



Water, Water Everywhere

THOUGH NOT ALONG FLORIDA'S COAST, GAINESVILLE BUBBLES WITH LIFE AND LIBATIONS.

BY JEFFREY SPEAR

There are more than 1,000 naturally occurring springs in and around Gainesville, including the largest number of First Magnitude springs (the largest on the classification scale) in the United States. While they have priceless ecological value, create wonderful natural habitats for plants and wildlife, and are spectacular recreational destinations for splashing about, you're sure to find the unique character of the local water supply is what puts Gainesville on the map.

It's been said that the purest water makes the best beer. Arguably, a skillful brewmaster, along with a carefully selected grains, hops and yeast, are equally responsible. In Gainesville, there are three breweries of note that make the most of all these variables, producing some of the finest brews around. At

Cypress & Grove Brewing Co., built in a renovated, late 1800's icehouse (using the existing well that taps into the Floridian aquifer), the brewmasters produce a stunning selection of undeniably delicious craft beers. Two other breweries, First Magnitude Brewing Company and Swamp Head Brewery, while relying on municipal water that's obsessively filtered in the brewery, are equally creative, serving their own, undeniably impressive, creations. All three of these facilities maintain inviting taprooms, have 20 or more varieties of house-made beers (plus seasonal variations) on tap year-round, offer delightful outdoor patios, and have plenty of big screens for sports fans.

Numerous fruit growers in the region are also finding delicious advantage from a plentiful water supply. In particular, Island Grove Wine Company, with approximately

400 acres of blueberries, produces more than 20 varieties of highly enjoyable blueberry and fruit wines. Similarly, Bluefield Estate Winery produces fruit-infused wines that capture the essence of local flavors. Both wineries offer tours and tastings.

While not specifically reliant on the local water supply, make sure to visit Afternoon, a Michelin recognized, neighborhood brunch spot. Other noteworthy attractions include Paynes Prairie Preserve State Park, boasting wild-roaming bison, horses, more than 300 species of birds, alligators and more; the Butterfly Rainforest at the Florida Museum of Natural History; Bat Houses at the University of Florida, home to an estimated 450,000-500,000 nocturnal bats; Cade Museum for Creativity and Invention; and a touch of old Florida at the Marjorie Kinnan Rawlings Historic State Park. *

CADE MUSEUM PHOTO: VISIT GAINESVILLE, ALACHUA COUNTY