



HILLSBOROUGH RIVER STATE PARK

Seminole Trail

ZEPHYRHILLS, FLORIDA

Hiking Time: 2-3 hours



What are those strange things in the water your trail dog may wonder at Hillsborough River? Indeed, those are the only Class II rapids on the Florida peninsula where the average elevation is about six feet. **There are just enough Suwannee limestone outcroppings in the river to inject the sound of rushing water into this canine hike.**

The jungle-like woodlands that envelop the Hillsborough River demand Seaman's notice as well. In addition to the requisite Florida sabal palms there are cypress-filled wetlands and groves of wild citrus trees. Just the tiniest bit of elevation brings stands of hickory and sweetgum. On the bluffs above the river are amazing ancient live oaks. It is little wonder this slice of "wild Florida" was one of the nine original state parks created in the 1930s.

The *Seminole Trail* loop visits them all, spending half of its 3.4 miles hard by the river and half inland. Since the canine hiking is on the north side of the Hillsborough River and the main park is on the south side a swinging wooden suspension bridge gets you started. The beautiful rustic structure was built by the Civilian Conservation Corps when the park opened. Two shorter loops, the *Rapid River Nature Trail* and the *Baynard Trail*, complete Seaman's day along the blackwater river. That day should begin with a moment at the "Prayer of the Woods" sign posted at the trailhead, a bit of wisdom from Portugal to launch your canine hike in the right spirit.



HONEYMOON ISLAND STATE PARK

Osprey Trail/Pelican Trail

DUNEDIN, FLORIDA

Hiking Time: 1-2 hours



Honeymoon Island is the best place to hike with your dog along the Gulf of Mexico on the Florida peninsula. The island was cleaved from a larger island by the Hurricane of 1921 and purchased by Tampa entrepreneur Clinton Washburn. The undeveloped island had been used to raise hogs but the new proprietor cooked up a scheme with *Life* magazine in 1940 for a contest to win Florida honeymoons. Thatched bungalows were hurriedly built and 164 couples enjoyed all-expenses-paid nuptial trips before World War II intervened.

The *Osprey Trail* runs up the spine of a sand spit for over one mile, working through one of Florida's last old growth slash pine forests with trees almost 200 years old. It is all easy trotting for Seaman on a mixture of grass and sand under paw. Inverted osprey nests can be spied in the bare pine snags. Bald eagles have also arrived in recent years. Interpretive stops explain the barrier island's unique ecology.

At the end of the spit the canine hike moves onto the *Pelican Trail* for the return trip along the shoreline, dominated by black and red mangroves. This will be slower going, both because of the luxurious sugar sand on the trail and the time your water-loving dog will be spending in the gentle waters of Pelican Bay.

Oh, and about those honeymooners. In 1991, those celebrating their golden anniversaries were invited back, including Althea Meyer and her husband, Fido.