





FUN IN THE SUN

Summer is upon us and we're all looking for ways to escape — and possibly even enjoy — the heat. Instead of whimpering about the temperature, lather on the sunscreen, fill those water bottles and check out these Lake County outdoor adventures.

WRITER: MARY ANN DESANTIS

MAKE A SPLASH

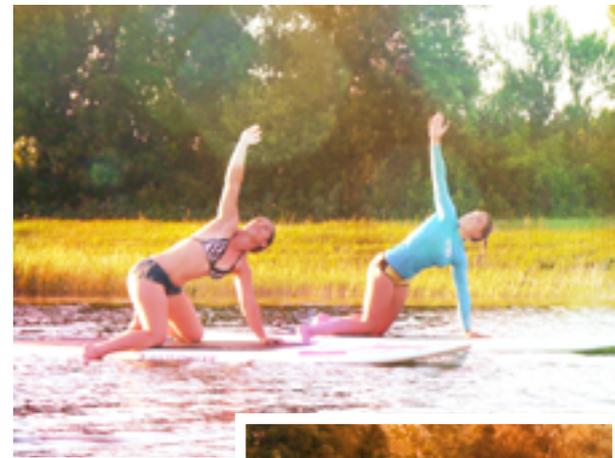
Whether you're using them to perfect your downward-facing dog pose or explore the gorgeous 11 connecting lakes of South Lake, paddleboards are all the rage at Clermont Waterfront Bikes & Boards on Lake Minneola's shores. On Wednesdays at 6p.m. and Saturdays at 8a.m., you can wind down with an hourlong paddle around the lake and then enjoy yoga aboard that same board.

"It's not as hard as you would think," says Dawn Engle, who co-owns Clermont Waterfront Bikes & Boards with her husband, Tim. "The boards are anchored about 100 to 150 feet offshore for the yoga portion."

Open since October 2013, the company also rents kayaks and bicycles every day during the summer and on weekends in the fall. Rentals begin at \$7 an hour for bicycles and \$30 for two hours of paddleboarding or kayaking. Half-day rentals are the most popular and those rates are \$55 for kayaks and paddleboards. Be sure to check the company's Facebook page for specials.

CLERMONT WATERFRONT BIKES & BOARDS

15 Second St., Clermont
352.394.0535
clermontwaterfrontbikesandboards.com



A WALK IN THE WOODS

Bourlay Historic Nature Park, just off U.S. Highway 441, is not only an important part of Leesburg's history but also a great fitness adventure. Six intertwining wooded and well-shaded trails combine for 2.28 miles of hiking or off-road bicycling along Lake Griffin. Buddy's Bounty Trail, at nearly a half-mile long, also features 10 exercise stations with instructions.

Managed by the Lake County Water Authority, Bourlay is best for leisurely hikes during which you can bird-watch, picnic and bone up on Leesburg's history. The 88-acre property was the site of the area's first steamboat landing and the first Methodist Church service. Originally owned by the Lee family, the park was

donated by Arthur "Buddy" Bourlay III in 1999.

Kayaks are available for rent, but call to reserve first. Bourlay is also considered one of Lake County's best birding venues, so take your binoculars. Be sure to visit the shotgun-style Cracker House and the native plant butterfly garden near the park's entrance.

BOURLAY HISTORIC NATURE PARK

910 Canal St., Leesburg
352.343.3777
(phone is for Lake County Water Authority)
lcwa.org



TAKE A QUACK AT THIS

Sometimes summer fun calls for just getting down and dirty, and there's no better place than Revolution Off Road, where you can have the ultimate off-road adventures on ATVs, dune buggies, or in Mucky Ducks. The amphibious all-terrain Mucky Ducks run on both land and in water and take water, mud and sand all in stride.

Leave the land behind and motor across a 60-acre private lake that's home to alligators, soft-shell turtles and numerous bird species. The all-weather vehicle operates rain or shine, but you must be at least 18 years old with a valid driver's license to take your turn at the wheel. The four-passenger vehicle rents for \$75 and includes a guide who will show you the real Florida, real close.

Prices vary for other ATV and dune buggy rentals. Be sure to check the Revolution Off-Road website for daily specials.

REVOLUTION OFF ROAD

4000 State Road 33, Clermont
352.400.1322
revolutionoffroad.com





NATURE'S COOLEST WATERING HOLE

Alexander Springs is one of Mother Nature's coolest places, especially for families looking for the perfect watering hole on hotter-than-hot summer days. The crystal-clear waters maintain a year-round temperature of 72 degrees, and summertime is the most popular at the Alexander Springs Recreation Area, on the eastern side of the Ocala National Forest near Altoona and Umatilla.

The recreation area also features hiking trails, canoe and kayak rentals, and large picnic areas, making it the perfect spot for a family *daycation*.

It's the natural springs, though, that attract people from as far away as Europe.

"Our main attraction is probably scuba diving," says Linda Dick, co-manager of the recreation area. "We get quite a few scuba divers from Europe."

Certified scuba divers and snorkelers can get up close views of the aquatic vegetation and fish in the springs. Scuba diving is permitted only in the large spring boil, which discharges fresh water at 107 cubic feet per second.

The large spring pool, where kids can play all day, features a sand beach on one portion with stairs leading into the gently sloping pool. Most of the Alexander Springs shoreline features native Florida vegetation.

Entry fee to the day-use area is \$5.50 per person. Rental fees for kayaks and canoes vary from hourly rates to day rates.

ALEXANDER SPRINGS RECREATION AREA

49525 County Road 445, Altoona
352.669.3522
floridasprings.org

Photo provided by Alan Youngblood



ALL ABOARD!

If you prefer to stay dry, a nostalgic, peaceful train ride through two of Lake County's most beautiful cities may be just the ticket.

The Orange Blossom Cannonball, Central Florida's historic train on the Tavares, Eustis & Gulf Railroad, began offering the 10-mile journey between Tavares and Mount Dora last spring. Passengers can depart from one town, have lunch and shop in the other, and then return an hour and a half later to their original destination. Departure times from Mount Dora are 11 a.m. and 1:30 p.m., and from Tavares at noon and 2:30 p.m. on weekends. Prices begin at \$14.95.

The vintage coaches are pulled by a 1907 steam locomotive or a 1941 GE 45 ton center cab locomotive. Known as the "movie train," the Orange Blossom Cannonball was used in more than 20 television shows and motion pictures including "True Grit," "Appaloosa," "3:10 to Yuma," and "O Brother, Where Art Thou?"

In addition to the new route between Mount Dora and Tavares, the Orange Blossom Cannonball also offers special excursions such as the Wild West Shoot-Out, a pizza train and a wine-and-cheese excursion. Check the website for schedules and times.

ORANGE BLOSSOM CANNONBALL, TAVARES & MOUNT DORA

100 E. Ruby St., Tavares
150 W. Third Ave., Mount Dora
352.742.7200
orangeblossomcannonball.com



SPLISHING 'N' SPLASHING IN WOOTON PARK

A new generation of Lake County children has rediscovered Tavares' historic Wooton Park after a seaplane themed splash park was added when the park was revitalized a few years ago.

The "splash pad," complete with a colorful water-spewing seaplane sculpture, brought new life to the 6-acre park on Ruby Street. From the park, you can ride in a vintage train car, rent a kayak, take a boat cruise, get spooked on a ghost tour, or just enjoy watching seaplanes land on Lake Dora.

Entry fee to the splash park is \$2, and proper bathing suit attire must be worn.

TAVARES CHILDREN'S SPLASH PARK

100 E. Ruby St., Tavares
352.742.6267
tavares.org/910/Childrens-Splash-Park



Photo by Shayne Casto

