

C-Life just completed a one and a half week side trip on the St. Johns River. The river is a wildlife paradise lined with Spanish moss covered cypress trees. It was really a great 10 days. Two advantages of being on the St. Johns River with the low temperature around 22 degrees are (1) you really appreciate days like today in the upper 60's, and (2) you can see all of the manatees crowded in the clear springs off the river. We traveled about 130 miles up (south) on the St. Johns River, stopping at Blue Springs State Park, just short of the town of Sanford, Florida. Even though the St. Johns is a "black water" river from the tannic acid of the decaying plant matter, the springs are crystal clear, emitting 72 degree water year-round. Blue Springs has an output flow of approximately 101 million gallons of 72 degree water daily. With the river temperature in the low 50's, the 72 degree water really attracts the manatee, and numerous fish also. There were hundreds of manatee crowding into the warm water at Blue Springs. After leaving Blue Springs we broke our all-time record for seeing Bald Eagles. One day we observed 12 Bald Eagles between 7:30 am and 12:40 pm, WOW! Several of the eagles were within 50 to 75 feet of us! We stopped one evening in Welaka, and were amazed at what we found in a maritime museum. A local person, Richard Speas, now deceased, made boats up to 40 feet long, by epoxying wooden blocks of wood together in a pattern like laying bricks. The boats were extremely strong, but the total weight of the boat was a problem. They were beautifully finished pieces of art. You can find more information on the museum at www.welakamaritimuseum.com.

A highlight of our trip on the St. Johns was visiting with Joy and David Speights and their family upon our return to Jacksonville. Joy is Kay's niece, Kay's sister Hazel's daughter. Joy and David are missionaries in Thailand, and were home in the U.S. for a brief visit. We spent most of two days visiting with them. Joy and her family rode with us from downtown Jacksonville around to Jacksonville Beach, a ride of about four hours, and we concluded our visit by having lunch with them at a Korean restaurant. We really enjoyed the food. There were no leftovers on my plate.

We concluded our trip to Jacksonville with a visit by J.W. Boykin and his wife Kay. J.W. is from my home community outside Kenly, North Carolina. We grew up together, and we both graduated from Glendale High School, J.W. in 1964, and me in 1965. J.W. moved to Jacksonville in the late 60's and retired in Jacksonville from the railroad business.

We are now continuing our way further south, with a destination of the Florida Keys in a week or so. The temperature has finally reached the upper 60's and I had on shorts for the first time today.

Robert & Kay
C-Life

Attachments:

A drawbridge with Jacksonville in the background
Spanish moss covered cypress trees
Manatee in Blue Springs State Park
One of 12 Eagles seen one day
Boat Museum in Welaka, Florida
Railroad Bridge we had to wait for



