

2015
Central Florida
Towns & Parks



“Cypress Swamp”

Towns: Lake Wales



Lake Wales was surveyed in 1879 by Sidney Irving Wailes, who changed the name of a lake—Watts Lake—to Lake Wailes. The city of Lake Wales was established in 1911-12 by the Lake Wales Land Company. The spelling Wales was used for the city, although the lake is still Lake Wailes. The city is in the middle of the long, narrow Lake Wales Ridge, which was the first part of the Florida Peninsula to rise above sea level, beginning as a series of small sandy islands not unlike the Florida Keys today.



In 1925 the Atlantic Coast Line Railroad built a new line from Haines City (less than 20 miles to the north) joining lines to Everglades City, on the Gulf coast. Today, the depot is an historical museum that is currently closed for renovation.



Parks: Lake Kissimmee State Park

There is hiking, boating, and picnicking, but the special feature at Kissimmee State Park, near Lake Wales, is the 1869-era cow camp, complete with an actor who never departs from his role as 19th-century cowcatcher. In the 16th century Spanish conquistadors left some of their on-the-hoof larder behind to become wild Florida cattle. In the 19th century these rangy cows were rounded up by cowcatchers who herded them by the sound of cracking whips. Thus: “Florida Crackers.”

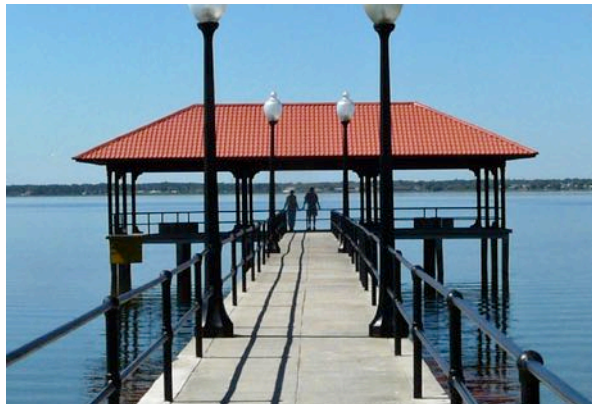
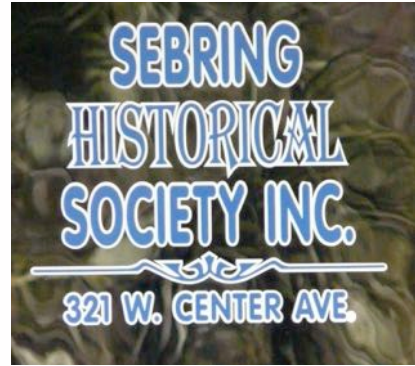


Towns: Sebring

At the center of the Florida peninsula, Sebring sits on the southern end of the Lake Wales Ridge. The city, founded in 1912, was named for George E. Sebring (1859–1927), a pottery manufacturer and developer from Ohio. Three lakes are within its boundaries—Lake Jackson, Little Lake Jackson, and Dinner Lake. Nearby is Highlands Hammock State Park.

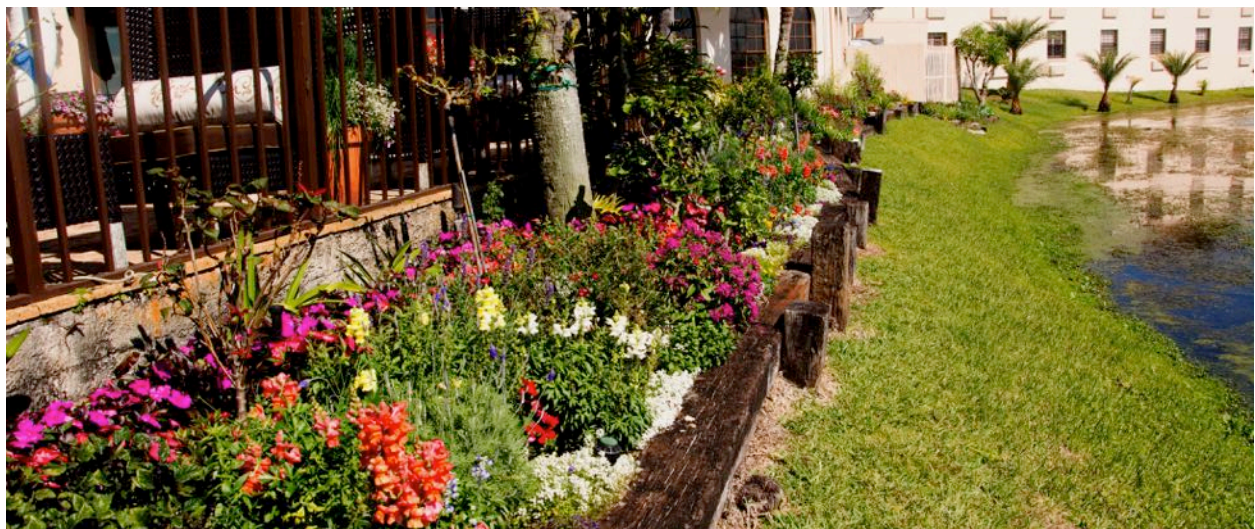
The firehouse looks as it did when it was built in 1927, complete with the tower that has its original fireman’s pole. Actually, it was rebuilt substantially after the hurricanes Charlie, Frances, and Jeanne in 2004 blew out its windows.

Below: Lake Jackson pier; wood stork and egret roost, Little Lake Jackson;



Towns: Sebring

Inn on the Lakes is a hotel located on Little Lake Jackson just across US-27 from Lake Jackson. What sets it apart from other hotels in Sebring are it's gardens that are brilliant with carefully arranged flowers and herbs.



Towns: Abandoned Hotels



Harder Hall
Sebring, FL
1927

Click [here](#) for an article about these and similar Florida hotels



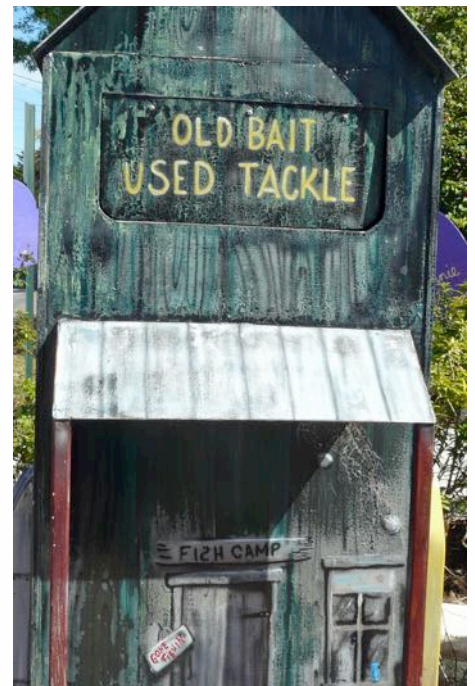
Grand Hotel
Lake Wales, FL
1926

Towns: Lake Placid



About 20 miles south of Sebring on US-27, Lake Placid was called Lake Stearns in 1925. But in 1927, at the instigation of Dr. Melvil Dewey, the inventor of the Dewey Decimal System (and the founder of the Lake Placid Club in Lake Placid, New York), the name was changed to Lake Placid.

The town is known for (1) its murals and (2) as the source of most of the world's caladium bulbs. Scattered about downtown, are trash receptacles disguised in many imaginative ways (below).



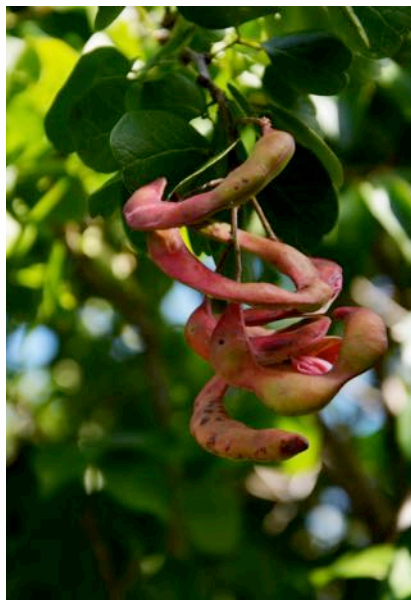
Parks: Shark Valley

Part of Everglades National Park, Shark Valley has everything the tourist might want—tram ride (so you don't have to walk or bike, though you can if you want), birds, alligators, and the River of Grass.



Parks: J.N. “Ding” Darling National Wildlife Refuge

On the west coast of Florida, Sanibel Island is home to the Ding Darling Wildlife Refuge, which was named for an editorial cartoonist who, because of his advocacy of conservation causes, was appointed head of the United States Biological Survey by Franklin Roosevelt. Darling was instrumental in founding the National Wildlife Federation in 1936.

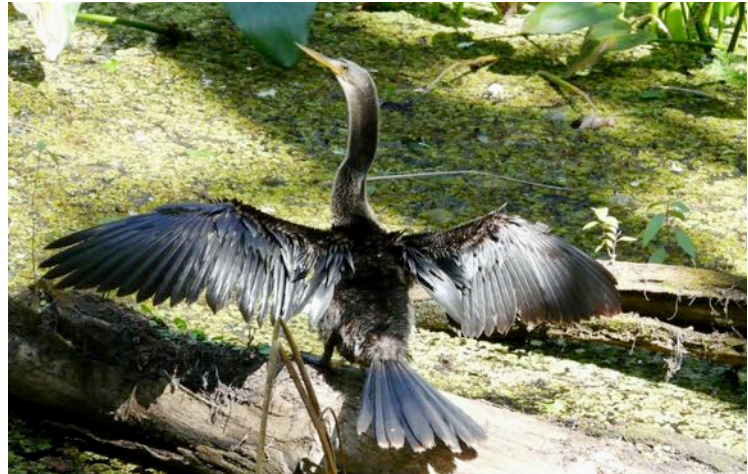


Parks:



Parks: Corkscrew Swamp

Corkscrew Swamp Sanctuary is a National Audubon Society sanctuary located in southwest [Florida](#). The sanctuary was established to protect one of the largest remaining stands of Bald Cypress and Pond Cypress in North America from extensive logging that was ongoing throughout the 1940s and 50s.



Parks: Highland Hammock State Park



Cypress Swamp Type