

Exploring the hidden side of Crystal River

Tour aims to give visitors deeper sense of region's history, wildlife

By The Staff

Wednesday, October 20, 2010 at 7:00 pm

"It's the best-kept secret in the area." That's how Captain Bob Lewis described it.



Raptors such as these ospreys, as well as plumed birds wading the estuaries of the Crystal River, are a common sight during the tour.

Lewis was referring to the 90-minute Heritage Eco River Tour that he and other volunteers and park rangers conduct for visitors six times each week. The theme of the tour is "The Ancient River Dwellers," and the voyage meanders through the heart of the 27,000-acre Crystal River State Preserve Park.

Lewis, a retired school teacher turned river tour interpreter and boat captain, has volunteered his time for nearly four years as a volunteer with the nonprofit Friends of the Crystal River State Park Inc.

Those traveling on the cruise are treated to an interpretive cruise back in time.

"There is evidence of the early river dwellers along the Crystal River dating back 10,000 to 12,000 years," Lewis said.

The cruise begins at the Crystal River Preserve State Park and head upriver a short distance before heading west toward the gateway to the Gulf at Shell Island.

As the boat eases past Wash Island within sight of the open waters of the Gulf, park rangers paint a crystal-clear image of what researchers believe life was like for the river dwellers and even Spanish explorers that found refuge inside the protective banks of the Crystal River generations ago.

He tells of artifacts found on the island that are evidence that it was once used as a trading post for travelers coming and going by ship.

As the tour continues, a sharp mental picture of deeply tanned men working fishing nets along the mouth of Deer Creek is vividly painted.

"The men would use the moving tidal water to their advantage. They would paddle west to their fishing grounds as the tide flowed out into the Gulf, and then back to their home base inside the Crystal River as the incoming waters flowed east, making paddling easier," said park ranger Mike Petellat.

Petellat kept the guests entertained and informed during the journey from his perch at the front of the vessel, encouraging visitors to point out wildlife so he could identify and inform the group about which species were in view.

Another favorite attraction the cruise offers, according to Lewis, is information given about the vast flora and fauna visitors can view as the boat slowly motors past the estuaries on the Crystal River.

A dozen or so pairs of binoculars are supplied for tourists to use, but many guests bring their own viewing gear, as well as cameras. Photographic opportunities present themselves nearly continually.

A myriad of plumed wading bird, such as blue herons and white egrets, as well as raptors, like American bald eagles and ospreys, give visitors plenty to view or photograph as they learn about the heritage of the area.

One point of interest the crew makes sure to point out is the active bald eagle nest located on the north shore of the river that has served as home for a pair of eagles for several years.

On a recent trip down the Crystal River a pair of Atlantic bottlenose dolphins followed alongside the tour boat, surfing the large vessel's wake and offering a rare opportunity for visitors to get an up close and personal experience.

Brian and Dawn Rader, first-time visitors to Citrus County from Xenia, OH, said they loved the tour they took Friday morning. "The landscape is absolutely beautiful here, and the trip is very informative," Rader said. His wife said she felt,

"It's a great way to see the wildlife in the area," Dawn added. She said she was also happy about the affordability of the tour — adult tickets are \$10 and children six to 12 years old are \$8; children less than six years of age are free.

The tours are offered Monday, Wednesday and Friday at 10:30 a.m. and 1:30 p.m., and tickets go on sale one hour prior to each departure. Tickets may be purchased at the park's visitor center, located 1.5 miles west of U.S. 19 on North Sailboat Avenue. There is a maximum of 24 guests per trip.

Lewis, one of three boat captains trained to operate the tour boat, is also one of approximately 30 Friends of the Crystal River State Park Inc. volunteers who make much of the park's success possible.

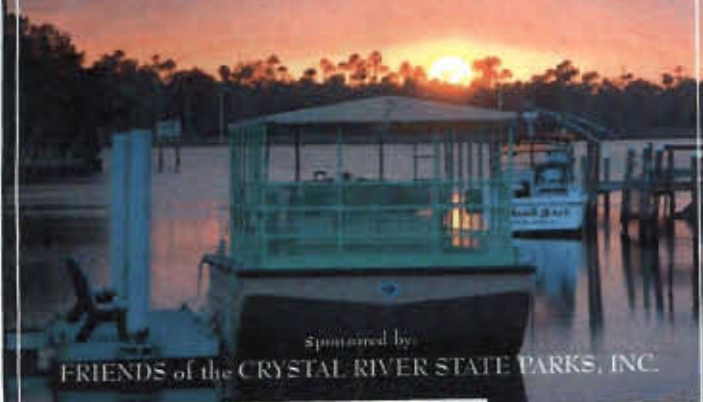
He summed up his feelings about the river tours by saying, "I share my love of nature with our visitors and along the way hope to impart some environmental awareness. Hopefully, the visitors will learn to appreciate what we have and they will want to protect it."

He continued, "The underlying theme of the tours is that today we are enjoying many of the same things that the early river dwellers from thousands of years back found attractive here — fishing, recreation and lodging. Through conservation efforts, we will have this for future generations to enjoy. We want to keep an ecological message here. We want to keep it clean."

For more information about the tour, call the park at (352) 563-0450.

SUNSET CRUISE

Crystal River Preserve State Park



sponsored by
FRIENDS of the CRYSTAL RIVER STATE PARKS, INC.

Call 352.563.0450
for Departure Dates & Times

Depart the Crystal River Preserve Visitor Center dock for a delightful two hour SUNSET CRUISE on the Crystal River. Travel out into the Gulf for a spectacular sunset.

Refreshments & snacks
will be available.

Adults: \$15.00
Children under 12: \$10.00

Advance tickets available in the Crystal River Preserve State Park Visitor Center located just north of Crystal River on US Hwy 19 - turn onto State Park Street at the Days Inn and go 1.5 miles to 3266 N. Sailboat Ave.

The Friends of the Crystal River State Parks, Inc. is a not-for-profit [501 (C)(3)] Citizen Support Organization

SUNSET CRUISE

Crystal River Preserve State Park



sponsored by
FRIENDS of the CRYSTAL RIVER STATE PARKS, INC.

Call 352.563.0450
for Departure Dates & Times

Depart the Crystal River Preserve Visitor Center dock for a delightful two hour SUNSET CRUISE on the Crystal River. Travel out into the Gulf for a spectacular sunset.

Refreshments & snacks
will be available.

Adults: \$15.00
Children under 12: \$10.00

Advance tickets available in the Crystal River Preserve State Park Visitor Center located just north of Crystal River on US Hwy 19 - turn onto State Park Street at the Days Inn and go 1.5 miles to 3266 N. Sailboat Ave.

The Friends of the Crystal River State Parks, Inc. is a not-for-profit [501 (C)(3)] Citizen Support Organization

The Friends of the Crystal River State Parks, Inc. is a not-for-profit [501 (C)(3)] Citizen Support Organization

Advance tickets available in the Crystal River Preserve State Park Visitor Center located just north of Crystal River on US Hwy 19 - turn onto State Park Street at the Days Inn and go 1.5 miles to 3266 N. Sailboat Ave.

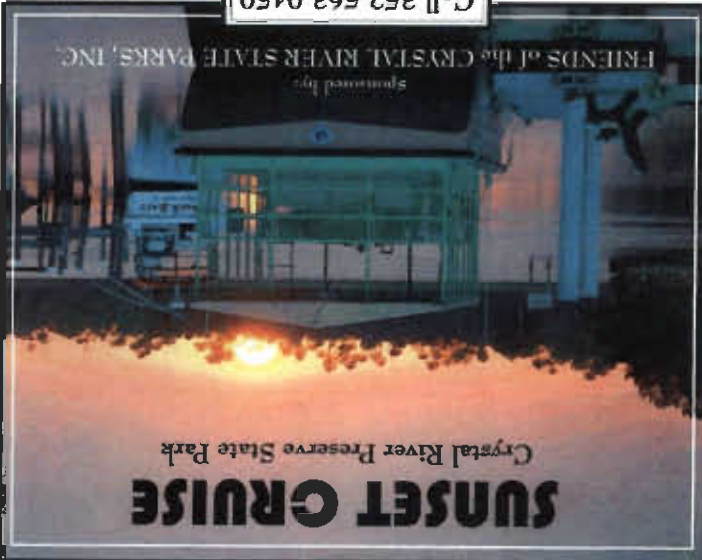
Adults: \$15.00
Children under 12: \$10.00

Refreshments & snacks
will be available.

Depart the Crystal River Preserve Visitor Center dock for a delightful two hour SUNSET CRUISE on the Crystal River. Travel out into the Gulf for a spectacular sunset.

Call 352.563.0450
for Departure Dates & Times

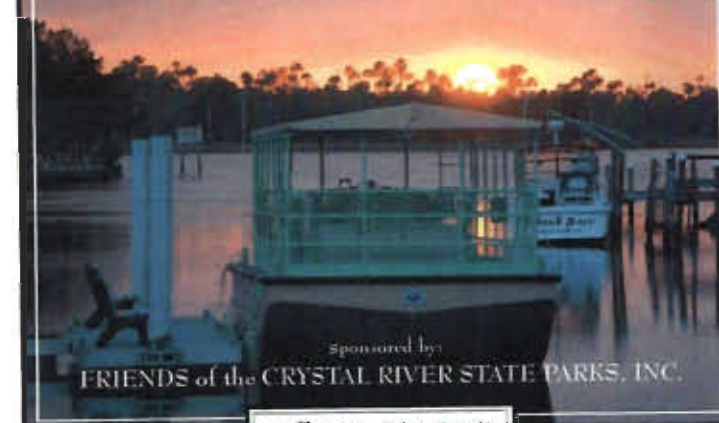
sponsored by
FRIENDS of the CRYSTAL RIVER STATE PARKS, INC.



Crystal River Preserve State Park
SUNSET CRUISE

SUNSET CRUISE

Crystal River Preserve State Park



sponsored by
FRIENDS of the CRYSTAL RIVER STATE PARKS, INC.

Call 352.563.0450
for Departure Dates & Times

Depart the Crystal River Preserve Visitor Center dock for a delightful two hour SUNSET CRUISE on the Crystal River. Travel out into the Gulf for a spectacular sunset.

Refreshments & snacks
will be available.

Adults: \$15.00
Children under 12: \$10.00

Advance tickets available in the Crystal River Preserve State Park Visitor Center located just north of Crystal River on US Hwy 19 - turn onto State Park Street at the Days Inn and go 1.5 miles to 3266 N. Sailboat Ave.

The Friends of the Crystal River State Parks, Inc. is a not-for-profit [501 (C)(3)] Citizen Support Organization



free
POPCORN & A MOVIE NIGHT

January 15, 2011 -

Humming Birds The magic is in the air.

Water Life I Travel the globe & explore the amazing world of water. Visit the ecosystems & the diverse species that live there. Includes: *Soup of Life & Water Slides*.

February 19, 2011 -

Ocean Odyssey Follow the life journey of an 80 year old sperm whale to the bottom of the Atlantic & Pacific Oceans in the most accurate portrayal of the deep oceans that has ever been seen.

March 19, 2011 -

Meerkats Paul Newman narrates this documentary that chronicles the antics of young Koro & his family. These members of the mongoose family live in the harsh African Kalahari Desert where life & death struggles play out throughout the film.

April 16, 2011 -

Water Life II Continue the journey around the world to explore the most valuable resource on our blue planet- water. Includes: *Borrowed Water, Fleeting Water, Jungle Water & Salt Forests*.

May 21, 2011 -

Animals are Beautiful People This humorous look at African wildlife compares animals to humans. Filmed over four years in Namib, the Kalahari desert & the Okavikungo Delta region, this film has won many awards.

Place: Redfish Revue Theatre at the Crystal River Preserve State Park - 3266 N. Sailboat Ave. Crystal River, FL 34428

352-563-0450

Time: 7:00pm - 3rd Saturday of the month

donations appreciated

Presented by The Friends of the Crystal River State Parks, Inc. - a not-for-profit [501 (C)(3)] Citizen Support Organization



free
POPCORN & A MOVIE NIGHT

January 15, 2011 -

Humming Birds The magic is in the air.

Water Life I Travel the globe & explore the amazing world of water. Visit the ecosystems & the diverse species that live there. Includes: *Soup of Life & Water Slides*.

February 19, 2011 -

Ocean Odyssey Follow the life journey of an 80 year old sperm whale to the bottom of the Atlantic & Pacific Oceans in the most accurate portrayal of the deep oceans that has ever been seen.

March 19, 2011 -

Meerkats Paul Newman narrates this documentary that chronicles the antics of young Koro & his family. These members of the mongoose family live in the harsh African Kalahari Desert where life & death struggles play out throughout the film.

April 16, 2011 -

Water Life II Continue the journey around the world to explore the most valuable resource on our blue planet- water. Includes: *Borrowed Water, Fleeting Water, Jungle Water & Salt Forests*.

May 21, 2011 -

Animals are Beautiful People This humorous look at African wildlife compares animals to humans. Filmed over four years in Namib, the Kalahari desert & the Okavikungo Delta region, this film has won many awards.

Place: Redfish Revue Theatre at the Crystal River Preserve State Park - 3266 N. Sailboat Ave. Crystal River, FL 34428

352-563-0450

Time: 7:00pm - 3rd Saturday of the month

donations appreciated

Presented by The Friends of the Crystal River State Parks, Inc. - a not-for-profit [501 (C)(3)] Citizen Support Organization



free
POPCORN & A MOVIE NIGHT

January 15, 2011 -

Humming Birds The magic is in the air.

Water Life I Travel the globe & explore the amazing world of water. Visit the ecosystems & the diverse species that live there. Includes: *Soup of Life & Water Slides*.

February 19, 2011 -

Ocean Odyssey Follow the life journey of an 80 year old sperm whale to the bottom of the Atlantic & Pacific Oceans in the most accurate portrayal of the deep oceans that has ever been seen.

March 19, 2011 -

Meerkats Paul Newman narrates this documentary that chronicles the antics of young Koro & his family. These members of the mongoose family live in the harsh African Kalahari Desert where life & death struggles play out throughout the film.

April 16, 2011 -

Water Life II Continue the journey around the world to explore the most valuable resource on our blue planet- water. Includes: *Borrowed Water, Fleeting Water, Jungle Water & Salt Forests*.

May 21, 2011 -

Animals are Beautiful People This humorous look at African wildlife compares animals to humans. Filmed over four years in Namib, the Kalahari desert & the Okavikungo Delta region, this film has won many awards.

Place: Redfish Revue Theatre at the Crystal River Preserve State Park - 3266 N. Sailboat Ave. Crystal River, FL 34428

352-563-0450

Time: 7:00pm - 3rd Saturday of the month

donations appreciated

Presented by The Friends of the Crystal River State Parks, Inc. - a not-for-profit [501 (C)(3)] Citizen Support Organization



free
POPCORN & A MOVIE NIGHT

January 15, 2011 -

Humming Birds The magic is in the air.

Water Life I Travel the globe & explore the amazing world of water. Visit the ecosystems & the diverse species that live there. Includes: *Soup of Life & Water Slides*.

February 19, 2011 -

Ocean Odyssey Follow the life journey of an 80 year old sperm whale to the bottom of the Atlantic & Pacific Oceans in the most accurate portrayal of the deep oceans that has ever been seen.

March 19, 2011 -

Meerkats Paul Newman narrates this documentary that chronicles the antics of young Koro & his family. These members of the mongoose family live in the harsh African Kalahari Desert where life & death struggles play out throughout the film.

April 16, 2011 -

Water Life II Continue the journey around the world to explore the most valuable resource on our blue planet- water. Includes: *Borrowed Water, Fleeting Water, Jungle Water & Salt Forests*.

May 21, 2011 -

Animals are Beautiful People This humorous look at African wildlife compares animals to humans. Filmed over four years in Namib, the Kalahari desert & the Okavikungo Delta region, this film has won many awards.

Place: Redfish Revue Theatre at the Crystal River Preserve State Park - 3266 N. Sailboat Ave. Crystal River, FL 34428

352-563-0450

Time: 7:00pm - 3rd Saturday of the month

donations appreciated

Presented by The Friends of the Crystal River State Parks, Inc. - a not-for-profit [501 (C)(3)] Citizen Support Organization

MOON OVER THE MOUNDS

**CRYSTAL RIVER
ARCHAEOLOGICAL
STATE PARK**

2010
FRIDAY SEPT 24TH.....8PM
FRIDAY OCT 22TH.....8PM
FRIDAY NOV 19TH.....8PM
FRIDAY DEC 17TH.....8PM
2011
FRIDAY JAN 14TH.....8PM
FRIDAY FEB 18TH.....8PM
FRIDAY MAR 18TH.....8PM

MOONLIGHT GUIDED TOURS

of the Crystal River Archaeological State Park mound complex
Paved trail • Refreshments • Experienced Guides
Admission Donations accepted by the Friends of Crystal River State Park, Inc.
Friday tours cancelled by weather will be held on the following Saturday same time

FOR ADDITIONAL INFORMATION
CALL 352-765-5817



MOON OVER THE MOUNDS

**CRYSTAL RIVER
ARCHAEOLOGICAL
STATE PARK**

2010
FRIDAY SEPT 24TH.....8PM
FRIDAY OCT 22TH.....8PM
FRIDAY NOV 19TH.....8PM
FRIDAY DEC 17TH.....8PM
2011
FRIDAY JAN 14TH.....8PM
FRIDAY FEB 18TH.....8PM
FRIDAY MAR 18TH.....8PM

MOONLIGHT GUIDED TOURS

of the Crystal River Archaeological State Park mound complex
Paved trail • Refreshments • Experienced Guides
Admission Donations accepted by the Friends of Crystal River State Park, Inc.
Friday tours cancelled by weather will be held on the following Saturday same time

FOR ADDITIONAL INFORMATION
CALL 352-765-5817



MOON OVER THE MOUNDS

**CRYSTAL RIVER
ARCHAEOLOGICAL
STATE PARK**

2010
FRIDAY SEPT 24TH.....8PM
FRIDAY OCT 22TH.....8PM
FRIDAY NOV 19TH.....8PM
FRIDAY DEC 17TH.....8PM
2011
FRIDAY JAN 14TH.....8PM
FRIDAY FEB 18TH.....8PM
FRIDAY MAR 18TH.....8PM

MOONLIGHT GUIDED TOURS

of the Crystal River Archaeological State Park mound complex
Paved trail • Refreshments • Experienced Guides
Admission Donations accepted by the Friends of Crystal River State Park, Inc.
Friday tours cancelled by weather will be held on the following Saturday same time

FOR ADDITIONAL INFORMATION
CALL 352-765-5817



MOON OVER THE MOUNDS

**CRYSTAL RIVER
ARCHAEOLOGICAL
STATE PARK**

2010
FRIDAY SEPT 24TH.....8PM
FRIDAY OCT 22TH.....8PM
FRIDAY NOV 19TH.....8PM
FRIDAY DEC 17TH.....8PM
2011
FRIDAY JAN 14TH.....8PM
FRIDAY FEB 18TH.....8PM
FRIDAY MAR 18TH.....8PM

MOONLIGHT GUIDED TOURS

of the Crystal River Archaeological State Park mound complex
Paved trail • Refreshments • Experienced Guides
Admission Donations accepted by the Friends of Crystal River State Park, Inc.
Friday tours cancelled by weather will be held on the following Saturday same time

FOR ADDITIONAL INFORMATION
CALL 352-765-5817

