

# THE P • A • R • K • S

*Featuring the fine stalking and camera skills of our own Becky Hinson on her visits to local wildlife preserves and parks*



Are you tired of hiking with me yet? Ready to toss out those worn out hiking shoes? If so, I've got the State Park for you. **Washington Oaks Garden State Park** is located at 6400 North Oceanshore Blvd in Palm Coast. While it takes an hour to arrive, it's a pleasant drive.

The hours are 8 a.m. until sunset, 365 days a year. Admission is \$5 per vehicle (two to eight people) and \$2 for pedestrians, bicyclists, extra passengers in a vehicle with the holder of an Annual individual Entrance Pass. It's \$4 for a single-occupant vehicle. Pavilion Rental is \$50 a day. Bring correct change to place in the honor box.

This park is on the Great Florida Birding and Wildlife Trail. You can enjoy a variety of habitats including the Matanzas River, the formal gardens or the beach. The land is part of the Bella Vista Plantation once owned by a Floridian of Minorcan descent, General Joseph Hernandez. Being of Minorcan descent, myself, it makes exploring the park even more interesting to me. The Plantation raised cotton, sugar and crops. Much of what you see today was left by Owen Young who bought the property in 1937 and used it as a winter retreat. After his death, Mrs. Young donated the property to the State of Florida in 1964.

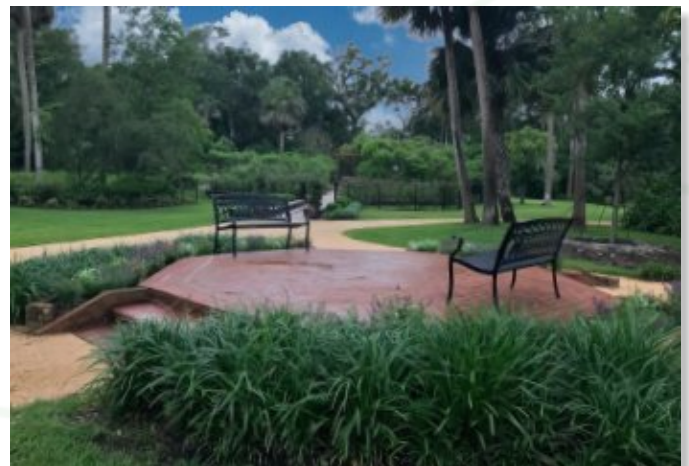
If you enjoy fishing, surf fishing is allowed on the beach or you can fish from the seawall on the Matanzas River. All fishing within the park must conform to regulations concerning size, number, method of capture and season. You can confirm with the

Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission website (Fishing in Florida) to determine if a fishing license is required.

Washington Oaks has trails for both hiking and biking. The Bella Vista trail is a 1.7 mile system which explores a mature coastal maritime hammock and ventures into the edge of a dense coastal scrub. The Mala Compra hike is a half mile loop between the coastal maritime hammock and the estuarine tidal marsh along the Matanzas River.

Pets are permitted only in designated areas and must be well behaved and on a leash no longer than 6 feet. Picnicking, sunbathing, beachcombing and birdwatching are all enjoyed by visitors. However, swim at your own risk due to the coquina rock formations along the beach.

My favorite area is the centerpiece formal garden. The gardens are known for their azaleas, roses and camellias. Exotic plants from around the world are displayed. You can sit in the shade and enjoy the reflecting ponds. Ranger guided walks are available with a reservation. Amenities include restrooms, visitor center, gift shop, picnic pavilion and a playground.



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PHOTOS THIS PAGE:  
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