

# 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**

of this year's trip, follow the links from [blog page](#).

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 couple of pounds each. If you want to read a detailed report with more pictures



**Bill Miller watching the kayak eating gator**

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. RVrs generally don't like to stay anywhere where there are no electrical hookups, so Ocala National Forest 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.



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.



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



**Great Heron**



**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 1<sup>st</sup> 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 6<sup>th</sup> 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 ft<sup>2</sup> 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.

