Finding Florida: The Guide to the Southernmost State, Revised

Cathy Salustri

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Abstract
In the 1930s the Works Progress Administration's Federal Writers Project hired unemployed writers to create driving tours of each state. Florida chose Zora Neale Hurston and Stetson Kennedy. They crisscrossed the state separately – Jim Crow would not allow black Zora to travel with white Stetson – carving out the routes immortalized in the Guide to the Southernmost State. Over seventy years later, I decided I wanted to go, too. I broke out my shiny, red Florida Gazetteer and tried to reconstruct twenty-two tours, studying towns and researching old route numbers. Often I could only recreate the Depression-era routes by jumping from city to city, sort of a geographic connect-the-dots. Roads are living things, and for one to assume that she can look for a road where someone else put it down almost 80 years ago, well, sir, you would be foolish to think that road would stay where you left it. Especially in Florida, a land kept eternally young through constant change. The roads, it seem, breathe and grow and twist and turn and pulse with Florida's fervor in much the same way her people and land does. They are malleable. Florida doesn't have much that won't bend and stretch – and sometimes break. Just as often, though, it yields, bending until it simply can no longer, and then it stretches and bends back and we are the ones who must yield or break. In September I climbed into a camper van with my better half, Barry, and my other better half, Calypso. We spent the month recreating those original tours, guided by a dogeared, broken-
spined, 1950s-era version of the Guide, a now-tattered, Florida Gazetteer, and (on Barry’s part) endless patience. We logged almost 5,000 miles in on my quest for Florida. I hoped to see the state through Stetson and Zora’s eyes. I looked for what they saw. I searched for scraps of Florida abandoned along her backroads. Out of those miles grew these tours: the ultimate Florida road trip. These tours share much with the Guide, but they differ, too. I followed Stetson and Zora, yes, seeking their voices in the bubble of every spring and searching for visions of them in every blazing-hot, pink and amber sunset, but I also recreated, one more time, Florida’s story – and mine. This tour is the best thing I have ever done.

Comments
A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Liberal Arts, College of Arts and Sciences, University of South Florida St. Petersburg.

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The most popular spot on the sand, Clearwater Beach, offers lots to do. Stroll the half-mile Beach Walk (pictured above), where you can spend a day frolicking in the water, check out the surf shops, hunt for the perfect souvenir at a touristy boutique, or grab a bite to eat along the waterfront. No matter what you do during the daytime, head straight to Pier 60 for the nightly sunset celebration. It's a free show that you don't want to miss. Not only does the sun display brilliant, glorious colors across the sky, local street performers like fire-breathers, tightrope-walkers, and musically inc The Florida Keys archipelago, south of Miami, is a Caribbean-flavoured getaway with beautiful beaches and clear blue waters. For something wilder, head to the sprawling wetlands of the Everglades National Park, home to alligators, manatees and the endangered Florida panther. Orlando is theme park central. You can whizz through Disney's Space Mountain or see a real rocket at the Kennedy Space Center located in Merritt Island, less than an hour from the city. Tucked in among the rolling hills of North Florida, the state capital, Tallahassee, is a popular university town strictly Southern in tone, and a gateway to the stunning beaches located in the Panhandle. Key facts. Area Head to Central Florida for a day of swimming, tubing, and relaxing in some of the region's most beautiful natural springs (that hover around a refreshing 70 degrees year-round!). With so much diversity from city-to-city and coast-to-coast, there are thousands of things to do and see in Florida. 01 of 21.  There's always something fun on the roster at Gramps, from live music and comedy to the hippest weekly Bingo Night in town. The drinks are delicious and remarkably cheap, but the biggest draw is the creative and wide-ranging event list. Drop in at random and you might find yourself in the midst of an epic Trivia Thunderdome battle, a burlesque show, or a live screening of your favorite TV show. At Gramps, the endless surprises are half the fun. Continue to 13 of 21 below. DMV Florida - Your Guide to the Florida Department of Motor Vehicles. DMV Florida.  The Florida Government is based in Tallahassee, which is the state capital. Serving almost 21 million Floridians, the state of Florida has a large government and many of the departments are online on the states official MyFlorida website. Florida has no state income tax, which makes it attractive to many Americans looking to escape high state taxes. That and other factors are contributing to a robust increase in the Florida population. The majority of the revenue for the state comes from sales tax related to tourism, as well as property taxes. Shortcuts: 2017 Florida facts from the US Census. Southern Florida Southern Florida is Florida's largest metro area. If you're looking for a bustling urban area, Miami is the second-largest city in Florida. The city is also the most populous region in the Southern U.S. after Washington, D.C. Close to Miami is Hialeah, the sixth-largest city in Florida. Florida's southern region also hosts the Everglades, providing unique natural attractions. No matter what region suits you, moving to Florida comes with endless opportunities. The state currently has a 2019 growth rate of 1.63%. Unless you're moving to Florida to retire, finding a job is likely your top priority. Fortunately, Florida's economic outlook is strong. As population increases, job creation is vital to the state’s economic success.