

See Lake City, Florida's Springlands from a new point of view

Imagine seeing crystal clear prehistoric springs, luscious forestry, glistening lakes and rolling pastures from a soaring bird's eye view. Chances are, whether you're a long-time resident or a first-time tourist, you haven't seen Columbia County from that view... until now! Osceola Aviation Services recently started offering four different sightseeing helicopter tours, providing a totally new perspective of North Florida's incredibly beautiful and varied landscape and allowing you to see things you would not otherwise see. If you're feeling especially adventurous, they'll even remove the doors during your tour, allowing for a truly thrilling and unique experience.



Florida's Original Gateway is Now Emerging as the State's Undiscovered Adventure Travel Destination

Circa 1832, Columbia County was known as the Gateway to Florida, due in part to its centralized location at the top of the state and also because of its open spaces and natural bridges that would allow travelers to circumvent the areas multiple lakes and rivers. Today, that same space is now home to quaint historic downtowns and, most impressively, nine state parks.

One of the largest and most memorable, Ichetucknee Springs State Park, located just north of Gainesville and south of Lake City, features eight major crystal-clear springs which join together to make up the six-mile Ichetucknee River. In this refreshing oasis, visitors can explore by swimming, tubing, paddling, scuba diving or just relaxing on Florida's natural lazy river. In the spring's center, certified cave divers can cross off a daring dive at Blue Hole Springs, a crystal clear, turquoise aquatic masterpiece adorned with a floor of bright seagrass. With a 40-foot-deep drop in the spring's center, it gives the appearance of a geode and is a secluded secret garden for cave divers.



Columbia County's State Parks

Ichetucknee Springs	Big Shoals
O'Leno State Park	River Rise Preserve
Suwannee River	Gilchrist Blue Springs
Wes Skiles Peacock Spring	Fanning Springs
Stephen Foster Folk Culture Center	



Downtown Lake City's Historic Jewel: The Blanche

The perfect stop-over for short-term guests who are on the move, Lake City is the heart of Columbia County, featuring eclectic dining, boutique shopping, historical sites and itinerary jewels. The Blanche, a bustling downtown landmark and central hub of hospitality for over 100 years, is a 14-room historic boutique hotel, now operating as an Airbnb, that was once the most luxurious place to stay in town. Famous guests, from Johnny Cash to Al Capone have stayed in these posh accommodations when they passed through the “gateway to Florida” on their travels. Hungry travelers can dine at local favorites including Marion Street Bistro or Shirley’s Restaurant, sip a brew at Halpatter’s Brewing, and find the perfect souvenir at Blue Goose Studio or Southern Sisters Boutique. While exploring this quaint town, visitors will find themselves wanting to stop, stay, and dive into the realm of adventure that North Central Florida has to offer.



Unique Accommodations – Rustic Glamping

Rustic elegance abounds at Moonshine Acres RV Park in Columbia County, Fla. Once owned by a prominent local moonshiner, his spirit of discovery is kept alive across the park today. There are currently six pristine glamping tents at Moonshine Acres, complete with full electrical capabilities, making camping in Florida a breeze (which you won’t need, since these have air conditioning and electrical outlets!) With a log cabin clubhouse and an old fashioned general store on property, you’ll feel transported back in time while still enjoying the conveniences of modern luxury.

Lake City, Florida's Springlands

Conveniently located between Jacksonville and Tallahassee, Lake City, Florida’s Springlands is easy to get to and even easier to get along with. Known as the “Springs Capital of the United States” for decades, this unique central North Florida destination is a subtropical paradise of lush tall pine forest, crystal blue natural springs, world-class sporting facilities, historic downtown and lively communities. Here nature inspires art – all centered around the heart of the county, Lake City.

Bisected by Interstate 75 and located on the southern border of Georgia, the area has served as a gateway to Florida, welcoming visitors with Southern hospitality and natural beauty, since 1832. Part of Osceola National Forest and home to the renowned Southside Sports Complex and prehistoric Ichetucknee Springs State Park, Lake City, Florida’s Springlands has eclectic dining, boutique shopping, historical sites and itinerary jewels ranging from music festivals to sporting events that encourage visitors to stop, stay, and dive into the realm of adventure North Central Florida has to offer.

Lake City, Florida’s Springlands offers a taste of the mountains in Florida, Big Shoals State Park features the largest whitewater rapids and the only Class 3 rapids in the state. An enchantingly diverse ecosystem makes the destination a natural theme park for outdoor adventure with over 350 miles of rivers, 1,500 miles of trails, aquatic caves, nine state parks, waterfalls and 300 documented natural springs that offer cave diving, tubing, paddle boarding, kayaking, hiking, birdwatching and spring hopping that can’t be found anywhere else in the United States.

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