

# Best of Florida

February 24 - March 5, 2022 • 10 Days • \$3475

Arrive: Jacksonville, FL

Depart: Miami, FL

## Florida Keys Extension

March 5-7, 2022 • 3 days • \$1290

Depart: Key West, FL

We are excited to invite you to this inaugural February foray through Florida to soak in some sun and explore the history, culture, and natural wonders of the Sunshine State! Join us for a brand-new adventure planned by Scott Isom, currently on-site in Florida scouting out this brand new Best of Florida walking adventure!

Here's the plan!

- The start point is Jacksonville and the end point of the main tour is Miami
- Extension travelers will fly home out of Key West

[Contact Us](#)

[Tour Type: Classic Curated](#)

- [Overview](#)

Florida is a unique place! It's the southernmost state in the 48 contiguous states; only Hawaii is further south. It's the only state in the lower 48 to enjoy a tropical climate. About two-thirds of Florida occupies the peninsula jutting down into the Gulf of Mexico, making it the only state that borders both the Gulf of Mexico and the Atlantic Ocean.

Florida is the flattest of any state in the U.S.; its highest point is just 345 feet above sea level. It has the longest coastline in the contiguous United States, over 1300 miles, not including its many islands (more than any state but Alaska).

Florida's unique geography results in several unique ecosystems, including Everglades National Park, largest tropical wilderness in the U.S. Furthermore, the Florida Reef is the only living coral barrier reef in the lower 48 and the third-largest barrier reef system in the world.

Situated only about 90 miles from Cuba, where Christopher Columbus first established a Spanish beachhead in the Americas, Florida became the first part of present-day United

States to be explored and settled by Europeans. It's seemingly endless coastline has shaped it historically and culturally, and its colonial history was followed by successive waves of migration. Today, nine out of the top ten fastest growing communities in the USA are in Florida! And with a population of over 21 million, Florida is the third-most populous state in the country.

We begin our Best of Florida survey in the north, looking across a confluence of rivers into Georgia from Fort Clinch before turning south along the Atlantic seaboard. From Kennedy Space Center, we cross the peninsula from west to east, picking up the Gulf of Mexico shoreline near Tampa. Unsurprisingly, many of our activities are water-based or near the water. The Everglades region occupies much of the southern part of the peninsula, and we explore it on an airboat tour before returning to the Atlantic Coast. The last couple days are spent in Fort Lauderdale and Miami, arguably the cultural heartland of Florida.

Those joining us for the optional Florida Keys Extension continue south along the coral cay archipelago on Highway 1, one of the more unique highways explored on a Walking Adventure, ending the tour at the southernmost point of the lower 48 at Key West.

### **What's Included**

- Airport-hotel shuttle at Jacksonville hotel; Hotel-airport shuttle at Miami hotel
- All land travel by motorcoach as outlined
- Tourist class or better hotel accommodations
- All breakfasts
- 12 walk routes as listed
- Walking fees for 7 walks for those collecting AVA walk credit (if AVA sanctions approved)
- WAI guide service throughout
- Pricing is based on double occupancy. A limited number of single rooms are available for a supplement of \$850. We also provide a roommate matching service for those interested.

### **Visits to/Admission fees**

- Fort Clinch State Park
- Fernandina Beach
- Fort Caroline
- St. Augustine
- Daytona Beach
- Blue Springs State Park
- Kennedy Space Center
- Bok Tower Gardens
- Tampa
- Honeymoon Island State Park
- Myakka River State Park
- JN "Ding" Darling National Wildlife Refuge
- Everglades airboat tour
- Fort Lauderdale

- Little Havana
- Miami South Beach
- More fun and educational stops than we can list!

### **Optional Excursions**

- Tarpon Bay Guided Kayaking Tour - Day 7
- Jungle Queen Sunset Dinner Cruise - Day 8

## **Optional Florida Keys Extension**

### **What's Included**

- Hotel-airport shuttle at Florida Keys hotel
- All land travel by motorcoach as outlined
- Superior tourist class hotel accommodations
- All breakfasts
- 1 walk route as listed
- Walking fees for 1 walks for those collecting AVA walk credit (if AVA sanctions approved)
- WAI guide service throughout
- Pricing is based on double occupancy. A limited number of single rooms are available for a supplement of \$475. We also provide a roommate matching service for those interested.

### **Visits to/Admission fees**

- Robbie's Marina
- Key West
- Other attractions along the Florida Keys to be determined during on-site planning

### **Optional Excursion**

- Dry Tortugas Excursion (Ferry, Lunch, Snorkeling, Fort Jefferson)

- [360.260.9393](tel:360.260.9393)
- [Email Us](#)



## Adventure Pace

**Tour Pace:** 1 2 3 4 5

**Walk Challenge:** 1 2 3 4 5

[About Adventure Pace](#)

## Adventure Pace

How much Adventure do you want? Here are a few features to help gauge the following factors on each tour.

**Tour Pace:** On a scale of 1 (slowest pace) to 5 (fastest pace), we've rated the following factors: number of 1-night hotels; driving miles per day; fullness of schedule; mid-tour

airline flights; high elevation setting; and average amount of walking per day.

**Walk Challenge:** This number represents an average walk difficulty rating for the tour using a scale of 1 (easiest) to 5 (hardest).

[Contact Us](#)

## Important Info



### Group Size

Maximum 22 travelers in a full size motorcoach



### Hotels

Strategically located Tourist Class accommodations or better



### Transportation

Included. For groups up to 22, we use motorcoaches with a seating capacity of 40-55 seats.



### Airfare

Not included. Travelers will fly into Jacksonville International Airport (JAX) and out of Miami International Airport (MIA) at the close of the main tour. Those on the optional Florida Keys Extension will depart from Key West International Airport (EYW).



### Meals

All breakfasts. Due to Covid-19 concerns, some breakfast may be grab and go breakfast bags. Few group meals



are included; when possible, optional group meals may be offered.



## Traveler Age

Our travelers usually range from 50-75 years of age. All ages welcome!

## Your Guides



**Scott Isom** has had a passion for the outdoors ever since his childhood days spent exploring the waterfalls and outstanding hiking trails of the Columbia River Gorge with his family. Scott has led tours on all 7 continents and is one of WAI's busiest guides and on-site Adventure planners. Scott will be conducting nearly 3 weeks of on-site planning in January 2022 and is super-eager to share his discoveries in the Sunshine State with a happy group of walkers!

## Itinerary

*Click on each day to reveal more details. B refers to meals included ~ Breakfast.*

## Best of Florida

[Day 1-February 24: Arrive Jacksonville, Florida](#)

Travelers arrive into Jacksonville today for the beginning of our Adventure exploring the Best of Florida! No activities are planned for today until our rendezvous at the hotel this evening for a Welcome Orientation get together.

### [Day 2-February 25: Jacksonville - St. Augustine \(B\)](#)

*Fernandina Beach Walk - 5 km, rated 1B*

*Jacksonville (Fort Caroline) Walk - 3 km, rated 1C (unsanctioned)*

Our exploration of the Sunshine State starts up north on the border with Georgia, the Peach State. Fort Clinch dates to the Civil War-era and is spectacularly sited on the river looking across into Georgia. It's considered one of the premier state parks in Florida! After time to explore the fort museum and beach, we continue to Fernandina Beach.

Fernandina Beach is actually a town, the northernmost city on the Florida Atlantic coast and the last town platted by the Spanish, in 1811, before the state was ceded to the USA in 1819. It's a lovely setting for our first walk in Florida, boasting a delightfully picturesque historic district replete with antebellum homes and evocative live oaks with their cloaks of Spanish moss.

Scenic driving from Fernandina Beach takes us south to Fort Caroline. Here, we stop for a 2 to 3 km walk from the Timucuan National Reserve Visitor Center, our first foray into Florida forest on a lovely natural trail with views of the St. John's River and the historic French fort.

We finish the day in St. Augustine. After hotel check-in, you're invited to join us for a dinner excursion into old town and a no-host dinner at the Columbia Restaurant, reputed to be Florida's oldest eating establishment, a likely claim given that St. Augustine is North America's oldest European-settled town (Juan Ponce de León explored that area in 1513!).

### [Day 3-February 26: St. Augustine - Daytona Beach \(B\)](#)

*St. Augustine Walk - 5 km, rated 1B*

*Daytona Beach Walk - 5 km, rated 1C*

Today's first walk takes us through "the oldest city in the United States", established by Spanish explorers in 1565. The route passes the picturesque old Spanish fort, Castillo San Marco, and takes us through a placid and thought-provoking National Cemetery and past numerous historical sites. The town's architecture showcases the legacy of Henry Flagler, one of the founders of Standard Oil Company and the creator of the currently operating Florida East Coast Railroad.

The second walk of the day features "America's Most Famous Beach", historic Jackie Robinson Baseball Stadium where #42 made his first appearance in the majors, as well as the restored downtown area of Daytona Beach and Riverfront Park.

After check-in at our hotel, travelers are invited to join us for another fun no-host dinner,

this time at Crabby's Oceanside, situated directly on Daytona Beach.

#### [Day 4-February 27: Daytona Beach - Kissimmee \(B\)](#)

*Blue Springs Manatee Walk - 3 km, unsanctioned*

Hundreds of manatees congregate at Blue Springs from mid-November to March to seek shelter from the cold. Boardwalks strategically routed through the park provide excellent viewing opportunities of these massive mammals, as well as a well-crafted set of informative signboards.

"That's one small step for man, one giant leap for mankind." These immortal words spoken by Neil Armstrong on the surface of the moon would not have been possible without the Kennedy Space Center. Our stop here is the centerpiece of today's activities, exploring the U.S. space program that was propelled into a sense of urgency in the 1960s during the Cold War with the Soviet Union.

We spend this evening in Kissimmee, in the vicinity of Orlando.

#### [Day 5-February 28: Kissimmee - Tampa \(B\)](#)

*Bok Tower Gardens Walk - 3/6 km, unsanctioned*

*Tampa Downtown Walk - 5/10 km, rated 2A*

Dedicated by owner Edward W. Bok to the American people, Bok Tower Gardens was designed by noted landscape architect Frederick Law Olmstead, Jr. and dedicated by President Calvin Coolidge in 1929. The 50-acre park abounds in ferns, palms, and pines, which form a lush backdrop for flowering foliage like azaleas, camellias and magnolias. A network of trails showcases the gardens and provide us with this morning's walk, either 3 or 6 kilometers according to your preference.

The afternoon activity is in Tampa, known for its combination of historical architecture and modern landmarks, which we plan to explore on the local club walk. The walk starts from our historic hotel and offers you the option of a 5 km or a 10 km walk, featuring lovely Hillsborough River and Tampa Bay views, the Bayshore Trail, the University of Tampa campus, and a number of fun surprises.

#### [Day 6-March 1: Tampa - Fort Myers \(B\)](#)

*Honeymoon Island State Park Walk - 5 km, rated 1C*

*Myakka River Canopy Walk - 3 km, unsanctioned*

Honeymoon Island State Park is across Tampa Bay and offers lovely nature trails with abundant bird sightings, including osprey, pelicans, eagles, roseate spoonbills, and more. This is our first chance to walk along the Gulf of Mexico, a short, sandy section littered with lovely seashells.



More Florida fun awaits on the drive towards Fort Myers at Myakka River State Park. We'll use the park for a picnic stop, with some bonus walking available to view wildlife, with a good chance to see alligators!

Further into the park, we experience an elevated walk through a live oak canopy with panoramic views of the Myakka River basin. Bromeliads and resurrection fern play prominently into our walk both in the canopy and at ground level, where we pick up the boardwalk on the Boylston Nature Trail.

### [Day 7-March 2: Fort Myers - Naples \(B\)](#)

*JN "Ding" Darling National Wildlife Refuge Walk - 8 km, unsanctioned*

We spend a memorable day today on Sanibel Island! Three popular trails at JN "Ding" Darling National Wildlife Refuge give us great vantage points to enjoy Florida's best place to see egrets, roseate spoonbills, herons, and ibis, not to mention raptors and the smaller birds, and maybe even an alligator! It will be a bit like a wildlife treasure hunt!

Our lunch break is at Sanibel Lighthouse Beach Park, a gorgeous setting for a picnic looking out over the Gulf of Mexico. The afternoon options include relaxing at Sanibel Lighthouse, perhaps enjoying a swim in the Gulf of Mexico, or just a chance for some relaxing beach time. Alternatively, consider the optional guided kayak tour in Tarpon Bay, considered one of the top kayaking spots in the whole country! Mangrove forest and shallow lakes create an environment rich in bird, fish, and even crab life. This experience is kayaking at its easiest. The tour is about 2 to 2½ hours long. Estimated price: \$50 per person

Kayakers and beach goers rendezvous mid-afternoon for a drive south toward the Gulf-side town of Naples.

### [Day 8-March 3: Naples - Fort Lauderdale \(B\)](#)

*Fort Lauderdale Walk - 6 km, rated 1A*

An airboat is the quintessential vessel to navigate this extensive Everglades mosaic of swampland and waterways. Our boats seat 6 passengers and we are fitted with 2-way radios enabling communication with the guide as we whizz through mangrove tunnels, and through this watery world of teeming life.

Back on the Atlantic side of the state, we enjoy a memorable walk in Fort Lauderdale along the Riverwalk, imbibing wonderful Atlantic Ocean panoramas, and sampling a seemingly endless network of canals lined with yachts and mansions of the rich and famous. What a great way to switch gears for the last few days of the trip in southern Florida.

Even better, after checking into our hotel, join us this evening for an optional Jungle Queen Sunset Dinner Cruise, an enchantingly relaxing trip through the "Venice of Florida" past countless multi-million-dollar homes and yachts, arriving at a private island for a tasty

dinner. Estimated price: \$75 per person

#### [Day 9-March 4: Fort Lauderdale - Miami \(B\)](#)

*Miami South Beach (Art Deco & Atlantic) Walk - 6 or 11 km, rated 1A*

This morning we experience Miami South Beach's Art Deco and Atlantic Walk featuring the Holocaust Memorial, Lincoln Avenue Mall, an eye-catching collection of art deco architecture, spectacular South Pointe Park, and the enchanting Atlantic coast along the Marina Walk.

Little Havana is the perfect place to grab lunch. We hope to offer a short walking tour as well.

#### [Day 10-March 5: Depart Florida from Miami \(B\)](#)

Travelers on the main tour only depart the Sunshine State today from Miami. What an excellent way to gain a reprieve from the chill of a northern winter. Return home refreshed and looking forward to welcoming the Spring of 2022! Thank you for sharing the Best of Florida with us!

## Florida Keys Extension

#### [Day 1-March 5: Miami - Key West \(B\)](#)

*7 Mile Bridge - 6.5 km, rated 1A*

*Key West Walk - 5 or 10 km, rated 1A*

The bulk of the day is spent driving the Florida Keys, a coral cay archipelago that forms the southernmost part of the continental United States. We plan to sprinkle stops into the drive like Robbie's, a fun and famous tourist attraction where you can experience the novelty of hand-feeding the tarpon! A walk out over the water at 7 Mile Bridge is a great way to stretch our legs and enjoy the unique Florida bird life.

And of course, we have a stop for Key Lime Pie in mind as well! Late afternoon and evening is spent in Key West enjoying the Key West Walk, boasting a plethora of attractions including sites linked to President Harry Truman and beloved author Ernest Hemingway.

#### [Day 2-March 6: Activities in Key West \(B\)](#)

Today is a free day to explore more of Key West. Some walkers may want to save part of the local club walk for today. Attractions in Key West include the Hemingway Home and Museum, the Truman Little White House (President Truman loved to get away to Key West), and the Southernmost Point in the Continental USA.

#### *Optional Dry Tortugas National Park Excursion*

Made up of seven small islands, the Dry Tortugas is one of the world's most unique eco-

attractions. In addition to its natural wonders, the national park service preserves picturesque and historic Fort Jefferson and exploring the grounds of this evocative brick monstrosity is definitely a highlight of the visit. This is a full day experience including about 5 hours in transit by boat (round-trip) and 4 ½ hours on the island exploring the fort, enjoying the beaches, the lighthouse, and Bush Key and Long Key, with their lovely white sand beaches and occasionally conch shells. A guided tour includes stories of how Fort Jackson was used as a prison during the Civil War. Snorkeling and other activities are also available. Breakfast and lunch are included. Excursion price: \$215 per person

### [Day 3-March 7: Depart Key West \(B\)](#)

What a great way to escape the frigid climes of the North. We leave Florida this morning from the southernmost airport in the continental USA! Thanks for sharing the Best of Florida and the Key West Extension with us this winter!

## More Details

*Click on each heading for more details.*

### [How Do I Lock in My Place on This Adventure?](#)

To register, a non-refundable \$200 deposit is required to hold your spot. A final payment is due 60 days before departure and is non-refundable once paid. You will receive a prompt email from us a week or two in advance.

An email with critical information on flight arrangements will be sent soon after registration, as well as important steps to take in the months before your trip. Please do not buy your airline tickets until you review the Flight Arrangements email.

Please follow this link to read our full [General Tour Conditions](#).

### [What's a Classic Curated Tour?](#)

With help from local experts and walking guides, these itineraries are crafted with extensive on-site planning by WAI tour planners.

When planning Classic Curated Tours, our objective is to capture the essence of a destination—the history, culture, and natural wonders unique to that part of the world. We then build activities and walks that take us *inside* these characteristics.

Yes, these tours are educational, but they are also interactive and immersive; walking gets us off the bus and penetrates local cultures to not only see, but also touch, smell, and feel these special spaces.

Along the way, interactions with locals amplify the experience by sharing insights into the magic of that particular location.

## [Walk Ratings](#)

We generally walk at a pace of 2 to 3 miles per hour. Several walks on this trip are oriented more towards education, and therefore take longer due to stops for guide commentary. Nature walks, on the other hand, generally continue at a steadier pace because we're stopping less to talk.

In most cases, we are not "strolling." We are walking at a relaxed but steady pace. Your experience will be significantly affected by your level of physical fitness. If not walking regularly at home, we strongly recommend that you make a priority of "training" beforehand to both enjoy the trip and avoid medical issues due to overexertion. If you have questions about your ability to participate, please contact our office at [fun@walkingadventures.com](mailto:fun@walkingadventures.com).

We have adopted a walk difficulty rating system which contains a numeric indicator for trail incline and an alpha indicator for trail terrain. The explanation for this system is presented on the table below:

### **INCLINE**

1. Minimal hills or stair climbing. Cumulative elevation gain: <200 feet.
2. Some moderate hills and stair climbing. Cumulative elevation gain: 200-1000 feet.
3. Some significant hill or stair climbing. Cumulative elevation gain: 1000-2000 feet.

### **TERRAIN**

- A. Almost entirely on pavement.
- B. A significant part of the route is on well-groomed trails with very few obstacles.
- C. A significant part of the route is on somewhat difficult terrain (rocky / rooted paths or soft sand).

## [Tour Accommodations](#)

Good quality, tourist-class accommodations are the standard for our Adventure. Most accommodations on this tour are selected primarily as a practical base from which to pursue our itinerary. Many, but not all, of our accommodations on this adventure are either single-floor or two-floors with elevators. Travelers should be able to carry their luggage up a number of steps to get to a second-floor room if necessary.

## [How is Airfare Arranged?](#)

The main tour starts in Jacksonville, Florida, and finishes in Miami. The extension finishes in Key West, Florida.

Travelers will fly into Jacksonville International Airport (JAX) and out of Miami International Airport (MIA) at the close of the main tour. Those on the optional Florida Keys Extension will depart from Key West International Airport (EYW).

We recommend that you contact Laura Pfahler, the travel agent we work with, to help book your flight arrangements. In this age of airfare complications and airport uncertainty, using a travel agent is a good investment! More details about flight arrangements and travel agent contact information will be provided by email after you register for the Adventure. Please do not book your airfare prior to receiving these flight details from us!

### [Travel Insurance](#)

WAI believes strongly in the importance of travel insurance for financial and medical protection from any number of unforeseen circumstances that can arise before departure or during your Adventure. This is now especially true in the era of COVID-19, which is typically treated like any other illness for travel insurance purposes. Many travel insurance providers are available for you to consider. Laura Pfahler and Sharon Mitchell of World Travel Inc. are travel agents who provide air travel and insurance services to many WAI travelers.

- Laura Pfahler: 503.434.6401 or [llp@wtpdx.com](mailto:llp@wtpdx.com)
- Sharon Mitchell: 971.261.2091 or [smitchell@wtpdx.com](mailto:smitchell@wtpdx.com)

Check out [Insurance Tips](#) from World Travel for a short introduction to travel insurance. (NOTE: WAI receives no commission or financial remuneration from World Travel Inc.).

As always, do some shopping to ensure you are getting the best value. Using the [SquareMouth.com](https://www.squaremouth.com) website can be a good way to compare pricing.

Other options include:

- Allianz
- Betins
- Travel Guard
- Travel Insured International

*NOTE: We suggest purchasing from a reputable, well-established insurance company (avoid buying insurance from an unknown company found only online). Travelers interested in purchasing "cancel for any reason" insurance coverage should be careful to check pricing and terms BEFORE they register for a tour. Recent changes in the international travel landscape has caused changes in the policies of some insurance companies, and made the purchase of this particular type of policy even more time-sensitive.*

### [Tour Cancellations](#)

Walking Adventures International reserves the right to cancel this tour departure with fewer than 12 participants, in which case registered participants will receive a 100% refund of payments received. This refund policy contains one exclusion related to the COVID-19 outbreak. Many suppliers require non-refundable deposits as a condition of booking services. Unforeseen circumstances linked to the virus can force us to cancel a tour. Due to these supplier's non-refundable policies, WAI attempts to retrieve as much of these deposits as possible, but cannot guarantee a 100% refund. In cases where full refunds cannot be



obtained for a cancelled tour, we will do our best to transfer unrefunded money as traveler credits to be applied to a future tour to that destination.

View our full [Coronavirus FAQ](#) for more details.

### [COVID-19 Policies and Procedures](#)

[Our Approach to Fun but Prudent Travel](#) document identifies and explains Covid-19 mitigation policies and procedures WAI is using as a starting point for our 2022 tours. Because the knowledge base about COVID-19 changes daily, we review these policies and procedures on an ongoing basis, and will, of course, notify travelers of updates as we approach the departure date of your tour.

### [COVID-19 Travel Waiver](#)

During this age of COVID-19, WAI evaluates worldwide reports and conditions on an ongoing basis. Please read [Our Approach to Fun but Prudent Travel](#) document before registering for the tour. Part of the registration process is affirming the terms of the [COVID-19 Travel Waiver](#).

Participation in this tour requires your assent to these terms.

### [What Happens Next?](#)

Upon registering for this Adventure, you will receive a welcome email and initial invoice notifying you of your tour balance and due date. You will be able to make that payment online or over the phone. Any other payments necessary for optional services or one-off decisions can also be made either way.

A Flight Arrangements email with critical information on booking your flights will be sent soon after registration, as well as important steps to take in the months before your trip. Please do not buy your airline tickets until you review the Flight Arrangements email.

About 70 days before departure, you will receive a final statement reminder about the final tour payment, which is due 60 days before departure. Please see our [General Tour Conditions](#) for the full terms and conditions for participation in this Adventure.

Around 2-3 weeks before departure, you will receive a final email packet with details of the program, including hotel names and contact information, a list of fellow travelers, and a more detailed daily schedule.

Take a few minutes to peruse the *Best of Florida* itinerary. We are thrilled to finally apply our walking style of travel in the Sunshine State with you!