

HISTORY & NATURE

The Savannas is comprised of thirteen natural communities: pine flatwoods, wet prairie, basin marsh, marsh lake, sand pine scrub and scrubby flatwoods. Each community is characterized by a distinct population of plants and animals that are naturally associated with each other and their physical environment.

Of particular interest is the sand pine scrub, a globally imperiled plant community covering the eastern boundary of the park. It is dominated by sand pines and is home to the Florida scrub-jay and gopher tortoise. Rare plant species, like the prickly apple cactus, Lakela's mint and four-petal pawpaw, dot the landscape.

The basin marsh covers nearly 1,500 acres. The landscape changes dramatically with the rainfall as does the wildlife that lives here. The deeper marsh lakes provide habitat for largemouth bass, alligators, waterfowl and bald eagles.

Archaeological evidence suggests native occupation of the area approximately 7,000 years ago. These native peoples inhabited the Atlantic Ridge, relying on the rich fauna and flora of the nearby Indian River.

During the Second Seminole War (1835-1842), Lt. Colonel Benjamin Pierce first used the term 'savannah' to describe a series of ponds and marshes found here. In 1879, Captain Thomas Richards planted the first pineapples, grown from cuttings he transported from Key West. The plants thrived in the sandy, well-drained soils and dozens of plantations appeared along the Atlantic Ridge. African Americans and Bahamians provided plantation labor working the fields in extremely uncomfortable conditions. From 1895 to 1920, Jensen Beach was known as the "Pineapple Capital of the World."



SAVANNAS PRESERVE STATE PARK

2541 Walton Road
Port St. Lucie, FL 34952
772-398-2779
www.friendsofsavannas.org

PARK GUIDELINES

Please remember these tips and guidelines, and enjoy your visit:

- Hours are 8 a.m. until sunset, 365 days a year. The Education Center is open 9 a.m. until 5 p.m., Thursday through Monday
- 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 6 feet and well behaved at all times.
- Equestrian activities are prohibited on the Atlantic Coastal Ridge due to the sensitivity of this endangered natural community.
- Only electric outboard motors are permitted in designated areas.
- Fireworks and hunting are prohibited in all Florida State Parks.
- Alcoholic beverage are not allowed.
- Inquire at the Education Center to volunteer.
- 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 Education Center at **772-398-2779**.

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SAVANNAS PRESERVE STATE PARK

*Largest freshwater marsh system
on Florida's southeast coast*



EXPERIENCES AND AMENITIES

Encompassing more than 6,800 acres and stretching more than 15 miles from Ft. Pierce to Jensen Beach, Savannas Preserve State Park contains the largest, most ecologically intact stretch of freshwater marsh in southeast Florida. The park offers visitors a variety of ways to explore and learn about this natural area.

Begin by visiting the Education Center located off Walton Road. The award-winning facility features interactive exhibits and displays on local history, the preserve's natural communities, plant and animal species and how the Florida Park Service is managing the park for future generations to enjoy. The center also features live animal exhibits.

Numerous interpretive activities are available to school groups and park visitors, including guided walks and kayak/canoe trips. Kayaking and canoeing are good ways to explore the Savannas, water levels permitting. A launching area is located .75 miles from the Education Center and affords visitors easy access to the basin marsh. A second launching area is located at the Evans Creek area on U.S. 1, offering visitors access to North Fork of the St. Lucie River. A small picnic pavilion and environmentally-friendly restroom are located nearby. For additional information, or to reserve a tour, please call the Education Center at 772-398-2779.

From the Walton Road entrance, hikers, bicyclists and horseback riders share more than 8.5 miles of multi-use trails. An equestrian area, located off nearby Scenic Park Drive, can easily accommodate trailers with plenty of space to unload horses.

The Park entrance at Jensen Beach Boulevard is the southernmost trailhead and offers park visitors a leisurely 1.5 mile hike to the marsh overlook. It has a picnic pavilion and restroom facilities.

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Savannas Preserve State Park

