



Gainesville

(Alachua County)

Cool Temperatures, Rich History, and Unparalleled Nature Makes Gainesville Vacations Fall Right into Place.

Spring, especially in a quaint college town can get all the good breaks. Literary and figuratively. However, it only takes one vacation to Gainesville to fall in love with, well, with Fall. Nestled smack dab in the center of North Central Florida - just two hours north of Orlando, the same drive time west of Tampa and just an 1-1/2 hour south of the Georgia border - Gainesville enjoys a more traditional, albeit subtle, change in season. So, as the autumn months usher in a cool respite to Florida's hot and humid summer, Gainesville's prime location provides vacationers a perfect place to pause and ponder.

And as the county's visitors moniker, "where nature and culture meet," suggests, Gainesville offers a diverse and lengthy list of places to explore and activities to experience. Their cool autumnal breezes that magically transform much of their lush flora and fauna to a colorful display of pumpkin and rich curry-colors are just bonuses to a trip to Gainesville.

Tops on any Gainesville trip is a stay at one of the seven historic bed and breakfast inns. Four are actually located conveniently and within an easy five minute walk from the historic downtown area. Built in the 1890's Victorian, Queen Anne architectural-style, each Inn offers charming, wrap-around porches, prime spots for relaxing, rocking and languishing with a glass of wine or savoring a warm sip of cider.

Delectable, homemade breakfast served at each of the B&B's coupled with Gainesville's temperate Fall mercury readings, provides the perfect recipe for a journey to nearby Paynes Prairie State Park Preserve's La Chua Trail. Amazingly, just a five-minute drive from downtown, visitors to this 1.5 mile portion of the 21,000-acre Preserve, are immediately remind-

ed that there ARE gators in them there ponds...in this case, the "pond" is the Alachua Sink, a sinkhole located at the trail-head. It is home to dozens and dozens of prehistoric snap-pers just basking along the banks and sometimes literally lazily lumbering on the perfect, back-to-nature path.

Few adventures are more refreshing and indicative of this natural north Florida region than a dip and float in a nearby high-magnitude springs. Amazingly and a bit astonishingly, this very slice of Florida has the largest number of high-magnitude springs in the world.

It is in these same waters and the nearby pristine Santa Fe River where it is commonplace to see archeological digs being conducted along their banks unearthing pre-historic artifacts and fossils of woolly mammoths and mastodons.

Just short of a dig, visitors can also trek through Gainesville's Florida Museum of Natural History (FLMNH). Located in the University of Florida's Cultural Plaza, this museum is full of interactive displays and exhibits providing visitors a history laced with a smidge of science -a perfect blend for kids as well as kids at heart. And with a price tag of 'free', it's a terrific bargain to boot.

Speaking of all things blooming, Gainesville is also home to the 62-acre Kanapaha Botanical Garden, making it the second largest in the Sunshine State. And, admittedly, while Spring and Summer are peak bloom times, even in the Fall, Kanapaha is replete with many lush members of Florida's rooted wonders. Fourteen major collections make up Kanapaha Botanical Gardens including the largest herb garden in the Southeast and Florida's largest display of bamboos. *