All permittees will be required to print their own permits and parking placards. You may print your permit up to 7 days in advance of your trip. Once your permit is printed, no changes will be authorized.

Know Before You Go

Being prepared is critical for your overnight trip into the Okefenokee. Whether you are staying one night or four, there are many things to consider as you get ready for your trip. Please remember that it is your responsibility to be prepared for a Wilderness experience, which may include temperature changes, precipitation/thunderstorms, difficult trail navigation, and other factors.

• Check the weather conditions prior to your trip – be prepared!
• Each camping group is limited to 20 people.
• Entrance fees are included in the Wilderness Camping Permit.
• Any additions or changes to permits must be completed prior to departure.
• Portable toilets with disposable bags are recommended. Restroom facilities are available at overnight stops and day-use shelters.
• Portable camp stoves are required for cooking in areas where campfires are not permitted.
• There will only be one group per overnight platform. However, day use visitors access a large portion of the Wilderness Trail System and day use shelters.
• Water filters are NOT recommended for drinking water.

Rules and Regulations

• Canoes and kayaks only are permitted on overnight camping trips. Although boats with small motors are permitted on portions of the water trail system for day-use, absolutely no motors (electric or gas-powered) are authorized on overnight trips.
• The Wilderness Camping Permit must be carried by each boat in the party and must be printed by the permittee.
• Parties must launch before 10 am to ensure that the overnight stop is reached before dark each day. All members of the party must be present at time of departure.

How Difficult is Paddling in the Okefenokee?

Consider the skill level of individuals in your party before choosing a trail! The swamp terrain is flat; there is little moving water/current and dry land is scarce. Your paddle will be used every inch of the way as you wind through cypress forests or cross open prairies exposed to the sun and wind. Paddling can be slow and strenuous on shallow and/or narrow trails. You may have to get out of your canoe and push across peat blowups, shallow water, or trees.

You must remain at the designated overnight area between sunset and sunrise. Each party must leave the platform by 10 am.

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You need to have a profile in Recreation.gov The cancellation policy is as follows: There is a $10.00 non-refundable reservation fee in addition to changing the date of entry, the number of days, or the number of guests. Thunderstorms, high winds, high humidity, and other factors include temperature extremes (highs and lows), precipitation, and wind speed. It is imperative that you keep on the most direct trail to the platform specified on your permit for safety. Never stray off marked trails. Check the weather conditions for the refuge prior to the date of your visit.

Platforms/Islands on the Refuge

Each camping platform in the refuge contains a roof on half of the platform and a picnic table or shelf for cooking. Some platforms also have a picnic table or shelter for cooking. Some platforms have a fire ring provided. Canal Run is a platform but is built into the bank of the historic Suwannee Canal. There is a solid land area where a fire ring is also present. Firewood must be purchased on site to reduce the spread of invasive species.

What Will I See?

Entering from Stephen C. Foster State Park, cypress forests are the dominant environment. Billy Lake is an open area good for fishing and with great opportunities to see alligators, herons, egrets, barn owls, and other wildlife. The trail east and north of Billy Lake is often obstructed and can be narrow and winding, depending on the trail. The plants that you are likely to see on this side of the refuge include pond cypress, black gum, bay leaf, and Spanish moss. Billy Island is a day-use area that is a "must see" for all visitors. In the early 1800s a logging community of over 600 people lived on this island in the middle of the swamp. Today, few remnants of that community remain, but take a walk back in time on the short hiking trail on the north side of the island.

Entering from Kingfisher Landing, scrub-shrub areas are endemic to the Okefenokee Swamp. Family groups of alligators are often seen along these trails and the spatterdock has beautiful yellow flowers when blooming. The trails from Kingfisher Landing are the most remote trails for visitors wanting a Wilderness experience. The entrance itself is also remote and simply offers a parking lot, a boat ramp, and a kiosk.

A great resource for navigating the swamp is the Discover Nature Wilderness App. Download this app on your smartphone to have a map of the refuge, points of interest, overnight stops, and navigational information. The app will pinpoint your location on the water trails even without cell service.

How Do I Make a Reservation for a Wilderness Camping Permit?

Camping overnight in the refuge is authorized with a Wilderness Camping Permit (excluding camping areas within Stephen C. Foster State Park). Permits must be made up to two months in advance of your trip. Reservations are made by calling the Permit Reservation Line at 912-496-3331 between 7:00-10:00 am, Tuesday—Thursday, excluding federal holidays. Reservations can be made up to two months in advance of your trip. Things to know before calling to make a reservation:

• You need to have a profile in Recreation.gov before calling to make your permit reservation. Recreation.gov is an easy way to create your trip and process payments.

• There is a $10.00 non-refundable reservation fee in addition to the $15/person per night use fees. Be prepared to make payment at the time of reservation. All fees will be charged through Recreation.gov; only credit cards will be accepted. No discounts are offered for America the Beautiful passholders. The permit fees cover the refuge entrance fees.

• The permit is valid for one night only.

If you cannot reserve your camping at least 14 days prior to your entry date, all use fees (excluding fees for one person/night reservation – $15) will be refunded. The $10 reservation fee is non-refundable for all reservations. If you cannot reserve your camping 13 days or less prior to the entry date, no fees will be refunded. If the refuge must cancel a reservation due to extreme weather events requiring the closure of the refuge and trails (hurricane, wildfire, etc.), you will be notified, and a full refund of fees will be issued. If you do not cancel and decide not to use your reservation, make of the fees will be lost. Please cancel your reservation if you are unable to use it as this opens space for others.

• Changing the number of people with same dates and trip itinerary: log onto Recreation.gov to make changes up to 24 hours prior to trip and before your permit is printed.

• Changing the date of entry, the number of days, or the trip itinerary: cancel your current permit and reserve a new permit. Based on when you make this cancellation, a refund may be issued (see above). A $10 reservation fee and all use fees will apply to the new permit reservation.
Wilderness Canoe Trails

Trail within the refuge are color-coded (blue, brown, green, orange, pink, purple, red, yellow). Numbered mile markers line each trail, while wooden posts painted white on top serve as trail markers to help you find your way. At main intersections wooden signs indicate the direction of several different trails or sites.

Blue Trail
- Description: This trail connects the Orange Trail with the Green Trail and skirts the edge of Chase Prairie. The deeper holes you come across are good fishing areas. It is used mainly as a route from the Orange Trail to Floyds Island or Bluff Lake.
- Difficulty: moderate

Brown Trail
- Description: Campers access Mixons Hammock with an easy two-mile paddle across Billys Lake. To reach the Suwannee River Sill, paddle five miles through the River Narrows. The trail continues an additional three miles along the Sill through mixed cypress, bay, and gum swamp. Trail conditions vary with water levels. There can be a current in the River Narrows, which may make the return trip difficult.
- Difficulty: easy (to Mixons Hammock), moderate (River Narrows)

Green Trail
- Description: Kingfisher Landing to Bluff Lake is eight miles along a channel originally cut for peat mining and across open lakes and a waterway lined with pitcher plants and spatterdock. The next nine miles to Floyds Island take you through Territory and Chase Prairie with narrow closed-in channels in between the prairies that may be difficult to paddle during low water levels. Floyds Island to Stephen C. Foster State Park is nine miles of marshes and cypress forests, ending in Billys Lake.
- Difficulty: moderate - difficult

Orange Trail
- Description: Follow the historic Suwannee Canal, dug in the late 1800s in an attempt to drain the swamp. Six miles from the Suwannee Canal Recreation Area is a day use shelter, Coffee Bay, which is a great spot to stretch your legs and have lunch.

Pink Trail
- Description: This trail starts off of the Suwannee Canal or Orange Trail, heading south into Chesser Prairie, then Grand Prairie, and ending at Monkey Lake. This trail goes through some of the most iconic open prairie, where you may see alligators, wading birds, and plants such as water lilies and golden club.
- Difficulty: moderate

Purple Trail
- Description: This trail connects the Orange Trail through Chase Prairie and back to the Blue Trail. The challenges of this trail come from the plants that may slow paddlers’ progress through the prairie.
- Difficulty: moderate

Red Trail
- Description: Kingfisher Landing to Maul Hammock is a long day paddle of 12 miles through scrub-shrub, marsh, and small lakes.
- Difficulty: difficult

Yellow Trail
- Description: This trail extends north of the Suwannee Canal into Mizell Prairie. Cedar Hammock platform lies about a mile into this trail. The challenges of this trail come from the plants that may slow paddlers’ progress through the prairie.
- Difficulty: easy