



# BIKE TRAILS

Cycling for nature enthusiasts

By Michael Howerton | Photography by Craig O'Neal



The Amelia Island Trail, paved and flat, is a great ride for families and novice cyclists.

## The Amelia Island Trail

The Amelia Island Trail, which officially opened in May, 2013, is the perfect venue for those cyclists, runners and walkers who prefer to experience inspiration rather than exhilaration. The trail extends from Peter's Point Beachfront Park at its northernmost point to Amelia Island State Park at its southernmost, for a pleasant "beach-to-beach" ride with no admission fee required. It offers just under six miles of a paved, asphalt path which is approximately 10 feet wide, allowing for comfortable side-by-side travel. Moss-laden live oaks and palm trees shade the

trail, which runs parallel to Highway A1A for most of its length. The Amelia Island Trail is part of the East Coast Greenway, an ever-growing trail network which stretches from Florida to Maine along the coast.

The trail is virtually flat, providing an easy, family-friendly environment for cyclists of all ages and abilities. For those wishing to rest or just diverge from the trail, numerous stopping opportunities are available along the way. The shops and restaurants at the OMNI Amelia Island Plantation are easy places to make a pit stop and grab lunch. The route itself is

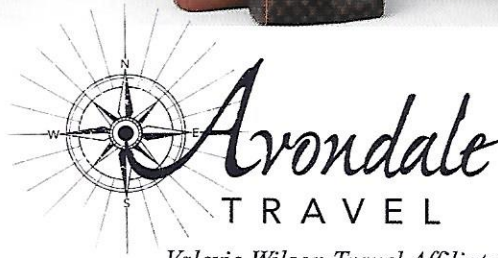
For more information on the Amelia Island Trail visit [trailink.com/trail/amelia-island-trail.aspx](http://trailink.com/trail/amelia-island-trail.aspx)



shady, scenic and tranquil, winding past residences, golf courses and unspoiled wooded expanses.

Beautiful vistas and activities are available at both ends of the trail. At its northern end, Peter's Point Beachfront Park includes a boardwalk access leading to a wide, sandy and pristine beach, as well as restrooms and shower facilities. At its southern end, Amelia Island State Park provides the opportunity to explore sandy beaches, salt marshes and maritime forests which are home to a variety of indigenous wildlife. Parking is plentiful and free at both ends of the trail.

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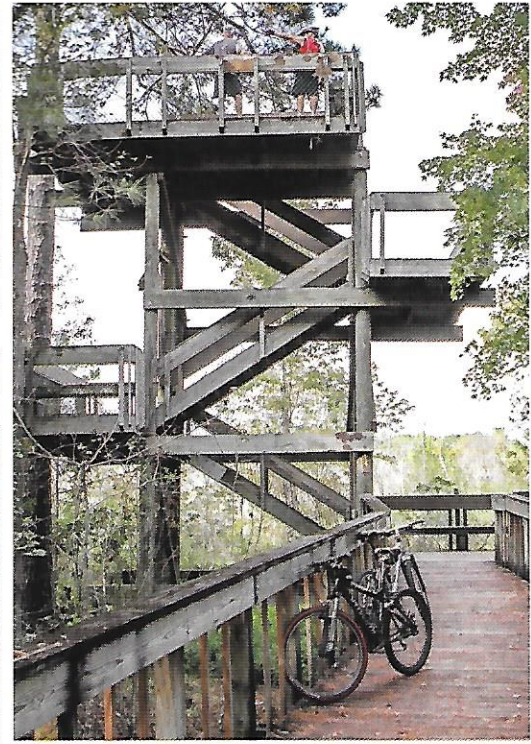
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For more information on Tillie K. Fowler Regional Park  
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Tillie K. Fowler Regional Park has bike trails for all levels of cyclists, and some amazing vistas.

The Amelia Island Trail is just one of the reasons that Fernandina Beach on Amelia Island has earned ‘Bronze Level’ status from the League of American Bicyclists as a “Bicycle Friendly Community.” A Bicycle Friendly Community is one which welcomes cyclists by providing safe accommodation for cycling, and encourages riders to bike for both transportation and recreation.

#### **Tillie K. Fowler Regional Park**

Tillie K. Fowler Regional Park, located on Roosevelt Boulevard in Jacksonville across from the Naval Air Station (NASJAX), includes over 500 acres of woodland, marsh and picnic areas, along with a dog park and nature center. The park is probably best known, however, for its network of three trails—the Island Trail, The Tower Trail and the Mountain Bike Trail—which collectively provide approximately six miles of hiking and cycling pathways throughout the property.

The Island Trail, the northernmost trail at approximately 2.25 miles in length, attracts both hikers and cyclists. The numerous cross-trails and occasionally marshy paths require attentive navigation, but the views of an island forest in the midst of a swampy floodplain make the caution more than worthwhile.

The Tower Trail, which traverses the central areas of the property, is roughly 1.2 miles in length. Hikers and cyclists alike are drawn to the elevated stretches of pathway, as well as sections of an antique brick road which pre-dates 1917. The trail ends at a wooden tower which, after an easy stair-climb, provides an unencumbered view of the property in all directions.

The Mountain Bike Trail located at the Park’s southern end, at 2.5 miles in length, although open to hikers, is the main attraction for serious cyclists. The terrain is generally hard-packed, suitable for beginners and experts alike, with

the most advanced sections—featuring “rollers, berms and ladders,” in mountain biker terms—clearly marked.

All trails are maintained by SORBAJAX (the Southern Off Road Bicycle Association of Jacksonville), ensuring their continuing attractiveness and navigability.

Alice Gould, the Manager of World Famous City Cycle in Jacksonville, has been a frequent visitor to the park and its trails. “It’s just a fun, family-friendly place,” she says. “It’s rarely crowded and the Mountain Bike Trail is a perfect venue for training cyclists at all levels of expertise. The Island and Tower Trails have no real technical challenge for cyclists,” she says, “although you do have to watch out for ‘roots in the road.’ On the other hand, certain sections of the Mountain Bike Trail are definitely for the fearless alone!”

