

How to avoid the snowstorms

Winter in the South

By John Kobak

Last year we went to Mexico with our RV, bikes and kayak. This year it was back to Florida. I'm often asked why. Mexico is warmer and a great cultural experience. There is little difference in gas, food and camping expenses. Both have great wildlife if you look for it, but for biking and canoeing we prefer Florida. In Mexico we are usually close to the ocean and the surf which makes it fun kayaking but not canoeing. Florida has some great paved rails-to-trails for biking; Mexico's streets are either cobblestone or sandy. So it depends on what you looking for.



Peggy on Jekyll Island

If you want to read a detailed report with more pictures of this year's trip, follow the links from [blog page](#).



We love our 17' ABS canoe and I use my bike as a shuttle vehicle when we can. This year we decided since many of the streams are slow flowing that we could paddle upstream and then float back to camp. We found it fun attaining the class 1 riffles.



Manatees at Homosassa Springs

In Florida we generally try to stay north of Tampa for several reasons. We prefer the cooler temperatures because we are physically active and we prefer wilderness and wildlife to RV neighbors and full hookups. The ideal daytime temperature for us is between 55-75°F, with lows in the 40's which makes sleeping great. We never used our A/C but needed to use our furnace or radiant heater on many mornings. We biked over 300 miles and canoed over 100 miles. Good work outs but we ate so well that we only lost a

We also paddled in coastal estuaries where we saw lots of big manatees along with Egrets, Heron and I bis.

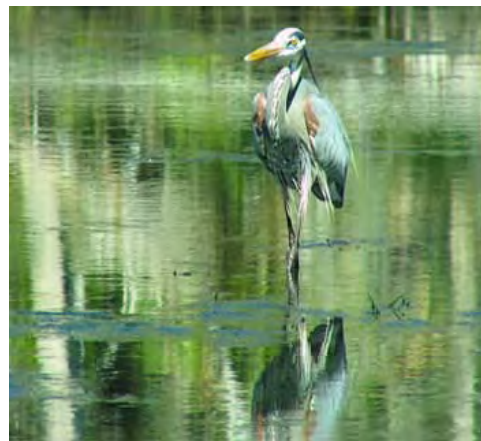
Our favorite rivers were the Silver River for wildlife including monkeys, Juniper Springs for a wilderness experience, Alafia River for little rapids and great camping at Lithia Springs. If you want to see more gators than any other place in Florida, head to



Bill Miller watching the kayak eating gator

the Myakka River, east of Sarasota. Bill Miller met up with us in Feb. and paddled with us for a week before heading further south with Cathy.

Another reason for staying North in Florida in the winter is the lack of available campsites south of Tampa.. The state parks in Florida are great but they take reservations for all of their campsites. So unless you know exactly when and where you are going it's very hard to find an available campsite, even if you arrive after a weekend. However there are lots of other available places. In general the county parks and state forests do not take reservations so if you arrive after a weekend there is no problem snagging a campsite. Rv's generally don't like to stay anywhere where there are no electrical hookups, so Ocala National Forest



Great Heron

almost always has room. We have solar arrays on our RV which allows us the luxury of enjoying light & TV at night using the batteries that usually get recharged by the next afternoon as long as it is sunny. This works better in Mexico.

The weather was a little cooler this year but the only rain we got was in the evening or while we were traveling. We began our trip in southern GA on Jekyll Island & the Okefenokee.

The furthest south we got to was Sarasota.



Lithia Springs County Park

Roatan Honduras

We would have stayed even longer in FL and possibly headed south with Bill & Cathy but we had made plans to go even further south on March 1st for a week on the island of Roatan which is about 30 mi north of the coast of Honduras.



Carl & Donna Homberg, Elliott & Pegge Drysdale, Larry Fordyce & Judi Cleary, John & Peggy Kobak

This is our 6th time in Roatan, our favorite Caribbean Island. The off shore reef is spectacular with coral and tropical fish. You can snorkel off the beach where we stayed or scuba dive a short 5 min boat ride to the reef. Six of us were certified divers and we all did 10 dives including a night dive and a deep wreck dive.



Judi and Larry got their advanced divers certif.

You may wonder why we like Roatan. Of course for me it starts with value.

Accommodations in the West End go from youth hostel cheap to Luna Beach luxury. We chose Luna again since we could rent a 4000 ft² four bath/bedroom beach house with huge living room, dining room and kitchen for less than \$100/couple/day. Peggy & I got to Roatan a day early and stayed at a beautiful room at Posada Arco Iris for only \$40/day of course it did not have a kitchen but it did have a frig,

Rich & Tracey Priem came with their two boys Cade & Dane. They stayed in a three bedroom beach house. The kids did some swimming with the Dolphins. Rich took a [lot of pictures](#)



The West End of Roatan has 10 dive shops and dozens of good restaurants. The restaurants are getting more expensive each year but you can still get a dinner with two lobster tails for \$18 and fresh fish filets for \$12. Our favorite restaurant has been The Lighthouse. It burned to the ground last summer and it has been rebuilt bigger and better than ever. The original owner Mavis has teamed with her daughter Dixie to open a new restaurant right next door.





John the waffle man made breakfast each morning for the hungry crew.

Pegge Drysdale put on her big all you could possibly eat lobster and shrimp dinner one night for everyone including the Priem's

We had plenty of snacks and food, I probably gained back some of the weight I lost in FL.

Everybody left Luna on Saturday,

Judi & Larry were continuing on to Corn Island, Nicaragua. Peggy and I were heading back to the mainland for a night in San Pedro Sula before heading back to Atlanta where we left our RV. The Priem's got back to Houston OK but the big snowstorm in Cleveland caused all flights to be cancelled so that the Drysdals' and Hombergs' ended up in Atlanta stuck for three days. We met them there and continued our partying.



View of Beach near Posada Arco Iris



One of the several grocery stores nearby