



PRESS KIT



HORSE CAPITAL OF THE WORLD®



FLORIDA'S NATURAL WONDER®

Ocala/Marion County is unlike anything you've seen or imagined. "How did I not know about this?" sums up the wonder that first-time visitors experience in Ocala and surrounding communities like Dunnellon, Belleview, McIntosh and Reddick.

From its otherworldly natural springs to the impressive World Equestrian Center and Florida Aquatics Swimming and Training to its vibrant restaurants, quaint shops, dynamic arts and culture, and historic sites, the destination takes you by surprise in the best of ways.

Internationally renowned among equestrians, cyclists, geologists, and even the world of classic cinematography, Ocala/Marion County still feels like a hidden gem to those who aren't already insiders. And yet, when you're here, you're never an outsider. The relaxed, genuine friendliness of the county's communities makes you feel welcome wherever you go.



OcalaMarion.com

72 mi/ 114 km to East Coast of Florida
48 mi/ 77 km to West Coast of Florida

97 mi/ 157 km from Orlando International Airport (MCO)
113 mi/ 182 km from Tampa International Airport (TPA)
301 mi/484 km from Miami International Airport (MIA)
361 mi/ 581 km from Hartsfield-Jackson Atlanta International Airport(ATL)



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FLORIDA'S OUTDOOR PLAYGROUND



Ocala/Marion County is internationally known for being an outdoor playground, from the expansive Ocala National Forest to the Cross Florida Greenway, there are hundreds of miles of beautiful trails lined with the unique-to-Florida landscape. Bring your own bike or rent one from the local bike shops and hit our nationally recognized mountain bike trails at Santos Trails.

OCALA NATIONAL FOREST

The Ocala National Forest boasts approximately 387,000 acres of varied terrain, from highlands to coastal lowlands. It's also dotted with more than 600 lakes, rivers and springs. Ocala's mild winters make the forest an ideal spot for camping, and there's no better way to relax on a summer day than splashing into one of our refreshing springs.



SOARING ADVENTURES

What is more unexpected in Florida than canyons and elevation? Adrenaline seekers can add zip lining to their list of adventurous must-do's in Ocala/Marion County! Canyons Zip Line & Adventure Park in Ocala will give you a one-of-a-kind view of a charming Florida destination.

NATURAL SPRINGS

World-class springs continue to invite and inspire visitors year after year. Ocala/Marion County should not be missed, especially for natural parks and springs that feel far from the hustle and bustle but are centrally located and easy to visit. The destination is home to gorgeous natural springs including Silver Glen Springs, Juniper Springs, Salt Springs, Rainbow Springs and Silver Springs. Each one features special activities that are ideal for nature lovers of all ages. All the natural springs in Ocala/Marion County stay 72°F/ 22°C year-round.

If leisurely exploring is your pace, fun spring activities may include a relaxing float down Rainbow River in a tube, an iconic Florida experience on the famous glass-bottom boats at Silver Springs, and snorkeling or paddling in stunning crystal clear springs in the Ocala National Forest.



HORSE CAPITAL OF THE WORLD®



In 2001, Ocala/Marion County was trademarked as the Horse Capital of the World®, a testament to the County's unique involvement in all things equestrian and its record of producing some of the finest champions in the sport. With a beautiful, mild climate all year and soil rich with limestone calcium for strong bones, our destination is home to more horses than any other county in the U.S.

Visitors are able to get behind the fences on various tours of stunning farms, explore nature trails by horseback, and attend equestrian competitions at incredible venues like World Equestrian Center, Florida Horse Park, Live Oak Plantation, and HITS Post Time Farm.

Discover the history behind some of the area's most famous horses by following along the Walk of Champions in Historic Downtown Ocala, using the OcalaMarion Travel Guide App to make the experience immersive!



EVENTS

One of the biggest secrets of Ocala/Marion County is that the destination is home to hundreds of diverse special events annually. What better way to experience the personality of a destination than attending an event? Watch champion horses soar over jumps at equestrian shows or attend art festivals. Witness historic reenactments or listen to concerts from the Ocala Symphony Orchestra. During the holiday season, Historic Downtown Ocala lights up with thousands of lights and across the county, festive charm and events decorate the destination.

ARTS & CULTURE

The Ocala/Marion County arts and culture scene is thriving, vibrant and growing. Art is abundant—from local art galleries in Historic Downtown Ocala and the magnificent Appleton Museum of Art, to a variety of excellent performances at the newly expanded Reilly Arts Center or the Ocala Civic Theater.

Decorative murals are abundant throughout various cities and towns, beautifying water tanks, walls and bridges to offer one-of-a-kind photo-ops. Throughout the destination, visitors will notice uniquely painted horses that are part of a community initiative connecting the horse industry to local art. Nestled in Tuscawilla Park, just north of Downtown Ocala, sits an outdoor art park with larger-than-life sculptures that rotate every couple of years.





FOOD & DRINK

Our local chefs are making national headlines. A BBQ restaurant owner, Rashad Jones, won Food Network's BBQ Brawl, and World Equestrian Center's pastry chef, Yohann Le Bescond, is a James Beard Award finalist, starring in shows like Summer Baking Championship and Harry Potter: Wizards of Baking.

Ocala/Marion County is a strong destination for local flavor, covering everything from a five-star meal paired with a grand prix horse show to seafood on the deck overlooking lakes and rivers.

SHOPPING

Historic Downtown Ocala boasts a wide variety of shopping options including boutiques, gift shops and antique storefronts. Take in the local charm of nearby towns while exploring specialty shops and expansive farmers' markets. For classic shopping experiences, visit the outdoor mall Market Street at Heath Brook or stop in the Paddock Mall. If you are in search of luxury shopping, look no further than World Equestrian Center's collection of up-scale retail.

HISTORY & HERITAGE

History here is a significant and defining feature of Ocala/Marion County's character. The 40 acre Fort King National Historic Landmark offers museum exploration with local artifacts dating back to prehistoric times. Visitors are encouraged to stroll the charming historic districts of Ocala and the surrounding quaint towns.

FORT

MUSEUMS

HISTORIC DISTRICTS



World-Class Venues

World Equestrian Center

Ocala/Marion County is home to the largest and most prestigious equestrian complex in the U.S. World Equestrian Center – Ocala, known to locals as WEC, sits on 2,000 acres with room to expand and offers something fun for everyone. Explore a range of lodging options, diverse restaurants, horse shows, conventions and events, shopping and so much more. The property also offers two state-of-the-art expo centers, 132,300 sq ft each.



Florida Aquatics Swimming & Training

Florida Aquatics Swimming & Training (FAST) is the premier swimming, training, and competition venue in the Southeastern U.S. FAST features an indoor Olympic-sized competition pool and a uniquely designed outdoor pool for training and warm-ups. The facility features an indoor gym, ample spectator seating, and an outdoor spray ground. Coming soon next to FAST, is The Nest, an entertainment hub with an amphitheater, beer garden and more.



Florida Horse Park

Florida Horse Park is a long-standing 500-acre equestrian complex that's a premier venue for equine events like polo or the Grandview Invitational, as well as agricultural events. The venue also hosts other sporting events and national headline concerts.



Southeastern Livestock Pavilion

Located just north of Historic Downtown Ocala, the Southeastern Livestock Pavilion features two outdoor arenas and an indoor auditorium. This Ocala landmark opened in 1945 and hosts countless agricultural events, horse shows, rodeos and a multitude of year-round competitions.





CONSIDER US AN EXTENSION OF YOUR TEAM!

The Ocala/Marion County Visitors & Convention Bureau team is here to help you tell the story of Florida's Natural Wonder®. We would be honored to assist with story development, visual asset requests, interview opportunities, press trips and everything in between.

For more extensive resources or to request a press trip, visit OcalaMarion.com/Media or feel free to reach out to us!

CONTACT US

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