East Coast Greenway
St. Johns River-to-Sea Loop in Florida
November 8-15, 2009

The third Close the Gaps Club tour will be a loop bicycle journey following the East Coast Greenway along Florida’s Atlantic coast and the St. Johns River corridor this November 8-15.

Florida, hammered by over-development and lately called the “Ponzi State” by The New Yorker, retains much of the beauty that long shaped its image in American life as remote wilderness.

That large sections of original Florida remain in part reflects the work of the state’s bicycling and trails movement. Florida’s two most honored bicycling advocates will guide the tour. Bike Florida’s Linda Crider, ECGA regional consultant (and writer) Herb Hiller, and their friends will cruise along a 260-mile route that’s resiliently Old Florida. Travel through the oldest city in America (St. Augustine), along open seacoast, through regionally celebrated wildflowers, by water taxi, and, finally, by houseboat down the American Heritage-designated St. Johns River.

Discover Florida: glitter-free, lustrous in nature, and offering 500 years of American diversity.

Our tour through the St. Johns River-to-Sea Loop (locals refer to it as SJR2C) focuses on recent northeast Florida work by the Greenway Alliance. ECGA inspired the route. ECGA leads the effort to complete the route paved and car-free by 2014 (in time for the 500th anniversary of Spain in Florida). The Loop covers four counties worth of ECG spine route, while the rest is part of our alternative route. American Bicyclist has already devoted major attention to the Loop: http://www.greenway.org/pdf/LABFloridaJanFeb09.pdf.

Did we mention food and sleep? Herb (two of whose three books have earned top honors in their fields including Route A1A-Florida at the Edge) says this:

“I’m going to everyone I know along the route whose restaurants I’ve written about, whose places to stay represent terrific value, and who otherwise stand for authentic
Florida as much as I do. We’ll be treated in ways that nobody can duplicate on their own.”

Thanks to Bike Florida, an experienced bicycle tour operator, the week will roll out like a carpet. Bring your bike or rent one. Pay for your own lunches, wine, and beer. Linda has the rest covered: full sag support, luggage transfers, on-the-road guides, maps, cue sheets, breakfasts, dinners, admissions, special evening hostings, and more – exactly what our Close-the-Gaps touring donors have experienced in the Czech Republic and last year cycling between Wilmington and New York.

This tour is exclusively for CTG Club members (donors at the $1000 level or higher) and their families (or a close friend) and will be an opportunity to travel with some of our trustees, advisory board members and staff.

**Registration Details**
The fee is $1600 double-occupancy ($300 single supplement) and includes the following:
- Knowledgeable local tour leader
- 10-55 miles of cycling a day
- Almost entirely on paved road. Road bicycle surfaces.
- 7 nights lodging in comfortable hotels, B&B’s and one homestay
- 6 breakfasts
- 7 dinners (excluding beverages)
- Luggage transfer
- Sag support
- Entries and private guided tours of select sites
- Boat tour of St. John’s River

To hold a spot, an initial deposit of $200 is required to be mailed for each participant by May 1. The balance will be due in two equal payments, on June 1 and October 1.

**More Information Sources**
Tour information is posted at [www.greenway.org/closethegaps/tour09.htm](http://www.greenway.org/closethegaps/tour09.htm) and will be updated frequently. If you have questions, contact ECGA at 401-789-4625 or email info@greenway.org.

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*A leisurely cycle ride through the heart of Florida’s central Atlantic coastal region and St. Johns River corridor, rich with history, nature, small towns and wildflowers. Visit St. Augustine, the earliest European settlement in America.*
Itinerary
St. Johns River-to-Sea Loop Bicycle tour

Sunday, November 8: Convene in Palatka, an Amtrak city and headquarters of Bike Florida, the state's premier touring company. Rental bikes available. Short city tours, including to Ravine Gardens State Park and North and South Historic Districts. Overnight Quality Inn.

Monday, November 9: Ride to St. Augustine Beach, about 35 miles. Route through farmlands, small towns. Region surrounds lands of the Florida Agricultural Museum. Notable sites: railroad museum, produce stands, small ag town of Hastings that the Loop will help revive; Ancient City of St. Augustine, Lighthouse Museum. Overnight TBD.

Tuesday, November 10: Ride along portions of coastal Highway A1A accompanied by Herb Hiller, author of the definitive work on the coastal road. About 40 miles through Washington Oaks State Park, across un-tamed Matanzas Inlet, along historic beach settlements eroded almost to vanishing by the sea, and designated portions of the East Coast Greenway through Flagler County. Overnight TBD.

Wednesday, November 11: Further along the coastal road through Gamble Rogers Memorial, North Peninsula, Tomoka and Bulow Creek State Parks, altogether some 40 miles also along the Halifax River past John D. Rockefeller's Ormond Beach winter home, through trail ready for designation in Holly Hill, through Daytona Beach to Ponce Inlet. Cross by water taxi direct to Night Swan Bed & Breakfast, New Smyrna Beach.

Thursday, November 12: Early start on some 35 miles, much the way through Merritt Island National Wildlife Refuge. Late lunch at Titusville's landmark Dixie Crossroads Restaurant, domain of legendary Florida conservationist Laurilee Thompson. Continue by bus with narration by trail advocate John Harper to DeLand, historic seat of Volusia County and home of Stetson University. Overnight TBD.

Friday, November 13: Bike portions of Volusia County Spring-to-Spring Trail, late breakfast at famous Old Sugar Mill Pancake House, DeLeon Springs State Park. Conclude a roughly 55-mile day in Crescent City, an enduring small town on a chain of lakes in south Putnam County. Overnight Sprague House B&B and host Crescent City homes.

Saturday, November 14: Bike 10 miles to Welaka Steamboat Museum, then board houseboat down the St. Johns River to Dunns Creek Bridge. Ride Old San Mateo back to Palatka, about five miles.