

# COASTAL DUNES TOUR

March 9 – 12, 2018

There are only a few places on our planet Earth with Coastal Dune Lakes and Florida is one. If you have yet to discover them, join us March 9 – 12, 2018 when we journey to the panhandle to see them for ourselves. Known as the **Emerald Coast**, Walton County Florida has 15 coastal dune lakes, functioning as nature intended, interlaced along the coast just feet from the Gulf of Mexico, yet they remain fresh water for most of the time.

During periods of high rain, storms or hurricanes, they become brackish, sometimes breaching their outfalls and pouring into the Gulf with their tannic waters staining the turquoise ocean. But the lakes eventually flush out the salt and return to freshwater.

Inspired by the documentary, **COASTAL DUNE LAKES – JEWELS OF FLORIDA'S EMERALD COAST**, by Elam Stoltzfus, this tour traverses iconic Hwy 30A, crossing Fuller, Morris, Campbell, Stallworth, Allen, Oyster, Draper, Big Redfish, Little Redfish, Alligator, Western, Eastern, Deer, Camp Creek and Powell Lake, so you will see for yourself why these ecosystems are so precious.

We travel by luxury motor coach with professional driver departing from Plant City at 7 AM on Friday March 9<sup>th</sup> and stop first in Apalachicola to visit the home, gardens and cemetery of eminent Botanist, **Dr Alvan Wentworth Chapman** who spent most of his adult life exploring the flora of this area and died in this historic coastal community. Some of the plants named after him include Chapman's Rhododendron, custard apple, wild Florida azalea, large-flowered skullcap, spreading yellow foxglove, Georgia holly and many others. Two of his neighbors, John Gorrie, the early inventor of mechanical refrigeration and Thomas Orman, local cotton merchant, were friends, as was Asa Gray, another noted Botanist of this era.

Our accommodations for this 4day/3night tour are in cabins and bungalows at **Topsail Hill Preserve State Park**. Friday night is our pizza get-together in the Clubhouse. Saturday morning we join the rangers for breakfast and explore Topsail Hill's dunes trail and recently burned sections along with two park naturalists, then head to **Grayton Beach State Park** for a tour of their natural areas. Both parks support populations of the endangered Choctawhatchee beach mouse. We will learn how they are monitored and what the outlook is for their future.

Sunday we head to **Blackwater River State Forest** for a canoe/kayak trip or hike along the river so we can understand where all the coastal white sand comes from and search for the wild Azalea in bloom. In the afternoon, we tour **Seaside Village**, the first New Urbanism walkable community built in Walton County with all native front yards, varied architecture, and no-mow lawns.

We finish the evening with dinner and shopping in Seaside Village at their numerous restaurants and trendy food trucks.

Monday morning is open to explore the trails of Topsail Hill, then board our coach to head back to central Florida, arriving in time for dinner.

Make 2018 the year of discover, starting with our tour of the Coastal Dunes of Florida, March 9 – 12<sup>th</sup>. For more information, call Devon at 813-478-1183, email [indigotravelcompany@gmail.com](mailto:indigotravelcompany@gmail.com) or visit our website at [www.indigotravelcompany.com](http://www.indigotravelcompany.com).