

Off the Beaten Path in VOLUSIA COUNTY

The COVID-19 pandemic has really placed a halt on major travel plans. No exotic cruises, trips to Europe, or flying to see relatives. What can you do that is safe, fun, and educational? Let's explore some of the places that are off the beaten path that even most locals do not know about. There are some really cool historic places that are safe, educational, and even better, free. By exploring the nooks and crannies of our county we can learn more about our local history and environment. Let's check out some of these unusual places.

GREEN SPRINGS

994 Enterprise-Osteen Road | Deltona, FL

Let's start in the west part of the county on Lake Monroe. Green Springs in Enterprise, Florida is an unusual spring that has a bright rich green color and gives off a strong smell of sulfur. This 36-acre park is replete with walking and biking trails, and connects to the Spring-to-Spring bicycle trail. Beautiful oaks draped in Spanish moss lean over the boil and spring run to Lake Monroe. Dappled rays of sunshine penetrate into the mysterious green waters. The overall impression is otherworldly. The history of Green Springs stretches back to paleo-Indians over 6,000 years ago. In the early 1840s, pioneers discovered the Green Springs that they believed contained healing properties. From 1858 to 1900, several lodging facilities sprung up that provided housing and access to the healing waters for northern tourists.



One famous lodging facility was the famous Brock House Hotel built in 1856 by steamboat captain and riverboat pioneer Jacob Brock. He would transport tourists from all over the world from Jacksonville to his hotel with his steamboat. Their stay included

the nearby springs for fun, healing, and relaxation. Famous people like Ulysses S. Grant, the Vanderbilts, Harriet Beecher Stowe, and Henry DeLand were all guests at the Brock House where they participated in fishing, hunting, and of course, swimming in the healing waters of the Green Springs. A visit today includes biking, hiking, and picnicking, but swimming is not allowed. Green Springs is located at 994 Enterprise-Osteen Road in Deltona, Florida.



DEBARY HALL HISTORIC SITE

198 Sunrise Blvd. | DeBary, Florida

About five miles down the road from Green Springs is DeBary Hall Historic Site. In 1871, Frederick DeBary, the Mumm's Champagne Agent for North America, built this 8,000 square foot Victorian hunting lodge. After his wife passed away, he ventured down to Florida on a hunting and fishing trip where he stayed at the famous Brock House Hotel. He fell in love with the area and purchased 10,000 acres to build his winter retreat which reflected the excesses and grandeur of the Gilded Age. In addition, he developed a major steamship line on the St. John's River and pioneered the local citrus business industry. The three-story Victorian home had a primitive form of electricity, floor to ceiling windows, an icehouse, and stables for the horses. Today, this restored historic house museum is a great place to learn about life on the St. John's River. If you visit, it is located at 198 Sunrise Blvd., DeBary, Florida.

LAKE WOODRUFF NATIONAL WILDLIFE REFUGE

2045 Mud Lake Rd. | DeLeon Springs, Florida

Moving north along the St. John's River, the Lake Woodruff National Wildlife Refuge is one of the best places to hike, observe wading birds, and view beautiful vistas. In 1823, Major Joseph Woodruff sold the property to Colonel Orlando Rees and he developed Spring Garden Plantation where he raised corn and cotton. In 1831, the famous ornithologist and artist, John James Audubon visited the area for a weekend as he was searching for Florida birds for his magnificent art book, The Birds of America. Not long after his visit the Second Seminole War erupted, and the plantation was burned. In 1952, an agricultural group invested in levees and impoundments to grow rice, but the adventure failed. In 1964, the acreage was handed over to the federal government as conservation land and was opened to the public in the early 1970s. Today the refuge makes up 30,000 acres of marshes, lakes, swamps and is home to over 234 species of birds. It is an important resting stop for birds on the flyway between South and North America. There are three shallow impoundments and over 50 miles of waterways and 6.5 miles of trails. You can walk or bike on the dikes surrounding the water impoundments. Bring your binoculars as the vistas are breathtaking. It is located at 2045 Mud Lake Rd, De Leon Springs, Florida.



THE OLD DAYTONA-DELAND ROAD

Located in the Tiger Bay State Forest

The Old Daytona-DeLand Road is an important historic road that connected the county's most populous city, Daytona Beach, to the county seat in DeLand. Originally a simple sand path through the palmettos, a trip by horse and cart to conduct important business at the courthouse took six to eight hours and required an overnight stay before returning the following day. Once the horseless carriage became the norm, better roads were required. In 1917, the Daytona to DeLand Road was paved with bricks and the improved road was renamed the Pershing Highway after General John J. Pershing. Today U.S. 92 parallels its original path. Remarkably, the firestorm of 1998 burnt the forest debris and exposed part of the original brick road. Today, a portion of the road can be hiked or driven on. This transports the visitor back in time to when travel was an effort, and not just a half hour drive between the cities. It is located in Tiger Bay State Forest approximately seven miles west of Daytona Beach off of U.S. 92.



CANAVERAL NATIONAL SEASHORE

Parking Lot 8 at 7611 South Atlantic Avenue
New Smyrna Beach, Florida

Another great day trip is to head to the Canaveral National Seashore and visit the ghost town of Eldora, Florida. The only extant building is the beautiful Eldora State House which overlooks the

marshes and waterways of the Mosquito Lagoon. It houses a museum where visitors can learn about the settlement. Originally, the town was established in 1877 and consisted of roughly 100 pioneering people who made a living growing citrus, fishing, and collecting saw palmetto berries. During the great Florida freezes of 1894 and 1895, the temperatures dropped to 17 degrees in the area for multiple days and wiped out the citrus industry in the town. After the Florida East Coast Railroad bypassed the town, the pioneer community began to decline.



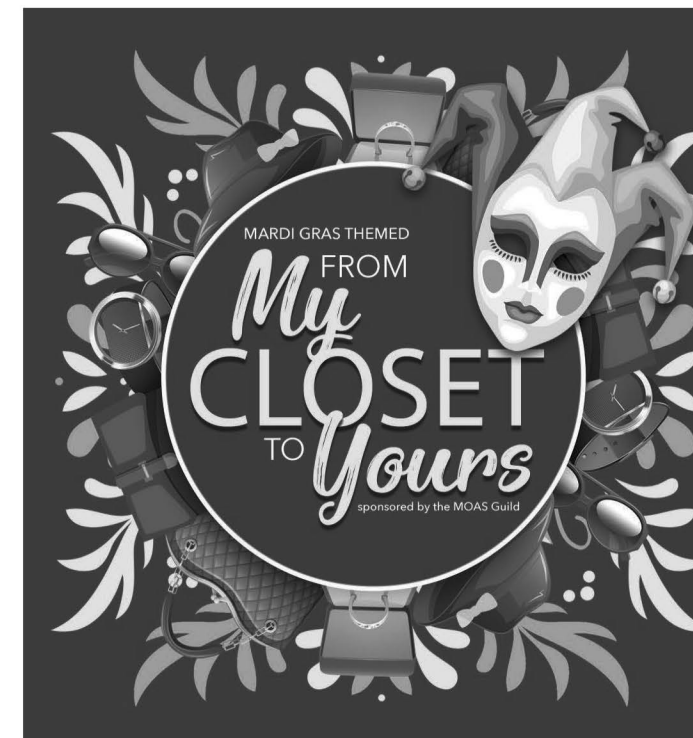
What happened to the town? Many of the homes changed hands as the original residents sold their homes to wealthy northerners who were looking for a fishing paradise. The Great Depression hastened the community's decline and the last resident left during this era. The Eldora State House was built in 1912 and was known originally as Moulton's Place. Take a stroll through 100-year-old oaks to see the great vista of the Mosquito Lagoon and the restored Eldora State House. There are some short walking trails, but it is the view of the lagoon that is mesmerizing. The town of Eldora is located at near the end of the Canaveral National Seashore Parking Lot 8 at 7611 South Atlantic Avenue, New Smyrna Beach, Florida.

INSTONE HOUSE

Located in Oak Hill, Florida

On the mainland side of the Canaveral National Seashore is the Seminole Rest Historic House located in Oak Hill, Florida. It is built on a waterfront Timucuan shell mound dating back 4,000 years. This late Victorian style home, called the Instone House, is attributed to Hatton Tumor who owned it from 1890 to 1911. There is some speculation it may have been constructed somewhere else and moved to top of the shell mound to save it from being used as road fill for the railroad. This was great foresight by Hatton Tumor as the majority of shell mounds in Volusia County were destroyed or partially destroyed. In 1911, Wesley H. Synder purchased the home, and it remained in his estate until the 1990s. Seminole Rest was donated to the Nature Conservancy and then became part of the Canaveral National Seashore. Even if you cannot visit the inside of the house, the grounds are beautiful and natural. From Route 1 in Oak Hill, turn east at light on Halifax Avenue, then north on River Road to the entrance about 1.5 miles from Route 1. Check their website for more information about its hours of operation.

This is just a smattering of the historic places that are off the beaten path that are easy to find, free to visit, and safe during the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic. As far as entry into any of the houses, please check with management to make sure they are currently open to the public. These places are perfect for the nature lover and history buff as so much of what to see is outside with huge open spaces and very few visitors. History and Florida's natural environment make these off the beaten path places a great combination during a time when it is hard to travel. If you want to feel like you are a million miles from nowhere, I highly recommend packing a lunch and enjoy the views.



TUESDAY, FEBRUARY 9, 2021

10:30AM *at the Halifax Plantation Golf Club*

RSVP & TICKETS CONTACT ZAYNA GIBSON
AT 386.788.2677 NO LATER THAN
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