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ABUNDANT VACATION OPTIONS IN SEMINOLE COUNTY

SEMINOLE COUNTY, Fla. -- Tucked away only minutes from Orlando, there lies a natural alternative to a Central Florida vacation: Seminole County. Seminole County boasts some 2,000 freshwater lakes and clear-running rivers that course around three sides of the county. A variety of cruises, tours and boating adventures await the nature enthusiast in Seminole County.

The Wekiva Marina offers canoeing on the Wekiva River and complete campground facilities. Wekiva Springs State Park, boasts a fresh-water spring perfect for swimming. St. Johns River Cruises offers guided nature tours onboard a pontoon boat of the St. Johns River Basin.

Gator Ventures at Black Hammock Fish Camp, which offers a ride on the wild side on an airboat over Lake Jesup deep into alligator country. Bill's Airboat Adventures or Eco Adaptations offer exciting airboat rides on the beautiful backwaters of the St. Johns River Valley.

The Rivership Romance, a 1940's style Great Lakes Steamer, cruises the St. Johns River daily from the Monroe Harbour Marina in Sanford's historic district; enjoy a lunch or dinner cruise.

For the kid in all of us, there's Fun World Family Fun Park. Adjoined to Flea World -- America's largest flea market -- Fun World features 40 rides and attractions including go-kart tracks, mini-golf courses, batting cages, a 350-game arcade, bumper cars and boats, a vintage carousel and the 350-seat Carousel Restaurant.

Another highlight of a Seminole County vacation is a visit to the Central Florida Zoological Park. Located in Sanford, the 116-acre park features a zoo experience that emphasizes wildlife education and conservation in a natural environment. And with the new ZOOM Air Adventures, any trip here is sure to be a thrill.

For the history aficionado, there are four Seminole County locations of interest: Historic Downtown Sanford, the Historic Sanford Residential District, Historic Longwood and Historic Downtown Oviedo. In addition, several area museums offer a glimpse of turn-of-the-century Florida.

A collection of public parks, public and semi-private golf courses and state-of-the-art sports facilities offer both casual and world-class athletes a multitude of recreational opportunities and venues.

The crown jewel in Seminole County's park system is Big Tree Park, home of "The Senator," the oldest and largest Bald Cypress tree in the world. The 3,500-year-old Bald Cypress towers over the surrounding marshlands at a height of 138 feet with a circumference of 47 feet and a diameter of more than 17 feet. The tree, which was dedicated by President Calvin Coolidge in 1929, once stood 165 feet tall before it was damaged by a hurricane in 1925.

For recreation of a different nature, Seminole County is the site of three pari-mutuel facilities: Sanford-Orlando Kennel Club, Seminole County Greyhound Park and Seminole County Jai-Alai.

Seminole County offers a full range of unique culinary experiences from continental to casual dining, key lime pie to Florida catfish. Fish camps, marinas, lakefront villas, historic district tea rooms, patio grilles and stylish new wave dining rooms provide distinct ambiance and ethnic menu alternatives for every taste.

Quaint antique districts, America's largest flea market under one roof, factory outlet stores and one of Florida's largest regional malls make Seminole County a shopper's dream. Moreover, the September 1995 debut of the 1.485-million-square-foot Seminole Towne Center mall in Sanford has broadened its appeal as a shopping mecca.

With some 4,400 lodging units available, Seminole County offers a wide variety of accommodations. And, while Seminole County's lodgings are similar in selection and quality to those in the neighboring Orlando area, its hotels and motels offer convenient access to downtown Orlando and area attractions without the congested feel of International Drive or other Orlando hotel areas. Cozy bed and breakfasts, fully furnished cabins and lovely campgrounds provide more unique lodging options.

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Located in the heart of Central Florida, and within a 15-minute drive from its tourist-magnet neighbor, Orlando, Seminole County offers immediate access to theme parks, exciting entertainment and thrilling nightlife. Yet surrounded by the beauty of natural Florida, Seminole County also offers the classic Florida experience of peaceful rivers, fishing, boating, hiking and more. Plus with Seminole County being one of Central Florida's top areas for sports training and tournaments, opportunities for sports and recreation abound. From golf to softball, visitors will find their game. And it's all within an easy drive of Florida's fabulous East Coast. For destination information call 1-800-800-7832 (USA and Canada) or 407-665-2900 (outside the USA) or visit www.visitseminole.com.