

## River of Lakes Heritage Corridor Story

The Native Americans of the area, the Timucua, referred to the **St. Johns River as the “Welaka”, which meant “River of Lakes.”** The St. Johns River and the series of lakes it connects were the lifeline and the roadway for centuries of inhabitants, settlers, travelers and tourists. From the Timucua, to the early Spanish and English settlers and plantation owners, to Civil War supply lines and the 1800s Steamboat Era, the **River of Lakes** provided the passageway, the supply line, and the source of life.

Today, the River of Lakes Heritage Corridor is a Florida Scenic Byway which connects travelers to the numerous cities, towns, historic and cultural sites in this history-rich area. The River of Lakes Heritage Corridor embodies a unique blend of sophisticated contemporary culture, rich historic preservation, and gorgeous natural Florida. The charm of this area has drawn many new developments in recent decades, with four-star restaurants and regal art galleries thriving alongside good old barbeque and antique architecture. Spanish moss hangs over the flooded sidewalks during the many festivals and concerts. You are never too far away from nature along this byway – and many locals have their bikes and kayaks at the ready.

Place names such as Deland, Sanford, Lake Helen, Debarry, and Stetson University are traced back to the wealthy investors who fell in love with the area and invested in it. These visionaries established the first industry, agriculture and educational institutions that anchor the area.

There is more to Florida than beaches and theme parks. River of Lakes Heritage Corridor is the place to find out what you have been missing, whether you are planning to visit Florida from across the globe or call Florida home.