

## History and Nature

Blue Spring is a first magnitude spring that discharges over 70 million gallons of water daily into the St. Johns River.

When British "Colonial" botanist John Bartram paddled into Blue Spring in 1774, he appreciated the "**admirable fountain**" but objected to the water's "most disagreeable taste." Gold Rush prospector turned orange-grower Louis Thursby purchased a portion of Blue Spring in 1856. He built his house atop a large Indian midden in 1872. Before the railroad rolled through in the 1880s, Thursby's **Blue Spring Landing** was a hotbed of steamboat activity, shipping tourists and goods to Jacksonville and beyond. Mrs. Thursby was Orange City's first postmistress.

Years later, in 1971, "The Forgotten Mermaids" episode of the **Underwater World of Jacques Cousteau** was filmed here. The documentary brought attention to the manatee and the importance of Blue Spring as a winter refuge, greatly influencing the state's decision to purchase the land.

Blue Spring is the habitat for at least 15 threatened or endangered plants and animals. The park is the winter refuge for the West Indian manatee, home to the Florida scrub jay, gopher tortoise, black bear and one of only two known locations for the Okeechobee gourd. Look for herons and other wading birds near the water.

The clear spring run displays the flashing scales of gar and sunfish, while swimming turtles can be seen from 50 feet away. Listen for frog calls, gaze at a basking alligator or catch a glimpse of elusive migratory birds.

### Florida State Parks

Florida Department of Environmental Protection  
Division of Recreation and Parks

### Blue Spring State Park

2100 West French Avenue  
Orange City, FL 32763  
(386) 775-3663

[FloridaStateParks.org](http://FloridaStateParks.org)

### Park Guidelines

- Hours are 8 a.m. until sunset, 365 days a year.
- An entrance fee is required.
- All plants, animals and park property are protected. Collection, destruction or disturbance is prohibited.
- Pets are permitted in designated areas only. Pets must be kept on a leash no longer than six feet and well behaved at all times.
- Fishing, boating, swimming and fires are allowed in designated areas only. A Florida fishing license may be required.
- Fireworks and hunting are prohibited in all Florida state parks.
- Become a volunteer. Inquire at the ranger station.
- For camping information, contact Reserve America at (800) 326-3521 or (866) I CAMP FL or TDD (888) 433-0287 or visit [ReserveAmerica.com](http://ReserveAmerica.com).
- Florida's state parks are committed to providing equal access to all facilities and programs. Should you need assistance to enable your participation, please contact the ranger station.

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**State Parks**  
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Central  
Florida

## Blue Spring State Park

*Florida's premiere manatee refuge*



...the Real Florida<sup>SM</sup>



**National Gold Medal Winner**

Florida State Parks - "America's First Three-Time Winner"

## Real Fun in ...the Real Florida<sup>SM</sup>

Blue Spring State Park is the winter home to more than 300 manatees. Tucked within 2,643 acres are 21 natural communities, including 2 lagoons, a north-flowing river and a first-magnitude spring. Blue Spring State Park literally overflows with diversity.

**Stroll** along the 0.4 mile boardwalk that follows the flowing Blue Spring Run through a shady hardwood hammock. In the winter **watch manatees** swim, rest and play in the warm 72-degree waters. Enjoy a short **interpretive program** about the manatees of Blue Spring.

In the summer join the fun: **swim, tube, snorkel** or **dive** in the crisp 72-degree spring waters. **Sunbathe** on the lawn, **picnic** or **barbeque** with friends. Enjoy one of our three pavilions. Please note that our pavilions are first come first served.

Visitors staying in the Sand Pine Scrub **campground** or a **cabin** can **bicycle** or **walk** to the spring, or enjoy a long **hike** through our 3.6 mile Pine Island hiking trail. There are 51 campsites equipped with water, electricity, a picnic table and a fire ring and six fully-equipped cabins.

To explore the river further, rent a **canoe** or **kayak**, take a kayak tour or experience native plants and wildlife on a two-hour **river cruise**.

Take a **self-guided tour** through the historical Louis Thursby House.

Rentals, a gift shop, food and beverages are located at the park concession.



Boat Ramp



Cabins



Camping



Concession



Canoe Ramp



Canoeing



Hiking



Parking



Picnicking



Playground



Restrooms



Scuba Diving



Showers



Snorkeling



Swimming



Tubing

