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Everglades City



Tour Everglades City & Chokoloskee

Discover the charm of Everglades City and Chokoloskee by walking, biking, or driving with our tour map, offering a fascinating exploration of local history and uncovering hidden gems along the way.



Stone Crabbing in Florida started in the 1890s when fishermen were trying to capture spiny lobster and inadvertently found stone crabs in their traps. Ernest Hamilton of Chokoloskee started fishing for stone crabs commercially and now Everglades City is considered the Stone Crab Capital of the World.



The first schoolteacher gave lessons at the Storter residence (now the Rod & Gun Club) in 1893. Two years later a schoolhouse was built at the mouth of the river but was destroyed in a storm; a second building was washed away in the 1910 hurricane, and another built at its present location. The high school opened in 1926 with one student graduating that year. In 1996 Collier County built a new **Everglades City School** building which includes grades pre-K through grade 12.



Everglades National Park's **mangroves** display unique "walking" adaptations, expanding into new areas with prop roots. They serve as natural filters, purifying water and supporting diverse wildlife. Thriving in brackish water, they maintain the delicate balance between freshwater and saltwater ecosystems.



The **Old Collier County Courthouse**, a historic two-story concrete structure in Everglades City, Florida, was built in 1926 by Barron Collier, the visionary behind Collier County's development. Reflecting the Classical Revival style, it served as the county courthouse until 1962 when the seat moved to East Naples. Later, it was repurposed as Everglades City Hall.



The **County Jail**, dating back to the earliest days of the county's inception in 1883, found its home in Everglades City. This modest, wooden structure served as the initial confinement space, accommodating only a handful of inmates as the county burgeoned. With the establishment of the Collier County Sheriff's Office in 1923, under the stewardship of William Riley "W.R." Maynard as its inaugural Sheriff, the jail's significance grew further. Situated on the southwest corner of the circle, the jail incorporated living quarters for the sheriff and his family on its upper floor. A relic whose remnants still linger in the present-day Captain Morgan's parking lot, serving as a testament to the county's enduring legacy.



Founded by Barron Collier, the **Bank of Everglades** received its charter in 1923, serving as the only bank in Collier County for 26 years. This building was completed in 1926 and operated as a bank until 1962 when the county seat moved to Naples. The Everglades Society for Historic Preservation (ESHP) currently owns the building and is in the process of rehabilitating it as the Everglades Area Visitor Center and Trail Town Headquarters.



This site was the home of William Smith Allen who settled here in the early 1870s. The property was sold to George Storter, Jr., who enlarged the house and opened a trading post in 1892, dealing with the local Seminoles, Barron Collier bought the house in the 1920s and renamed it the **Rod & Gun Club**, hosting four US Presidents and a number of celebrities. The Bowen family has owned the property since 1973.



Originally a commercial laundry, this building was an integral part of Collier's business empire - providing uniforms and linens for the Rod & Gun Club and the Everglades Inn. The laundry closed during WWII, and the building was occupied by several businesses before the local Women's Club purchased it in 1972. The Club disbanded in 1988 with the remaining members reorganizing as the Friends of Museum of the Everglades and raising funds to help create a museum. They donated the building to Collier County Museums and the **Museum of the Everglades** which opened in April of 1998.



In 1939 the Collier Corporation offered land on the Circle in Everglades City to **Everglades Community Church** for a building with the condition that the church be completed by October 1940 and that is be non-denominational. Services have been held continuously every Sunday since then for the greater Everglades area community.



The Spanish-style stucco building of the **Old Railway Depot** was built in 1928 and typical of the 1920s Florida railroad architecture. It was the terminus for the Atlantic Coast Line Railroad that operated until 1959 when the building was converted into a restaurant.



Built in the late 1930s by the Collier family, the **Everglades Airpark** began with a 1,000-foot paved strip, bustling with Air Force, Civil Air Patrol, and private pilot activity. President Harry Truman dedicated Everglades National Park here in 1947. Despite Hurricane Donna's 1960 devastation, the Colliers' legacy thrived, leading to Collier County's acquisition in 1968. Today, as an eco-tourism hub, we invite global vacationers to explore the Everglades' wonders. Visit to watch planes, inquire about lessons, and marvel at our rich history and natural beauty. Fun fact: We're the second smallest airport in Florida.



The **Ernest Hamilton Observation Tower**, erected in 1984 by Thomas Mitchell, offers visitors a stunning perspective, standing 75 feet tall with 108 steps leading to panoramic views. From this vantage point, one can admire the vast expanse of mangroves, Chokoloskee Island, the Everglades, and the picturesque Ten Thousand Islands. Birdwatchers may catch sight of various species, including the elegant Roseate Spoonbill.



Chokoloskee Island, steeped in history since the late 1800s, is connected to the mainland by a causeway built in 1956. Renovation of the **Chokoloskee Bridge** began in 2007 and was completed in 2017. The new bridge meets modern standards, offering increased width and height while preserving vital seawalls. The island's rich history, including tales of notorious characters and an era of moonshine and plume hunting, is intertwined with this vital causeway.



Located on Chokoloskee Island's southern tip, the **Smallwood Store** has embodied Ted Smallwood's vision since 1906. Once a hub for Seminole Indians, fishermen, and farmers arriving by various vessels, it now stands as an immersive museum showcasing the area's rich history. Its exhibits capture the enduring spirit of pioneers, reflecting old Florida's resilience and allure.