

# Steinhatchee River Paddling Trail

- Steinhatchee River Paddling Trail
- Canoe/Kayak Launch
- Picnic Tables
- Restrooms
- Potable Water
- Springs
- Wetlands
- Conservation Lands



**Access Point 1: Steinhatchee Falls**  
N: 29.746091° W: -83.342394°

**Access Point 2: Steinhatchee Boat Ramp**  
N: 29.671446° W: -83.390458°

**Access Point 3: Jena Boat Ramp**  
N: 29.670138° W: -83.389097°

Tennille

Steinhatchee Springs Tract

Steinhatchee Falls Tract

Steinhatchee Rise Tract

Steinhatchee

Jena

0 0.5 1 2 Miles

0 0.45 0.9 1.8 Miles

CR 361

SR 51

15TH ST E

STEINHATCHEE FALLS RD.

STEINHATCHEE TRAIL RD.

98

19

27

SW 358 HWY

1ST AVE S

RIVERSIDE DR

SW 358 HWY

SW 820 ST

SW 320 AVE



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## The Waterway

The Steinhatchee River is a serene blackwater river forming the boundary between Dixie and Taylor Counties, entering the Gulf of Mexico along the Big Bend coastline between the small towns of Jena and Steinhatchee. It begins as a shady meandering waterway just below a limestone ledge that creates the picturesque and historic Steinhatchee Falls. The upper stretches of the river are pristine and remote with no houses visible the first mile or so. The river continues to widen as it nears the Gulf, a distance of 6-7 miles depending on where paddlers choose to end a trip.

## The Paddling Experience

The 6-mile long Steinhatchee River Paddling Trail is appropriate for beginning paddlers and canoes although windy conditions and tidal effects may be encountered near the Gulf where the trail ends. An outgoing tide will increase the speed of current going downstream and incoming tide will do the opposite. Check [water levels](#) for Steinhatchee near Cross City. Best paddling levels are when the gauge river height is between 11-15 feet. Avoid paddling when flooding as it can be hazardous. Bring a pole to try your luck fishing for both freshwater and saltwater species and binoculars for improved wildlife viewing. There are several excellent restaurants and a multitude of lodging options accessible on both sides of the river as it nears the Gulf. Steinhatchee and Jena are important stops on the [Big Bend Saltwater Paddling Trail](#) and the 1,500-mile [Circumnavigation Trail](#) that embraces the coastline of Florida.

## Access Points

### #1, Start of the Trail, Steinhatchee Falls

Historic Steinhatchee Falls has been a water crossing for centuries by early travelers as evidenced by the ruts from horse-drawn wagons that can still be seen in the river banks. The launch is at a small park with picnic pavilions and a portable restroom. The gate is open between 8 a.m. and 6 p.m. The free launch is suitable for small boats that can be launched by hand and canoes/kayaks. There is also a 3-mile hiking loop trail that starts at the Falls and goes north through the woods and ends at the Tennille Trailhead on SR 51. *From US 98 turn west onto SR 51. Less than one mile on the left will be a sign for public access. Turn left onto the dirt road then turn right at the first intersection and follow the signs.*

### #2, Mile 6.0, Steinhatchee Boat Landing

The launch has multiple concrete lanes, some fixed and floating docks, and can be busy on weekends and during scallop season. There is a launch fee with ample parking and portable restrooms. No overnight parking is allowed. From Steinhatchee Falls travel back to SR 51 and turn left (south). Drive into Steinhatchee and turn right (west) on 1st Avenue. Continue until road ends at a 'T', veer to the right and proceed a short distance to boat landing on the left.

### #3, Mile 7.0, Jena Boat Ramp, End of the Trail

The launch is two-lane concrete with limited parking during weekends and scallop season. There is no launch fee. There is also a small hand launch next to the paddler-friendly Good Times Marina on the south side of the river. From Steinhatchee Falls travel back to SR 51 and turn left (south). Travel into Steinhatchee and turn right (west) on 1st Avenue. Turn left on 10th Ave and drive over the bridge crossing the river into the



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small town known as Jena. At the road junction, turn right and head to public ramp at the end of the road.

## Outfitters and Shuttle Service

[River Haven Marina](#), 352-498-0709  
[Steinhatchee Landing Resort](#), 352-498-3513  
[Suwannee Guides](#), 352-542-8331

## History

Located at the mouth of the Steinhatchee River, Deadman Bay was on Spanish maps by the early 1500s. Spanish Conquistador Panfilo de Narvaez came through the area in 1529 followed by Hernando de Soto ten years later. DeSoto crossed the Steinhatchee River at the "Falls," which also served as a crossing point for Native Americans and settlers in the 1800's. In 1818 General Andrew Jackson (1767-1845) also crossed at the Falls on his way to dispatch the Seminoles who were raiding "white" settlements. In 1838 General Zachary Taylor (1784 -1850) was sent to put down the Seminoles during the Second Seminole War. Fort Frank Brook was established up the Steinhatchee River in the same year and abandoned in 1840. In 1879 James Howard Stephens (1825-1906), a local pioneer, offered land for a post office, changing the name from Deadman Bay to Stephenville. In 1931 the community was renamed Steinhatchee after the river. The name Steinhatchee was derived from the Native American "esteen hatchee" meaning river (hatchee) of man (esteen). Steinhatchee's long history of human habitation includes prehistoric man dating from 12,000 BC, pirates from 15th through 18th centuries, loggers in the 1800s, and sponge divers in the 1940s and 50s. Today commercial fishermen, shrimpers, and crabbers continue to make a living along the Gulf.

Canoes and flat boats were the first means of transportation across the river. A ferry was used up until 1948 when a one lane swing bridge that had been removed from Scott's Ferry, near Blountstown, was installed. This bridge served until 1983 when the present concrete bridge was constructed. Electricity came to Steinhatchee in 1945 and telephone service was established in 1948.

*(From the Florida Department of State, Division of Historical Resources website)*

