

# WILD & WACKY Locations

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## Go Wild... and Wacky!

Florida is popular for several reasons: hundreds of miles of spectacular beaches, some of the best weather you will find anywhere in the United States and – maybe most notably – being home to a big mouse. In addition to the state's many tourist attractions, visitors can also enjoy some truly unique (and maybe even a little wild and wacky) attractions that are hard to find anywhere else in the country. Many of them are nestled along a Florida Scenic Highway.



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Looking for adventure? Enjoy wild and wacky attractions and







Fountain of Youth



Worm Gruntin Festival



### 1 Suncoast Scenic Parkway

Want to see some mermaids? "Real" ones? Then visit one of Florida's oldest attractions, Weeki Wachee Springs. Located along the **Suncoast Scenic Parkway**, this tourist attraction is actually older than the Scenic Highway itself. Founded in 1947, this area was made into a Florida State Park in 2008. Weeki Wachee gained fame worldwide during the 1960s when ABC purchased the property and promoted it on TV. Mermaid hopefuls came from as far as Japan to audition and – considered the ultimate "cool" factor – Elvis Presley visited. Today, the mermaid show is just as fantastic as what your grandparents would have seen. Imagine watching a mermaid eat a banana underwater! And the fun gets even better when a half-dozen sea turtles hover nearby their mermaid friend awaiting their banana snack. If you want to get your splash on, too, check out the nearby summer-season water park, Buccaneer Bay.

### 2 A1A Scenic and Historic Coastal Byway

Need a little pep in your step? Take a drive along the **A1A Scenic and Historic Coastal Byway** to find the Fountain of Youth Archaeological Park. Although we can't guarantee that drinking the water will give you eternal youth, you will definitely find scenic and natural beauty that will make you feel young again. If the Fountain of Youth itself doesn't interest you, you can still enjoy the fascinating archaeological excavations and natural history of the park. It is believed that this is the site where the New World settlers first met members of the native tribes in Florida.

### 3 Big Bend Scenic Byway

You may be familiar with hunting duck, rabbits or deer. But have you ever hunted a worm? Or, more accurately, "grunted" a worm? The little Town of Sopchoppy – located off the **Big Bend Scenic Byway** – loves the sport of "Worm Gruntin'" so much, they've created a festival for it! Worm Gruntin' is a sport where a wooden stake, called a "stob," is driven into the ground and worms are lured to the surface by vibrations created by rubbing a "rooping iron" across the stob. Every year, people gather from far and wide at the Annual Worm Gruntin' Festival, usually held the second Saturday in April. The festival features arts, crafts and food vendors; live music and games; a bait casting competition; Worm Gruntin' demonstrations; a Worm Gruntin' contest; and even the crowning of the Worm Grunter's King and Queen. This is fun for all, so be sure to wriggle your way to this fun event.

### 4 Florida Keys Scenic Highway

Want to know where the wild things are? How about dressing up like one? Fantasy Fest in Key West, along the **Florida Keys Scenic Highway**, is a "dress to thrill" 10-day "adult carnival" costume festival held every October. Revelers will enjoy events such as the Vampire's Ball, Headdress Ball, pet masquerade parade, celebrity lookalike contest, toga party and the Fantasy Fest Parade. Fantasy Fest features over 70,000 masked partygoers making their way down Duval Street. Add your flare to the fest and be part of the same spirit that defines the Keys and excites participants and visitors alike!

### 5 The Ridge Scenic Highway

Do you find excitement in spooky things that go bump in the night? The small Town of Lake Wales, along **The Ridge Scenic Highway**, has a destination that will make your hair stand on end. Legend has it that the lake – now known as Lake Wales – was the home of Seminole Indians who had left the Cherokee nation. After years of living in this spot, a giant bull alligator began terrorizing the camp. Having had enough of the gator's antics, Chief Cufcowellax took the gator to task, and the ensuing battle between the warrior chief and the gator was fatal. After his death, the body of the chief was said to be buried on the north side of the town's hill now known as Spook Hill. Years after the chief's burial, pioneers noticed that their horses "got spooked" and would not venture up the hill. Today, the mystery has grown. If you dare visit this little town, you must steel your nerves and experience what happens to your vehicle at the foot of Spook Hill. In defiance of the laws of physics, cars magically roll uphill. Could it be the ghost of the chief? Or maybe the ghost of the gator? Nobody knows. But the only way to find out is to visit. We dare you.

### Wild About Florida

Whatever you are planning on doing when you visit Florida, try venturing off the beaten path and travel a Scenic Highway or two along the way. We guarantee you will enjoy the trip. And, your spirit may be so moved by some of Florida's attractions and festivals, that you might just let your hair down and get a little wild and wacky.

