryear. More than 70 antebellum plantations on 30,000 acres are found in the capital region between Tallahassee and Thomasville, Georgia, 28 miles to the north. Six are open to the public.

Outside Tallahassee, visit the delightful small towns of Quincy, Madison and Monticello, where the Opera House dominates the town square.

## WHITE SPRINGS

Tourists first came to White Springs to "take the waters." The mineral-filled springs along the northern bank of the Suwannee River were said to have healing properties.



Today, people flock to this area for its recreation opportunities, including biking, kayaking, canoeing and hiking along the Florida Trail.

The Stephen Foster Folk Culture Center State Park offers a permanent year-round craft village. Listen to the melodies flowing from the Memorial Carillon Tower, and see 10 exquisitely detailed dioramas illustrating the famous songs of composer Stephen Foster.

Enjoy a meal at the Place in the Park Cafe (waffles with fresh fruit, \$3.25), or sample the country cookin' at the Suwannee River Diner outside the park. Be sure to check out the diner's famous mural depicting the history and wildlife of the Suwannee River basin.

If you really want to know Florida, plan your visit to coincide with the annual Florida Folk Festival held at the park over Memorial Day weekend. This is a three-day love fest celebrating Florida's folk music and culture, with more than 250 concerts and 75 music, dance and storytelling workshops.

The Olustee Battle Re-Enactment, held the third weekend of February at Olustee Battlefield Historic State Park outside Lake City, is the largest Civil War re-enactment in the Southeast. Walk amidst a living history encampment, visit a period shopping area, chat with women flouncing about in hoop skirts, and cheer as Confederate soldiers rout the Yankees.



DOWNTOWN GAINESVILLE

## A LAND RICH IN HISTORY, WITH A CULTURAL MIX BRAIDED FROM THE INTERACTIONS OF THE SPANISH, INDIANS AND EARLY FLORIDA SETTLERS

### GAINESVILLE

Start your visit to Alachua County at the University of Florida's Cultural Plaza. Get an overview of Florida's flora and fauna at the Florida Museum of Natural History, the

largest collections-based natural history museum in the southeast. Walk through a replica limestone cave, run your

fingers over a mastodon skeleton, and learn about Florida's native peoples.

At the McGuire Center for Lepidoptera and Environmental Research, also known as the Butterfly Rainforest, stroll through the 65-foot-tall outdoor vivarium amidst thousands of fluttering, jeweled butterflies and relax to the sound of cascading waterfalls.

If you're an art lover, the permanent collections of the Samuel P. Harn Museum of Art include American, African, pre-Columbian, Asian and contemporary works. The Harn is home to Monet's "Champ d'avoine" (Oat Field), and offers lectures, tours and creative performances year-round.

The nearby Baughman Meditation Center adorns the shore of UF's Lake Alice like a crown jewel. An exquisite glass and inlaid wood chapel, this is the perfect spot to relax and watch alligators basking in the sun and ibis and herons wafting from cypress trees.

Find out how early settlers lived by visiting the Dudley Farm Historic State Park in nearby Newberry, where park staff perform farm chores in period clothing.

Pulitzer-prize winning author Marjorie Kinnan Rawlings wrote "The Yearling" at her Cross Creek home near Gainesville. Now

a state historic site named after her, Rawlings' clunky black typewriter still rests on a table on the front porch. Tour her home and garden – kept the way it was in the 1930s – and learn about the author's life, including her famous dinners with guests such as Ernest Hemingway.

It's easy to coordinate your visit to Alachua County with one of the area's many festivals. The largest and most vibrant are the Spring Arts Festival in April and the Annual Downtown Festival and Art Show in November.

South of Gainesville, visit Micanopy, the second-oldest town in the state, renowned for its antique stores. Go west to see Cedar Key, a quaint island town chocked with art galleries and restaurants, but still not commercialized.

No matter which direction you travel, you can't go wrong exploring Original Florida. ■