

## Okefenokee Canoe Trip – November 14-17, 2021

Have you ever been to the Okefenokee for fall color? The rust color of the swamp cypress trees makes some of the best fall color photos you've ever seen. Now imagine the morning mist, the glassy smooth water with the lifting morning mist, and the call of a barred owl as you leave for an early morning paddle.



We're putting together a small group for an Okefenokee canoe trip to coincide with peak fall color. We will be staying at Stephen Foster State Park in two-bedroom cabins – or camping if you prefer. We'll experience the Okefenokee, the quiet water trails, magnificent sunsets and sunrises on the water, dark skies for astrophotography, and wildlife including birds, alligators, and possibly deer, otters, bears, and raccoons.



Most of our travel in the Okefenokee will be by canoe. We'll have two people in a canoe. Depending on our plan for each day, we will have half day or full day canoe trips to destinations like Minnie's Lake, Billy's Island, and other destinations in the area. Distances covered will be 8-9 miles for a full day trip to Minnie's Lake. That's a leisurely paddle with plenty of time for photographs. Do be aware that the area we are traveling is a swamp

with swamp trails. We will only stop in designated areas or picnic shelters, so there will be a lot of time on the water.



Planning well in advance, we don't know what the weather will be. Early November is normally mild with cool mornings around 50, warm days in the 70's, and mild evenings. I normally wear shorts and light weight layers. But it can rain, and in November can be quite cool. We'll modify the daily itinerary as appropriate.



**Cost:**

- \$1250 including a shared cabin and daily canoe rental

Here is the tentative schedule:

Day	Itinerary	Comments
Sunday 11/14	Arrival / Orientation / Sunset Paddle Dinner at cabins	We'll have a short sunset paddle on Billy's Lake to get comfortable in our canoes Bring your own meal
Tuesday 11/15 Sunrise 6:52 AM  Sunset 5:36 PM	Sunrise on eastern Billy's Lake Paddle to Minnie's Lake Lunch at Minnie's Lake Minnie's Lake casual paddle Sunset on Billy's Lake Dinner at cabins Astrophotography (optional)	We'll have an early start before sunrise to reach Billy's Lake for first light. We'll photograph sunrise through the rising early morning mist. Then we'll have a leisurely paddle through mature cypress trees to Minnie's Lake. We'll have a break and lunch on the picnic platform, then spend a couple of hours exploring the lake and nearby wildlife. We'll travel back to Billy's Lake for late afternoon light and sunset.
Wednesday 11/16 Sunrise 6:53 AM  Sunset 5:35 PM	Sunrise on eastern Billy's Lake Morning on Billy's Island Return to cabins for lunch Afternoon drive to Bank's Lake Grand Bay Wildlife Mgt Area Sunset at Bank's Lake Dinner near Banks Lake	We'll have another early start on Billy's Lake heading to the east end of the Lake and Billy's Island. This is one of the few elevated areas in the swamp so it has ruins of an old sawmill, wildlife such as bears and deer, and a short loop trail for a nice morning walk. After lunch, we'll drive to Grand Bay WMA and Banks Lake for landscapes and sunset. Banks Lake features huge cypress trees and nice reflections for sunset.
Thursday 11/17 Sunrise 6:54 AM	Sunrise on western Billy's Lake Departure late morning	We'll finish with one more sunrise on Billy's Lake – this time exploring the western end of the lake. We'll spend several hours on the lake before returning to our cabins for departure.

## Special considerations:

Clothing – Dress in layers with an emphasis on quick drying fabrics.

Watch the weather forecast as we approach the time of the trip. Normal temperatures are highs in the 70's and lows in the upper 50's, but it can be much colder in November with highs in the 50's and lows in the 40's.

Normally November is a relatively dry month, but you probably want rain gear to be prepared for wet weather.

## Camera gear

- Two camera bodies are recommended
- Normal lens focal lengths covering 24mm to 200mm on full frame or 18mm to 135mm on APS-C.
- Long lens optional for wildlife – anywhere from 300mm to 600mm is suggested but it needs to be handheld
- Ultrawide lens optional – there are lots of good creative wide-angle images
- Macro lens optional – macro opportunities are limited because you are in a canoe
- Fast wide lens for astrophotography – 20mm f/1.8 or a similar wide, fast lens
- Circular polarizer (optional)
- Tripod for astrophotography (optional)
- Binoculars (optional)

## Other

- Dry Bag large enough for camera gear (recommend a 30L or 40L dry bag)
  - [https://www.amazon.com/MARCHWAY-Floating-Waterproof-Backpacking-Mountaineering/dp/B01LYAQTCL/ref=zg\\_bs\\_3414201\\_1?encoding=UTF8&psc=1&refRID=PSGSQQ25CF8NZVC6HMFY](https://www.amazon.com/MARCHWAY-Floating-Waterproof-Backpacking-Mountaineering/dp/B01LYAQTCL/ref=zg_bs_3414201_1?encoding=UTF8&psc=1&refRID=PSGSQQ25CF8NZVC6HMFY)
- Small pack for food, drinks, and snacks while traveling
- Small absorbent towel to remove water from canoe and wipe off rain or splashes
  - [https://www.amazon.com/gp/product/B00IRVF3EC/ref=ppx\\_yo\\_dt\\_b\\_search\\_asin\\_title?ie=UTF8&psc=1](https://www.amazon.com/gp/product/B00IRVF3EC/ref=ppx_yo_dt_b_search_asin_title?ie=UTF8&psc=1)
- Rain gear optional – watch weather forecast

## Lodging

We have reserved three two-bedroom cabins. The cabins have a full kitchen, dining table, and living area with a television. We will have two people per cabin – each with their own bedroom. Lodging is included.

## Meals

We'll talk more about meals as we get closer. There are no restaurants or stores within 30 miles. You will want to bring food for your meals each day. We'll provide charcoal for grills for the first two nights.

Breakfast - You should plan to bring whatever you would like for breakfast. You can have an early breakfast before we depart each day, but you may want to have a snack during the morning.

Lunch – You should bring materials for a bag lunch on the first full day. We'll have lunch at Minnie's Lake. On Tuesday, we'll return to our cabins for a lunch break. Wednesday we'll head to Banks Lake and have lunch at a restaurant in that area.

Dinner – We will be returning to the cabins for dinner after sunset on Monday and Tuesday evenings. Wednesday night after sunset at Bank's Lake, we'll have dinner at a nearby restaurant.

Snacks and beverages – You should bring your preferred snacks and beverages for the trip. There is no access to food and beverages in Stephen Foster State Park. The nearest stores are nearly 30 miles away.

## Transportation

We will be traveling by canoe in the Okefenokee. It's a swamp with very little land. You will be sharing a canoe with one other photographer. We will be paddling at a leisurely pace a distance of 4-5 miles each morning or afternoon. On Wednesday afternoon, we will travel by car to Bank's Lake – about 65 miles away. You'll probably enjoy the comfort of a car instead of a canoe.

- Car travel – All car travel will be in your personal vehicle.
- Canoes – Canoe rentals with paddles and life preservers are included in the cost of the trip.

**Cancellation:** Full refund less \$50 processing fee before October 15; no refunds after October 15

**Questions:** Contact Eric Bowles [eric@bowlesimages.com](mailto:eric@bowlesimages.com)