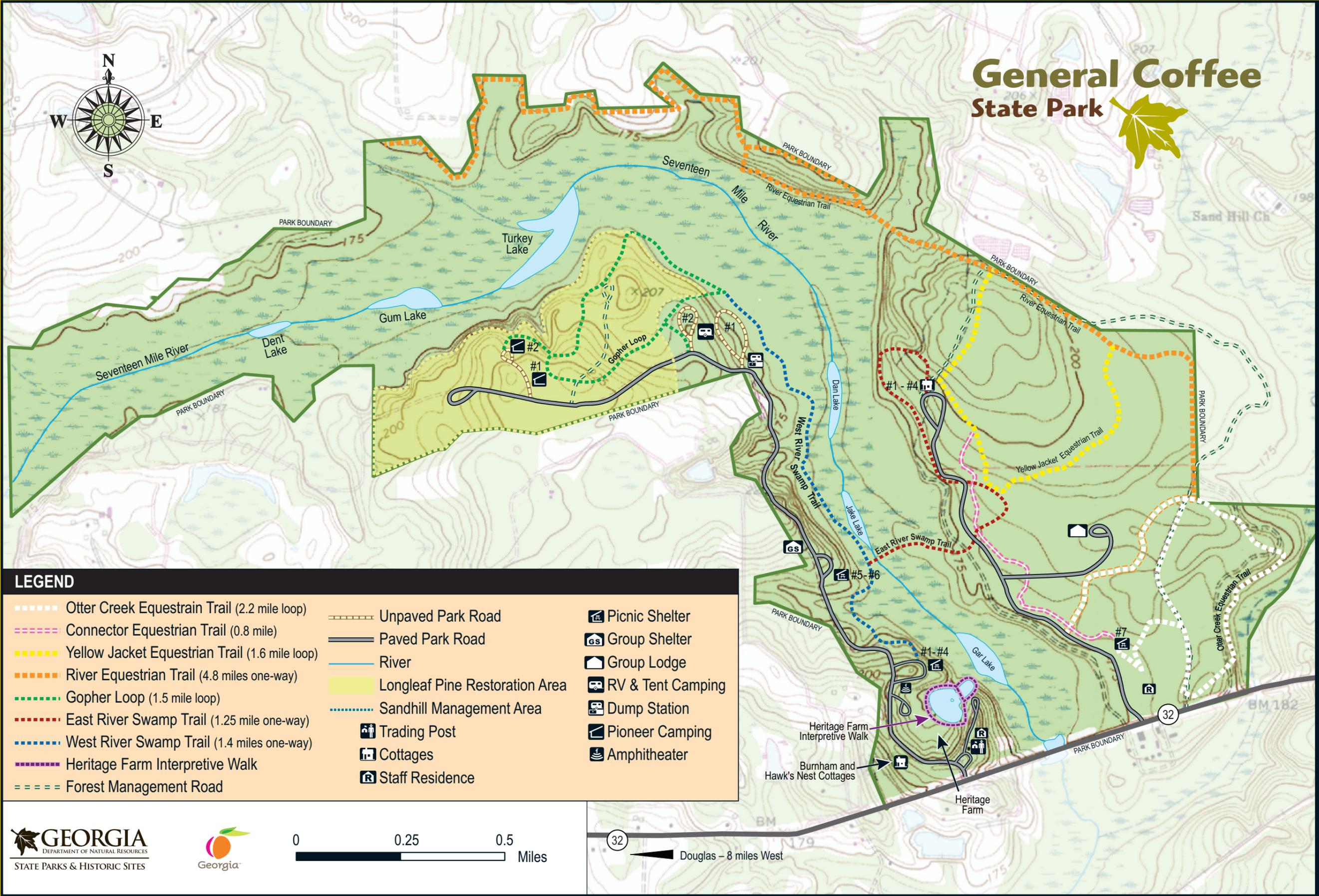


General Coffee State Park Trail Map

46 John Coffee Road • Nicholls, GA 31554 • Park: 912-384-7082 • Emergency: 912-384-7082 • Reservations: 1-800-864-7275 • www.GeorgiaStateParks.org

General Coffee State Park



LEGEND

Otter Creek Equestrian Trail (2.2 mile loop)	Unpaved Park Road	Picnic Shelter
Connector Equestrian Trail (0.8 mile)	Paved Park Road	Group Shelter
Yellow Jacket Equestrian Trail (1.6 mile loop)	River	Group Lodge
River Equestrian Trail (4.8 miles one-way)	Longleaf Pine Restoration Area	RV & Tent Camping
Gopher Loop (1.5 mile loop)	Sandhill Management Area	Dump Station
East River Swamp Trail (1.25 mile one-way)	Trading Post	Pioneer Camping
West River Swamp Trail (1.4 miles one-way)	Cottages	Amphitheater
Heritage Farm Interpretive Walk	Staff Residence	
Forest Management Road		



General Coffee State Park



General Coffee State Park is one of southern Georgia's "best kept secrets" and is known for interpretation of agricultural history at its Heritage Farm, with log cabins, a corn crib, tobacco barn, cane mill, barnyard animals and other exhibits. Seventeen Mile River winds through a cypress swamp where the park hosts rare and endangered plants. The threatened Indigo Snake and Gopher Tortoise make their homes in this Longleaf Pine/Wiregrass community. Overnight accommodations include camping, cottages, and the Burnham House, an elegantly decorated 19th century cabin perfect for romantic getaways. The park was donated to the state by a group of Coffee County citizens in 1970 and is named after General John Coffee, a planter, U.S. Congressman and military leader.

Horse Trails

The park features 12 miles (one-way) of horse trails that loop through the eastern side of the property. Parking for horse trailers is available at picnic shelter #7. All riders must check in at the park office before proceeding to the trail area. A small fee is charged for use of horse trails. Proof of negative Coggins test is required on all horses.

Riders will experience every type of habitat present at General Coffee State Park. The lower sandhill areas were clear-cut in the early 1970s and have re-grown as a mixed oak forest. Small sections of this area are being used as experimental areas to study various sandhill restoration techniques. The upper sandhill areas contain oaks and mature longleaf pine. The scrub area toward the back of the park is a rare glimpse at a unique ecosystem. The trail crosses several drainage areas and travels along the edge of the Seventeen Mile River and Otter Creek for several miles. The area abounds with wildlife such as whitetail deer, wild turkey, gopher tortoise, and many types of songbirds.

Heritage Farm Interpretive Walk

This half-mile walk loops around the pond located at the park's award-winning Heritage Farm. The best place to begin and end your walk is at the farm's parking lot. Located along the walk are interpretive stations where you can read about the habitats, plants and animals found at General Coffee State Park. This walk is also popular with birding enthusiasts as many species of water birds and songbirds can be spotted near the pond year-round.

East River Trail

The East River Trail begins on the west side of the Seventeen Mile River near picnic shelters #5 and #6. The trail starts with a half-mile-long boardwalk that crosses the river to the east side of the park. As you walk along the boardwalk, keep an eye open for wading birds and river otters during the wet season and for deer and raccoon during the dry season.

The Seventeen Mile River is an ephemeral river fed by runoff water from rainfall and fresh-water springs. Rivers such as this one are also called blackwater rivers due to their dark, tea-colored hue. During dry years, ephemeral rivers may completely dry up and the river bottom will be green with moss, ferns, grasses and wildflowers. During wetter years, the water level at this point in the river will reach to within a few feet of the bottom of the boardwalk. There are deeper areas of the river that are referred to as "lakes." It is in these deeper areas that fish and other aquatic animals survive during the dry times to repopulate the river when the waters return. To judge the average water level in the river you just need to look for the point on the cypress trees where the trunk starts to sloop outward.

As the trail leaves the river and you return to solid ground, you are climbing the side of a small hill. The change from river to upland happens within just a few feet of trail as you rapidly climb the few feet in elevation needed to go from a wet river bottom to a dry sandhill. Here it is easy to see how just a few feet of elevation can make a huge difference in the types of plants and animals that live in the area. Take note of the loose white sand that is common in these areas. The dry area you are now entering provides good growing conditions for trees such as hickory and oaks. The understory of the forest is full of different species of blueberry bushes.

The trail will cross and re-cross the park road and continue back down to the edge of the river. As you approach the river you will see a change take place in the forest as you enter wetter areas. Magnolia trees dominate this section of the riverbank. There are several different types of magnolias that grow in this area, but the dominant one is the Southern Magnolia. The best time to see these trees in bloom are the months of April and May. If you look carefully in the branches you may be lucky enough to see the rare Greenfly Orchid in bloom.

West River Trail

Beginning near picnic shelter #4, the West River Trail is the oldest trail on the park. This trail travels along the western edge of the Seventeen Mile River from the picnic area to campground #2. Along the route, the trail crosses several drainage areas where wet-weather creeks feed the river. The trail bed is relatively compacted and easy to walk, but the trail can be narrow in places with exposed tree roots. As you travel along this trail you will experience two habitats: the river on one side and mostly upland pine forest along the other side. This occurs because this trail is situated in what is known as the ecotone, or boundary zone between these two distinct habitats.

The upland pine forest in this area is dominated by Longleaf Pine and Wiregrass. This is one of the two types of longleaf habitats seen at General Coffee State Park. The other is the Longleaf-

Turkey Oak forest found in the sandhill areas. These upland forests are home to many types of songbirds and small mammals. During the spring and fall, these woods are full of native wildflowers. Like the sandhill areas, the upland pine forest needs to burn periodically, every 2-5 years, to remain a pine forest. The park actively manages these areas by conducting controlled burns that prohibit the hardwood trees from taking over the pine forest and allow the young longleaf seedlings to germinate and grow.

Looking in the river area along this trail you will see a mixture of Cypress, Black Gum and Red Maple trees. Scattered within the river are small islands that support pond pine and other species of trees and bushes. This variety of plant life leads to a variety of wildlife. As you walk along the trail you may see or hear songbirds, owls, hawks, raccoons, whitetail deer, snakes, and many other animals. If you stroll along the trail soon after sunset on a summer evening, you may be treated to a light show as lightening bugs rise from the riverbanks for their nightly mating flight.

Gopher Loop

Gopher Loop is a 1.5-mile loop trail that takes you into the sandhill management area of the park. You may access this trail at two points, the trailhead near the main park road (there is a small parking area) or the West River Trail as it joins into Gopher Loop behind campground #2. This is the driest area in the park, and during the summer it can be very hot, so be sure to take water and a hat. It is along this trail that you have the best chance of seeing the protected Gopher Tortoise and the threatened Indigo Snake.

Scattered throughout the sandhill are many Gopher Tortoise colonies. Each colony usually contains 10-15 burrows and is home to 10 or more tortoises. This species is the only tortoise in the Southeast and is an important member of the sandhill community. The Gopher Tortoise is often referred to as a keystone species since upward of 300 other species of wildlife will utilize the Gopher Tortoise burrow to stay cool in the heat of the summer and to escape the fires that are an important part of this ecosystem. These burrows can be over 30 feet in length and may be 6 or more feet below the surface of the ground. Located at the entrance to each burrow is an area of sand called the apron. This is the sand that the tortoise kicks out of the burrow as it is digging its tunnel. It is in this apron area that the female tortoise will lay her eggs. When walking around these burrows, be very careful to not step on the apron or near the tunnel entrance, as sometimes the beginning of the tunnel will collapse under your weight.

A restoration project began in this sandhill area in 2005. Due to many years of suppressing fires, various oak tree species began to shade out the longleaf pines, wiregrass and many plants the Gopher Tortoises depend on for food. To bring balance back to the system and allow for future controlled burns, the oaks had to be thinned out and 25,000 Longleaf Pine seedlings were planted. To many this may look like a dry desolate area, but it is in fact teeming with life. If you look closely you may see Longleaf Pines in the grass stage, and if you visit during the summer you will see the wiregrass and many wildflowers in bloom. These wildflowers and grasses attract many types of insects that in turn attract animals that eat insects. Due to the arid conditions, the best time to see wildlife in the sandhill is early in the morning and late in the evening.

SAFETY TIPS & ETIQUETTE

- Tell someone your itinerary and expected return time.
- Take a map, water, snacks, first aid kit, flashlight and whistle. Three short blasts on a whistle are known as a call for help.
- Do not stray from trails. If you become lost, stay in one location and wait for help. This will make it easier for rescuers to find you.
- Don't count on cell phones to work in the wilderness, but if they do, be able to give details about your location.
- Invest in good hiking socks such as those found at sporting goods stores. Avoid blisters by carrying "moleskin" and applying it as soon as you feel hot spots on your feet. Available in the foot care section of drug stores, moleskin is like felt that sticks to your skin.
- Be prepared for unexpected rain and wind which can lead to hypothermia. Always carry quality rain gear and turn back in bad weather. If you become wet or cold, it is important to get dry and warm as quickly as possible.
- Dress in layers and avoid cotton. Today's hikers can choose from numerous fabrics that wick moisture, dry quickly and conserve heat. Many experienced hikers wear a lightweight shirt that wicks moisture, while carrying a fleece pullover and rain jacket.
- Pack out all trash.
- Keep pets on a leash at all times and clean up after them.
- Do not pick flowers, disturb wildlife or take anything off the park.
- Protect the park and help prevent erosion by staying on marked trails.

CLIMATE DATA FOR NICHOLLS, GEORGIA

Month	Avg. High	Avg. Low	Mean	Avg. Precip.	Record High	Record Low
Jan	62°F	41°F	52°F	4.83 in	83°F (1975)	-1°F (1985)
Feb	66°F	44°F	55°F	3.93 in	86°F (1989)	13°F (1996)
Mar	73°F	49°F	61°F	4.80 in	91°F (1963)	18°F (1980)
Apr	79°F	54°F	67°F	3.16 in	96°F (1986)	31°F (1987)
May	86°F	62°F	74°F	3.04 in	100°F (1967)	40°F (1971)
Jun	90°F	69°F	79°F	5.49 in	104°F (1985)	47°F (1984)
Jul	92°F	72°F	82°F	6.01 in	104°F (2000)	56°F (1967)
Aug	91°F	71°F	81°F	5.50 in	105°F (1995)	57°F (1957)
Sep	87°F	68°F	77°F	3.34 in	101°F (1990)	40°F (1967)
Oct	80°F	57°F	68°F	2.79 in	95°F (1986)	26°F (1954)
Nov	72°F	50°F	61°F	2.57 in	89°F (1957)	15°F (1950)
Dec	64°F	43°F	54°F	3.67 in	83°F (1978)	7°F (1962)