



Contact: Eric Keaton-1-800-842-1873 ekeaton@pascocountyfl.net

Pasco County at a Glance

Experience It In Pasco County, outdoor escapes and adventures abound. Our Gulf Beaches, rivers and lakes offer fishing, canoeing, kayaking and scuba diving. More daring travelers may opt to see our beautiful area by skydiving. We have thousands of acres of pristine wilderness as well as eclectic small towns with unique histories to explore. You'll never feel crowded in Pasco County. The population is more than 471,709 (2009 estimate).



Location "It's Only Natural" Pasco County, the southern-most anchor of Florida's Nature Coast, sits just 30 minutes north of downtown Tampa and the beaches of Clearwater. Plus, Pasco County is just 90 minutes west of Orlando.

Natural Florida The landscape in Pasco presents a unique blend of plants and animals. Views include shady, slow-moving rivers, natural springs, a winding pristine Gulf shoreline and moss-draped oaks. In Pasco, visitors can enjoy the shade or the sun – we have both.

Climate The average temperature of Florida's Gulf Coast is 72 degrees – the perfect temperature for outdoor fun. Summer temperatures average 85 degrees and winter temperatures average 67 degrees.

Accommodations From a world class resort and quaint bed and breakfasts to economy lodges and corporate hotels, Pasco has many places to rest and revitalize. There are more than 24 hotel properties with 50-plus rooms.

Meeting Facilities Pasco can accommodate your meeting needs, large or small, indoors or outdoors. Our county offers more than 100,000 square feet of meeting space, the majority of it located at the Saddlebrook Resort, right off I-75 in Wesley Chapel.

Eateries An abundance of unique eateries are ready to serve you in Pasco County. Enjoy fresh-from-the-Gulf seafood specialties from Pasco's West Coast in New Port Richey, or visit Dade City's charming cafes on the eastern side of the county. Pubs, home style cooking and popular chain restaurants round out the list on Pasco's diverse menu.

Recreation & Sports Pasco County's 745 square miles contain more than 30 public parks that offer a variety of outdoor activities from canoeing and birding to fishing and diving. With more than 200 miles of mangrove and estuary shoreline and thousands of acres of pristine wilderness, Pasco's natural attraction is hard to resist. When it comes to sports, golfing and tennis are our specialties. Golfers enjoy playing on more than 20 public and private courses. Saddlebrook Resort in Wesley Chapel is home to two courses designed by golfing great, Arnold Palmer. Skydive City in Zephyrhills offers skydivers the chance to literally jump into the scenery and see a panoramic view of the whole area.

-more-

History & Culture Pasco's numerous historical properties and museums make terrific sightseeing excursions. In eastern Dade City, visit historic Main Street and the Pioneer Florida Museum & Village to get a glimpse of early Florida history. Or travel west to New Port Richey's West Pasco Historical Society Museum. Housed in a 1913 schoolhouse, exhibits include historical photos and documents, quilts, china, glassware and antiques. Slightly south in Elfers, see the Baker House, one of the oldest "crackerstyle" houses in the area, dating back to 1882.

Other interesting sites include:

Saint Leo Campus, St. Leo
The Pasco Arts Center, New Port Richey
Historic Pasco County Courthouse, Dade City

Bradley Massacre Site, Dade City
Historic Church Avenue, Dade City

Shopping There is a regional mall located in Port Richey on U.S. 19. For quaint boutiques, visit the historical downtown areas in Dade City and New Port Richey. Downtown Dade City has some of the best antique shopping in Florida. Plus, Wesley Chapel is now the home of the [Shops at Wiregrass](#). The Shops at Wiregrass is a main-street style, pedestrian-friendly, outdoor lifestyle village. The Shops at Wiregrass is Pasco County's newest Shopping destination, encompassing 800,000 square feet of retail, restaurants and entertainment on 67 acres of land. The mall features Macy's, Dillard's, JCPenney and 100 specialty retail stores and signature restaurants – in an eclectic tenant mix that combines fashion, home décor and entertainment venues shops.

Transportation Access Pasco is located just north of Tampa off of I75 or the Suncoast Parkway, and Tampa International Airport offers more than 200 flights a day into the area. To access Pasco County by car, there are four major highways to choose from: Interstates 75 and 275, U.S. 19 and U.S. 41.

Pasco Chambers

[West Pasco](#) (727) 842-7651
[Wesley Chapel](#) (813) 994-8534
[Central](#) (Land O' Lakes) (813) 909-2722
[Zephyrhills](#) (813) 782-1913
[Dade City](#) (352) 567-3769

Visitor Information For more information, contact the Office of Tourism Development at 1-800-842-1873 or tourism@pascocountyfl.net. Also, log on to www.visitpasco.net and follow us on facebook at Pasco County Tourism.

-end-



Contact: Eric Keaton-1-800-842-1873 ekeaton@pascocountyfl.net

Events for All

Kumquats, bikes, antiques and rattlesnakes — There's a little bit of everything here in Pasco County. Please join us for our next festival or unique adventure. To view all our events go to www.visitpasco.net and click on the Events button.

Here is a month by month summary of some of our annual events:

JANUARY

Suncoast Arts Festival – Shops at Wiregrass, Wesley Chapel – Celebrate a weekend of the arts with vendors and artists from all over the area. (727)247- 6182 www.suncoastartsfest.com (Third weekend in January)



Annual Kumquat Festival, Dade City, This event features over 200 arts & crafts vendors, farmer's market, car show, entertainment, antique shopping, food and fun. This unique event features the tangy and versatile kumquat, Florida's tiniest citrus fruit. (352)567-3769 www.kumquatfestival.com (Last Saturday in January)

Fort Dade Mountain Man Rendezvous – Held at Withlacoochee River Park in Dade City. See authentic Indian villages and the work of blacksmiths, candle makers, leatherworkers and flint-nappers. (352)567-0264 ftdademountainman.com (Last weekend in January)

FEBRUARY

Farm Fest and Quilt Show, featuring the **Annual Dade City Horse Pulling Championship** – Fine quilts with interesting patterns and other handmade textiles are the backbone of this event. In addition, this annual horse pulling championship sports competitors from across the nation. (352) 567-0262 <http://www.pioneerfloridamuseum.org>(First weekend in February)

Annual Pasco County Fair, Dade City – Come and enjoy the fun of the county fair! The fair offers something for everyone, including arts and crafts, beauty pageants, entertainment, great food, and of course, the famous midway. (352)567-6678 www.pascocountyfair.com (Third week in February)

MARCH

Celtic Festival and Highland Games, Zephyr Park, Zephyrhills – This annual event features a sanctioned pipe and drum competition, heavy athletics, Scottish and Highland dancing (813)991-6060 <http://www.zephyrhillscelticfestival.com>(First weekend in March)

Annual Chasco Fiesta Downtown New Port Richey – Celebrate the history and friendship between the Calusa Indians and Spanish colonists in early Pasco County with parades, pageantry, a carnival and nationally known entertainment during this 11-day event (727)842-7651. www.chascofiesta.net (Last 11 days in March)

Pioneer Florida Museum Train Show, Dade City – An exciting collection of model trains, railroad memorabilia and collectors show. (352)567-0262 www.pioneerfloridamuseum.org(Last Saturday in March)

-more-

APRIL

Spring Antique Faire, Dade City – Considered by many one of the best antiquing destinations in the state. (352)518-9299 www.dcantiquefaire.com (First weekend in April)

Wesley Chapel Celebration of the Arts – This annual event features more than 100 local, regional and state artists, as well as live music and activities for the kids. (813)994-8534 www.wesleychapelchamber.com (October 15)

MAY

Cotee River Seafood Festival & Boat Show, New Port Richey – Seafood, fishing demonstrations and a boat show make this event a water lover's dream. The festival also features a two day "Blues by the River" concert, a craft fair and activities for the entire family. (727)842-8066 www.nprmainstreet.com (May 13-15)

JUNE

Southern Region Figure and Speed Skating Championships, Port Richey – Top skaters compete for a spot in the national championships. (305)271-7003 www.soregskate.com (June 12-15)

Main Street Blast, New Port Richey – Entertainment, food, family fun and fireworks salute America's birthday. (727)842-8066 www.nprmainstreet.com (Last Weekend in June)

JULY

Old fashioned July 4th Picnic, Trilby Manor Park – Games, entertainment, music, balloon sculptures, food and drink round out this family focused event. (352)567-6678 www.trilbyfl.com/oldtca.htm (July 4th)

Sparklebration, Dade City – A traditional July Fourth Festival and Fireworks Celebration with continuous live entertainment, food, drinks and family fun. Pasco County Fairgrounds (352)567-6678 www.pascocountyfair.com/sparklebration.htm (July 4th)

AUGUST

A Night in the Tropics, New Port Richey – Reminiscent of a Key West Sunset Celebration this street party features a "cruise-in" of custom cars, street performers, music and a smorgasbord of food and drink (727)842-8066 www.nprmainstreet.com (Date TBD)

SEPTEMBER

Annual Pioneer Florida Day Festival, Dade City – Pioneer Florida Museum, Dade City, (352)567-0262 Experience early Florida history through Civil War reenactments, children's activities and authentic craft demonstrations. www.pioneerfloridamuseum.org (Labor Day weekend)

Fall Antique Faire, Dade City – This historic city is considered one of the best antiquing destinations in the state. (352)518-9299 www.visitdadcitey.com (Date TBD)

Founder's Day Celebration, New Port Richey – A fun filled event featuring a carnival, arts and crafts and historic activities. (727)842-8066 www.nprmainstreet.com (Last weekend in September)

-more-

OCTOBER

Annual San Antonio Rattlesnake Festival, San Antonio – For 45 years spectators filled the stands as professional snake handlers demonstrate their knowledge of one of the world's most feared inhabitants. Arts and crafts, music entertainment, a 5-mile race and Gopher tortoise races add to the enjoyment of this weekend of wildlife. (352)588-4444 www.rattlesnakefestival.com (Third weekend in October)

Longleaf Triathlon, Longleaf Town Center – Sanctioned by USA Triathlons this event features and Olympic-distance course as well as a kids event. (727)847-2424 www.longleaftriathlon.com (Third Sunday in October)

Scarecrow Festival, Dade City – A Fall Festival with live music, scarecrows, kids events and farmers market. (352)567-0284 www.dadecitymainstreet.org (TBD)

Fall Festival, Wesley Chapel – A variety of art and crafts, festival also features the Ronnie Setser Custom Car Show, Wesley Chapel Battle of the Wings Contest, live music and entertainment, plus children's pavilion and activities. (813)994-8534 www.wesleychapelchamber.com (Third Saturday in October)

Cotee River Bike Festival, New Port Richey – Motorcycle enthusiasts will enjoy this two-day event live music, bike show vendors, and a benefit ride, (727)842-7651 www.coteeriverbikefest.com (October 7-9)

NOVEMBER

Bug Jam, Dade City – This event features more than 500 vintage and new Volkswagens along with VW collectables, games, a swap meet, live entertainment and more (352)567-6678 www.pascobugjam.com (Second Sunday in November)

Hudson Seafood Fest, Port Richey – Sample Florida's finest seafood including grouper and alligator, while enjoying the carnival, arts and crafts show and other family fun. (727)236-3854 www.hudsonseafest.org (November 11-13, Theme for 2001: Salute to Veterans)

Annual Skydiving Boogie, Skydive City, Zephyrhills –Come and watch as hundreds of skydivers from around the world plummet from 13,000 feet to compete for prizes and the admiration of thousands of spectators. 1-800-888-JUMP www.skydivecity.com (Thanksgiving and Christmas Weeks)

DECEMBER

Country Christmas Stroll, Dade City – A tradition for more than 25 years, this event has beautifully decorated storefront windows, street displays, holiday lights, live entertainment, strolling carolers and children's activities. A holiday market from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. the Saturday before Christmas is a regional draw. (352)567-0284. (Beginning the second Saturday in December)

To see other events go to our calendar: <http://www.visitpasco.net> for exact dates or more information contact the Office of Tourism at 1-800-842-1873 or email tourism@pascocountyfl.net.

-end-



NEW PORT RICHEY'S GLAMOROUS PAST

EARLY STAGES Celebrities began flocking to New Port Richey in the roaring 1920s, when New Port Richey residents Mr. and Mrs. George Sims invited friends to visit from Great Neck, New York—a prominent movie and stage colony in the north. Sims Park, along the Pithlachascotee River on the edge of downtown, is named for this couple who introduced so many to the area and truly encouraged the city's growth.

STAR STRUCK Soon after the incorporation of the City of New Port Richey in 1924, Warren E. Burns of New York City began to develop his extensive holdings here. Lots were sold to silent screen idol Thomas Meighan, renowned comedian Ed Wynn, theatrical stars Raymond Hitchcock and his wife Flora Zabelle, movie stars Gloria Swanson and Leon Errol, jazz musician Paul Whiteman, and grand slam champion golfer Gene Sarazen. Meighan was among the first to build a home along the river. Today, boaters can view Meighan's gatehouse, Swanson's home, and Sarazen's riverside residence.

MEIGHAN THEATRE In September of 1925, the Richey Amusement Company built a new movie theatre downtown which was then named after Meighan. This elaborate brick building had a modified Moorish design, an ornate and colorful façade and columns imported from Italy. All 500 seats sold out in the Meighan Theatre upon its opening July 1, 1926, with the showing of "*The New Klondike*." This picture was about Florida's property boom and the star of the feature was none other than Meighan. Now named the Richey Suncoast Theatre, this historic building still stands, restored to its glorious splendor. Today the feature presentation is live stage productions instead of silent films.

HACIENDA HOTEL Completed in 1927, the 55-room Spanish-style Hacienda Hotel was designed to attract the movie industry to Florida. Opening night was like a Hollywood party with Ed Wynn serving as Master of Ceremonies. Meighan, Swanson and Sims were among partners in the hotel. For several years the hotel lived a colorful life, however, the hotel went bankrupt during the Great Depression. Since then, the hotel's condition has been on the decline. City officials are working with a development company and a site plan is underway to restore and expand the Hotel and enhance the destination for tourists.

END OF AN ERA While many expected New Port Richey to flourish as a movie and stage colony in the 1920s, the city never reached this destiny. The 1929 stock market crash and untimely death of Thomas Meighan in 1936 brought an end to such dreams.

SCENES TO REMEMBER The spotlight continues to shine on New Port Richey's glamorous past with scenes of the Meighan Theatre and the Hacienda Hotel on two murals located downtown. The wall paintings also feature residents and celebrities that frequented the area. Painted by local artist Tamara Gerkin and titled "Treasured Memories of New Port Richey," the first mural was dedicated in February 2005 by Mayor Dan Tipton, Deputy Mayor Ginny Miller, Councilman Tom Finn, Councilman Bob Langford, Councilman Matthew McCaffery and the Cultural Affairs Advisory Committee. Painted by Chad Leininger and titled "Dining and dancing at the Hacienda Hotel in the 1920s," the second mural was dedicated in June 2006. Some local residents of the community and celebrities depicted include: Greta Garbo, J. B. Starkey, Tim Holladay, Marsha Starkey, Des Little and Babe Ruth.

-more-

These are not New Port Richey's last murals, and city officials hope to add more downtown. More information is available on www.nprmainstreet.com, and walking tours and group boat tours can be scheduled by contacting the Greater New Port Richey Main Street Office at (727) 842-8066.

Antiques and Good Eats in Dade City

Tucked amid the lush rolling hills (yes, we said rolling hills!) of eastern Pasco County sits Dade City, the county seat. **Downtown Dade City** makes the perfect small town getaway with quaint restaurants and more than 50 antique shops, gift stores and chic boutiques all within walking distance of each other.

As Dade City visitors stroll through the historic town square, they will see numerous antiques in storefront windows and on the sidewalks. In 2004, *Florida Monthly* magazine recognized the area as one of the best antiquing destinations in the state. With brick roads and shops occupying early 20th-century buildings and surrounding the Historic Pasco County Courthouse, this downtown creates a great atmosphere for finding old treasures.

Dade City's eclectic lunch spots shouldn't be missed. At the popular **Lunch on Limoges**, mini-muffin appetizers are served on Limoges China and the menu changes daily. If dining on fine China is not your style, how about eating inside a transformed auto mechanics garage? At **Kafe Kokopelli** guests enjoy southwestern cuisine while sitting at tables made out of the Ford dealership's original garage doors.

Home to the **Annual Kumquat Festival** in January, Dade City and the neighboring town of St. Joseph produce the majority of kumquats in the southeastern U.S.—though they claim to be the “kumquat capital of the world!” Learn more about Florida's tiniest citrus by taking a **tour** through **Kumquat Growers, Inc.** Call 352-588-0544 to schedule it. For more information about Dade City's attractions and monthly events, go to www.dadecitychamber.org, or contact the Tourism Office at 1-800-842-1873 or tourism@pascocountyfl.net.

-end-



Contact: Eric Keaton·1-800-842-1873 ekeaton@pascocountyfl.net

GET WILD WITH GIRAFFE RANCH AND ZOOLOGICAL TOUR

DADE CITY, FL— Giraffe Ranch is located in beautiful east Pasco County 45 minutes north of Tampa. The eco-friendly tour is operated on 47 acres of rolling countryside. With huge live oaks, native orchid sand lush pastures and wetlands, the ranch is also a native wildlife preserve. Every night up to 200 sand hill cranes roost on the grounds. Experience the Giraffe Ranch farm tours with an experienced driver/guide in customized 4-WD safari tour vehicles. You will be safe, comfortable and get a terrific view, as each vehicle is fitted with shade canopies and stadium seating. You will learn about native and exotic animals and their habitats from your safari guide. You will see ongoing conservation efforts with endangered species and some that are extinct in the wild.

On safari you can feed giraffe, zebra and other animals from Asia, Africa, and the Americas. See a working herd of Austrian Haflinger horses and tiny Irish Dexter cattle. Giraffe Ranch has one of the largest herds of these diminutive cattle in Florida. Giraffe Ranch is not a zoo or theme park. It is a hands-on real working game farm and wildlife preserve where animals have room to roam. Family-owned and operated for over 10 years, Giraffe Ranch is open by reservation only. Giraffe Ranch operates two tours per day at 11 a.m. and 2 p.m. Tours are strictly limited in size and are fun, educational adventures. Giraffe Ranch is accredited by the Zoological Association of America (ZAA) and licensed by USDA.

Dade City's Wild Things is the latest attraction to boost Dade City as a unique tourist destination. The zoo is an outreach program of Stearns Zoological Rescue & Rehab Center Inc., a non-profit sanctuary zoo located on a 22-acre facility in the heart of Pasco County in historical Dade City, Florida.

"We pride ourselves on providing a natural botanical garden landscape environment for the animals in our facility," said Kathy Stearns, the zookeeper of more than 150 exotic animals. Big cats are walking the grounds like tigers, lions, jaguars, leopards, cougars and a Florida Panther. Plus, there are lemurs, bears, deer, porcupines, monkeys, exotic birds and a cute little river otter, who is quite an entertainer. The downtown Dade City Gift Shop features zoo-themed home décor, jewelry, photography and gifts for all ages. Visitors can relax and enjoy downtown Dade City or get a video preview of the exciting zoo. Then it's time to hop on an authentic trolley and experience an once-in-a-lifetime tour that brings visitors within four feet of the animals.

Attendees will be amazed at how close the tigers are stalking, bears playing, lions roaring, monkeys playing, otters swimming, birds calling, and much more. It's an experience young and old will not forget. For more information, contact Kathy Stearns at 352-567-WILD or visit www.dadecityswildthings.com/

-end-



Contact: Eric Keaton·1-800-842-1873 ekeaton@pascocountyfl.net

Skydive Over Zephyrhills

ZEPHYRHILLS, FL- While there are numerous ways to take in the lush natural beauty of Pasco County, there is only one place that offers a panoramic view of the countryside from 13,000 feet up – **Skydive City** in Zephyrhills.

Skydive City is a world-famous destination for skydiving enthusiasts. Every year, thousands of people from around the world leap into the brilliant blue skies over eastern Pasco for a glimpse of the countryside and the thrill of their life.

Annual events at Skydive City include the Thanksgiving Skydiving Boogie & Competition and the December Christmas Boogie. Both bring divers from around the world and spectators from around the country. In 1998, Skydive City also hosted the First Ever World 100- Way Competition where hundreds of skydivers converged in Zephyrhills to attempt the largest formation in the country. Today, world record dives are being attempted and made on a regular basis at Skydive City.

The combination of an excellent location (just minutes off I-75, 30 minutes from Tampa airport), engaging staff and sunny Florida weather have given Skydive City the reputation as one of the world's premiere drop zones.

Visitors have at their disposal a large viewing deck, high-quality student equipment, rigging service, food concessions, free camping, showers, laundry and a shuttle to major airports. The professional staff will make sure your jump is safe, and photography and video services will capture your experience forever.

Jump-start your visit to Pasco County at Skydive City. For more information, contact TK Hayes at 800-404-9399 or visit Skydive City's web site at www.skydivecity.com.

For information about other natural attractions and events, visit www.visitpasco.net or contact the Tourism Office at 1-800-842-1873 or tourism@pascocountyfl.net.

-end-



Contact: Eric Keaton·1-800-842-1873 ekeaton@pascocountyfl.net

Saddlebrook Resort



Saddlebrook Resort and Spa

5700 Saddlebrook Way, Wesley Chapel, FL 33543

Phone: 1-800-729-8383

Web: www.saddlebrookresort.com

Located on 480 acres of lush Florida countryside, the Saddlebrook Resort and Spa offers luxury spa treatments, premier golf and tennis, and a secluded retreat.

The Spa at Saddlebrook offers a variety of body treatments, facials and salon services. The 7,000 square-foot Spa includes 12 private treatment rooms, a couple's room with soaking tub, a hydro massage tub, vichy shower room, whirlpools, saunas, and steam rooms. The treatments, designed for both men and women, are available to resort guests, local residents and area visitors.

Two 18-hole championship golf courses designed by Arnold Palmer challenge golfers of all skill levels. Saddlebrook Resort's tennis complex features 45 courts in six surfaces, including all Grand Slam surfaces. Saddlebrook is a *must* for sports lovers!

The Walking Village, surrounding the pool in the very heart of the resort, contains recreation and dining facilities and shops. The 800 guest rooms border the village, providing scenic views and easy access to the grounds.

-end-

Contact: Eric Keaton·1-800-842-1873 ekeaton@pascocountyfl.net



Outdoor Adventures

Theme-parked out? Pasco County offers a more natural approach to recreation with great places to go for fishing, biking, bird watching, skydiving and exploring.

Go Fish With 20 miles of shoreline as well as numerous lakes and rivers, bait shops, guided tours, deep sea charters; fishing piers and boat ramps, Pasco County has the makings of a great fish story... One that you don't have to exaggerate!

Bird Watching Pasco County has a wide range of natural habitats in its central location, attracting a variety of birds from both North and South. Salt marsh, mangrove, barrier islands, oak scrub, pine flatwoods, cypress swamps, coastline and pasture species all land here.

Happy Trails The scenic Suncoast Trail offers 42 miles of continuous smooth surface riding, start to finish—perfect for biking or rollerblading. Detour at one of Pasco's trailheads and explore Crews Lake Wilderness Park or Jay B. Starkey's Wilderness Park.

For Thrills While there are numerous ways to take in the lush natural beauty of Pasco County, there is only one place that offers a panoramic view of the countryside – Skydive City in Zephyrhills.

Park Right Here Pasco County offers RV'ers a prime parking location. Pasco's strip of Interstate 75 allows quick access to Tampa, St. Petersburg, Clearwater and Orlando. Many of the 40 RV Parks situated throughout the county offer the same amenities as others along the Gulf Coast—such as heated pools, shuffle board courts, horseshoe pits and cable—but at far better prices.

For more in-depth news releases on our great outdoors, contact the Office of Tourism at 1-800-842-1873 or tourism@pascocountyfl.net.

-end-



Bird Watching at its Best



Pasco County is home to more than 100,000 acres of public land to access and explore. These public areas consist of Pasco County parks, Florida state parks, the Southwest Florida Water Management District recreational lands, Florida State trails, state forestlands and private ranches. These diverse areas provide a wide range of natural habitats for a variety of birds. Salt marsh, mangrove, barrier island, oak scrub, pine flatwoods, cypress swamps, coastline, pasture and ranch land all encourage diversity of bird species. Historically, the area has yielded more than 325 species of birds.

Pasco County is a great birding destination because of its west central location; birds from both the north and south Florida areas can be observed. The broad-winged hawk, a more northerly species, and the short-tailed hawk, a more southern species, can both be found here. Rare birds, such as the western vagrants like the scissor-tailed flycatcher can be viewed here as well. The state identified Pasco's coastal areas as an important resting and feeding station for migratory birds because so much of the coastline to the south is developed. Pasco offers many modes of bird watching opportunities. Boating in the Gulf of Mexico, canoeing or kayaking the salt marshes and rivers, nature trails (for hiking, bicycling, and horseback riding), piers, observation towers and boardwalks are all available in Pasco County. The Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission created The Great Florida Birding Trail — a collection of sites throughout Florida selected for their excellent bird watching opportunities. Ten of these sites can be found right here in Pasco County. They are:

- **Withlacoochee River Park** — This county park features sand hill bluffs overlooking the Withlacoochee River, as well as a small wet prairie and some seasonal wetlands. This park offers amenities like picnic shelters and restrooms for family birding.
- **Green Swamp West** — This 37,000+ acre property safeguards the Green Swamp which gives rise to the Withlacoochee River, while providing excellent recreational access to upland pasture, sand hills and “Wildcat Swamp.” A bike makes the size of this site more manageable.
- **Crews Lake Park** — This delightful little park offers a high tower overlook of Crews Lake, where overwintering waterfowl like sandpipers, ring-necked ducks and dunlin loaf and forage. Sedge wrens call from grassy margins and migratory songbirds like bobolinks exploit the edges between the wetland and oak hammock. According to the Great Florida Birding Trail, this is a “must-see.”
- **Werner-Boyce Salt Springs State Park** — This vast park stretches nearly 3,500 acres along the Gulf of Mexico. A one mile scrub trail is currently open; a boardwalk is planned across a shady, freshwater slough, and trails will resume on the other side, leading all the way to the Gulf. This is a haven for paddlers who want to explore one of the best kept secrets of the nature Coast. Bring water and insect repellent. Monthly bird walks are available; call (727) 816-1890 for details.

-more-

- **Robert K. Rees Park at Green Key** — This compact peninsular park is a birding gem, with clapper rails, reddish egrets and roseate spoonbills year-round; wintering shorebirds, marsh and sedge wrens; and a tendency for remarkable songbird landfall events in spring migration.

The entrance gate area can be excellent for hordes of spring migrants near dawn in April (bring insect repellent.) Gray kingbirds also breed here.

- **Jay B. Starkey Wilderness Park** — Behind the nature center, bird the boardwalk out across the floodplain forest to the Pithlachascotee River. The best birding by far is along the paved bike trail. A bike helps cover ground; listen for brown headed nuthatches and Bachman's sparrows as you pedal through flatwoods past occasional cypress domes. In nice weather, there are bird walks on the first Saturday each month. Loaner optics are available at the nature center.

- **James E. Grey Preserve and Pithlachascotee River** — This new 100-acre park includes a canoe launch and trail along the river with easy views of an eagle's nest. Hike the trail or paddle the river, which changes quickly from a wide waterway, to a winding stream over-arched with vegetation. Look for yellow crowned night herons and limpkins by the water; migrants like cedar waxwings in the canopy.

- **Key Vista Nature Park** — This small nature park provides hiking trails through sand pine uplands, a viewing tower of mud flats where shorebirds and waders feed at low tide, as well as a sand beach on the south side of its peninsula for loafing terns and skimmers. Good for songbird fallouts in migration, this site is also nice for wintering water birds.

- **Anclote Gulf Park** — An extensive fishing pier gives good access to mudflats and open water for wintering ducks, feeding shore and wading birds, as well as flyovers from terns and gulls. In winter, birders scope for bufflehead, common loons and horned grebes out on the Gulf. Like many coastal areas in Pasco County, gray kingbirds are possible in summer.

- **Anclote River Park** — A small park with waterfront worth checking for reddish egrets and black-bellied plovers on flats and in shallows of the Anclote River. Osprey nest nearby, as have great horned owls in past years. This site has a popular boat launch that can get very busy on weekends; come early, or on a weekday. To view the entire Great Florida Birding Trail, or to learn more about the ten locations in Pasco County, visit www.floridabirdingtrail.com

For more information, contact our Tourism Office at 1-800-842-1873 or tourism@pascocountyfl.net.

-end-



Contact: Eric Keaton·18008421873 ekeaton@pascocountyfl.net

Cycling Pasco's Hills and Trails



The hills and trails in Pasco attract cycling enthusiasts from all over Tampa Bay and beyond. Visitors and residents alike enjoy the 42-mile paved Suncoast Trail in Central Pasco and the challenging terrain and small town feel of Eastern Pasco.

Cycling Groups With more than 15 years' experience cycling the area, Sarah coordinates weekly group rides throughout Dade City and San Antonio. For a schedule, call (352) 588-2453 or visit www.sananncyclery.com. Other

resources for cycling in the area include the Tampa Bay Freewheelers, www.tbfreewheelers.com and Suncoast Cycling Club www.suncoastcycling.com.

Annual Events The Dade City hills also attract race organizers. Major races include The Race for Humanity (www.theraceforhumanity.com) every February, the St. Petersburg Times Bike Tour (www.sptimes.com/biketour) in March and the Hilly Hundred (www.tbfreewheelers.com) every October. The Race for Humanity takes riders through the downtown areas of Dade City and San Antonio, and spectators are welcome. Plus, Pasco is the home to a number of sprint triathlons.

Bike Paths and Trails Spanning three counties as it parallels the Suncoast Parkway, the Suncoast Trail starts in Tampa and goes north through Pasco and up to Brooksville. The trail is accessible in Pasco County at State Road 54, State Road 52, Crews Lake Park and Jay B. Starkey Wilderness Park. Markers along the way recall historical significance, emphasize transitions between ecological communities and identify native species. Based in large part on the Suncoast trail, the Suncoast Parkway has been designated a Scenic Highway. For more information about cycling and other activities in Pasco, visit www.visitpasco.net or contact the Tourism Office at 1-800-842-1873 or tourism@pascocountyfl.net.

-end-



Contact: Eric Keaton·18008421873 ekeaton@pascocountyfl.net

Ecotours of Natural Florida

Nature-lovers will enjoy Pasco County's expansive wilderness. A glimpse into everything Pasco offers comes together with a visit to Crystal Springs Preserve. This trip is both educational and adventurous.

Crystal Springs Preserve Pasco County is home to Florida's premier Living laboratory, a fabulous 525 acre environmental education center located on Crystal Springs Preserve. Visitors are encouraged to arrange a tour of the site, take guided nature walks, explore the boardwalks along the Hillsborough River, view Crystal Springs and participate in the educational programs designed for all ages. The pristine wilderness offers amazing opportunities for wildlife viewing and birding. The nature center features native reptiles and amphibians.

Crystal Springs, just south of Zephyrhills, is the largest natural spring system south of Weeki Watchee. The 40 million gallon per day flow from Crystal Springs triples the down stream volume of the Hillsborough River as it wanders through the preserve. Tours require a minimum of 15 people. Programs can be tailored to fit any group's needs, accommodating seniors, families, scouts and school groups of all ages (pre-school through college). A nominal per person fee and advanced reservations are required. For more information and to register, go to www.crystalspringspreserve.com or call (813)715-9707.

For information about other natural attractions in Pasco County, visit www.visitpasco.net or contact the Tourism Office at 1-800-842-1873 or tourism@pascocountyfl.net.

-end-



Travel Back in Time



It's more than a slogan at the Pioneer Florida Museum & Village— it's a reality Nestled on 20 acres of wooded hillside in northeast Pasco County, the **Pioneer Florida Museum & Village** gives tribute to the lives and histories of early pioneer Floridians. Made up of a main building and a walking village, this Dade City museum houses many pioneer treasures.

Inside the main building, visitors can peruse collections of Native American artifacts, letters and war treasures dating back to the Civil War, Roseville pottery and more. Visitors can walk through the medical room and see what visiting the dentist and doctor was like in the old days, or they can marvel at the rare collection of miniature dolls representing the first ladies of Florida. Beginning in 1821 with Mrs. Andrew Jackson, each doll is dressed to represent how the first lady looked on her husband's inauguration night. Other buildings and historical features on the grounds of this unique Florida museum include:

- **Lacoochee School** – a 1930's building which has been restored and furnished in the style of the one-room schools prevalent in pioneer Florida.
- **John Overstreet House** – a two-story farmhouse constructed of native heart pine and built in the 1860's. The house, a typical pioneer era structure, is complete with a dogtrot connecting it to the kitchen and period furnishings.
- **The Trilby Depot** – built in 1896 and once located in Trilby, the third largest rail yard in Florida. Outside the depot sits a 1913 Porter Steam Engine, used by the local Cummer Cypress Company to haul cypress logs to its sawmill in Lacoochee.
- **Enterprise Church** – originally built in 1878 by local residents, the church was moved to the Pioneer Museum in 1977 to be preserved as an example of rural architecture.
- **Jack Bromley's Shoe Repair Shop** – brought from Kansas to Dade City in 1913, cobbler Jack Bromley operated this small shop for many years.

Each year the museum plays host to hundreds of school-age children studying Florida's heritage. The grounds are also used for weddings, picnics, class reunions and other special events.

The **Pioneer Florida Days Festival** every Labor Day weekend attracts crowds of people to the museum every year. Attendees experience early Florida history through Civil War reenactments, children's activities and authentic craft demonstrations. Supported entirely by volunteers and generous donations of historical items and property, the museum has been dedicated to preserving Florida's history since 1961. For more information, visit their web site at www.pioneerfloridamuseum.org/, or contact the Pasco County Tourism Office at 1-800-842-1873 or tourism@pascocountyfl.net.

-end-



Contact: Eric Keaton·18008421873 ekeaton@pascocountyfl.net

Go Fish in Pasco County

Itching to go fishing? Pasco County has plenty of opportunities to do just that. With more than 20 miles of shoreline and numerous lakes and rivers, fishing is a popular pastime for both beginner and experienced anglers.

“Pasco County offers excellent fishing,” says Captain Ed Peters of Rum Runner Charters. “We have great weather here as well as a variety of fish including kingfish, blue marlin, amberjack and grouper. In fact, this is one of the best areas for ‘grouper digging’ or ‘bottom fishing.’”

Deep-sea fishing charter companies, such as [Florida Back Water Charters](#), handle all of the details of your fishing excursion. Tackle, bait and licensing are all included with the ride out to sea. Spend the day fishing for numerous types of fish, while sitting back and enjoying the sunshine on these adventures.

[Devil's Rock Yard](#), with its rocky minefield guarding the approach to Fillman Bayou, is a favorite fishing spot for locals. [Aripeka](#), a historic fishing village on the Gulf of Mexico, also attracts fishing enthusiasts from all over the county. Ten miles northwest of [Anclote Park](#) sits a fisherman's dream. This water is home to Spanish mackerel, snook, tarpon, cobia and trout.

With numerous fishing spots, bait shops, private tours, guides and charters, Pasco County is nearly irresistible to anglers of all ages. For more information, go to www.visitpasco.net, or contact the Tourism Office at 1-800-842-1873 or tourism@pascocountyfl.net.

-end-



Contact: Eric Keaton-18008421873 ekeaton@pascocountyfl.net

Pasco's Clothing-Optional Resorts

Pasco County is home to several clothing-optional resorts, each offering a unique all-natural experience. The warm and sunny weather of west central Florida allows these resorts to plan outdoor adventures year-round.

Three of the largest and best known clothing-optional resorts in the United States are located in Land O' Lakes. A total of six clothing optional/nudist resorts make their home in Pasco County.

Caliente Resort and Spa offers the perfect place to unwind. Spa treatments include advanced holistic skincare therapies, hydrotherapies, massages, facials and more. With motel rooms, cottages, bedroom villas and condominiums available, Caliente Resort allows guests to stay comfortably, anywhere from a few nights to a few months. Visit their web sit at www.calienteresort.com for more information.

Paradise Lakes Resort is one of the most frequently visited clothing optional resorts in North America. This 72-acre community features a miniature golf course, a spa and salon, boutiques, swimming pools, tennis courts, water and sand volleyball and a large spring-fed lake for canoeing and paddle boating. Visit www.paradiselakes.com for more details about this resort.

Lake Como Family Nudist Resort hosts the Super Bowl South Volleyball Tournament in March. This annual event attracts people from all over the world. The resort has a full schedule of activities for the whole family. For details, go to www.lakecomoresort.com. For more on Pasco County's clothing-optional resorts, contact the Tourism Office at 1-800-842-1873 or tourism@pascocountyfl.net.

-end-

Contact: Eric Keaton-18008421873 ekeaton@pascocountyfl.net



Florida Estates Winery

Florida Estates Winery in Land O' Lakes is Tampa Bay's first premier winery. This secluded winery is surrounded by a canopy of scenic oak trees on a 3,600-acre working plantation four miles west of I-75 on SR 52. This unique winery features festivals twice a month and tasting sessions daily. Florida Estates Winery is open 11 am – 5 pm every day.

The winery opened in 2001 and the vineyard was planted in 2004. Though the grapes are young, Florida Estates Winery staff members are very knowledgeable about Florida wines. Perhaps that is because their sister winery, Eden Vineyards in Fort Myers, is the oldest winery in the state. During tasting sessions, visitors have the opportunity to learn about Florida hybrid wines — a blend made from grapes throughout the state — as well as Merlot, Cabernet Sauvignon, Chardonnay and other well known varietals. Each session lasts 30-40 minutes.

A wine festival and market occurs every other Saturday at the winery. The event features fresh fruits and vegetables, homemade goods and, of course, wine samples and sales. Though guests will find plenty to eat at the festival and market, picnics are welcome. For more information about the winery, call (813) 996-2113 or visit www.floridaestateswines.com. For information about other Pasco County attractions and events, contact the Tourism Office at 1-800- 842-1873 or tourism@pascocountyfl.net, or go to www.visitpasco.net.

-end-



Contact: Eric Keaton-18008421873 ekeaton@pascocountyfl.net

Parks in Pasco

Pasco County, the southern-most anchor of Florida's Nature Coast and the tip of Tampa Bay. The County boasts more than 30 visitor friendly parks and preserves. Numerous rivers, trails, shorelines, beaches and picnic spots scattered throughout the area await you.

New Port Richey

At **Jay B. Starkey Wilderness Park**, just eight miles northeast of New Port Richey, you can embark on 13 miles of marked foot trails that wind through Florida's natural landscape. For equestrians, there is a nine-mile horse trail, and pedal pushers will enjoy the three mile paved bike path around the perimeter of the park. For the serious cyclist, an additional 3.5-mile bike trail connects you to the 42-mile paved Suncoast Trail. The park also has campsites and primitive cabins for if you want to "rough it."

At **Sims Park** in downtown New Port Richey you can stroll on the river walk. The river walk parallels the Pithlachascotee River and winds through the four acre park. Bask in the sunshine on one of the many benches edging the river while viewing the river's natural inhabitants – perhaps even catching a glimpse of a gentle manatee.

Dade City

Visit **Withlacoochee River Park**, located in Dade City, for Florida's natural scenery at its finest. There are foot trails to explore, a fishing dock for land-loving anglers, picnic shelters and playgrounds. For those interested in exploring the Withlacoochee River, there is also a canoe launch. The Withlacoochee, whose Native American name "little great water," flows north past Dade City, Lacochee and Withlacoochee State Forest until it empties into an estuary on the Gulf of Mexico. Observe the "natives" of this river habitat such as river otters, alligators, largemouth bass, bream, bluegill and bowfin.

Werner-Boyce Salt Springs State Park, is early in its development. However, areas now accessible to the public in this 3,500-acre park allow visitors to hike and watch for a variety of wildlife including the gopher tortoise, little blue heron, southern bald eagle, Florida black bear and West Indian manatee. In the near future, the park will include canoeing, kayaking, shoreline fishing, biking trails and picnicking along with a 1,000 foot boardwalk to make the park more accessible to visitors.

Flora and Fauna

Pasco's parks offer the perfect opportunity to observe native plant life. Numerous hardwood forests, high pine and flatwoods line county parks and waterways. Nature trails also feature sand pine scrub, freshwater marshes, cypress and prairie ecosystems as well as lakes, rivers and natural spring's habitats.

Not surprisingly, these ecosystems provide a haven for many species of birds and animals. At **Crews Lake Wilderness Park**, visitors can view a variety of resident and migratory bird species from the observation area and mile-long nature trail. Guests can also get an up-close encounter with a colorful cloud of butterflies in the park's butterfly observation area.

-more-

Beach Parks

Head to one of Pasco's three protected beaches where water temperatures average 80° during spring and summer months. With boardwalks, canoe and fishing access, nature trails, picnic areas and playgrounds, these beaches are more than just sand. The 45-acre [Robert K. Rees Memorial Park](#) offers undeveloped beaches edged in seashells while [Hudson Beach](#) has an observation platform perfect for a colorful Florida sunset. [Anclote River Park](#) is also ideal for beach lovers. Just load up the cooler and umbrella for a day of fun.

All Natural

[Key Vista Nature Park](#) is the only park in Pasco County that is dedicated entirely to the environment and the wildlife found there. The 101-acre park along the gulf is made up of easily traveled nature trails and gracious picnic areas.

Travel by Boat

For those with boats, [Anclote Key State Preserve](#) on Anclote Key offers excellent swimming as well as a beautiful, secluded four-mile long beach. Recently, the 118-year-old Anclote Key Lighthouse was restored, and now it shines brightly over the Gulf of Mexico.

For more information on our parks, visit www.visitpasco.net or contact the Office of Tourism at 1-800-842-1873.

-end-