

Clockwise from top: Visitors can get close to local wildlife along the cypress-dome boardwalk nature trail; for an even closer look, try the Snake & Alligator Show or Swamp Critter Show; airboats and swamp buggies make touring the area an adventure; Billie Swamp Safari encompasses a variety of natural habitats, such as wetlands and hardwood hammocks.

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built this authentic Seminole village and introduced the swamp buggy tour,” explains Ed Woods, park director at Billie Swamp Safari. “As a matter of fact, we just earned the Best Guided Tour award from *Florida Monthly’s* Best of Florida readers’ poll for the fourth time—and this is beating out the big boys like Disney.”

Woods has good reason to be proud. While the Sunshine State boasts plenty of

world-class amusement parks, resorts, and family attractions, it can be difficult to catch a glimpse of the real, historic Florida. So this family-friendly journey through the untamed Everglades is an experience that visitors will remember for a lifetime. “This is the real thing,” Woods says. “Actually, the most common phrase that we hear from our guests—kids and adults alike—is ‘This is better than Disney!’” ♦

**[ FIND IT FAST ]**  
 Billie Swamp Safari  
 On the Big Cypress  
 Reservation, just north  
 of I-75, Exit 49  
 1-800-949-6101  
[www.semtribe.com/safari](http://www.semtribe.com/safari)



Clockwise from top left: Chickee huts are available for overnight rental; at Billie Swamp Safari, visitors experience authentic Seminole culture; alligators commonly make appearances during tours.

**BIG CYPRESS SHOOTOUT**  
 Friday, February 27 through  
 Sunday, March 1.  
 Battle reenactments are at 2 p.m.  
 on Saturday and Sunday.  
 1-800-949-6101, ext. 12125  
[www.semtribe.com/calendar](http://www.semtribe.com/calendar)



**Billie Swamp Safari** is unique because of the level of access it offers and its ever-expanding list of interpretive activities. An exclusive new swamp buggy ecotour takes guests on a private 90-minute in-depth exploration of the Everglades and allows them to sample tasty Seminole fare such as gator nuggets and Seminole fry bread along the journey. Visitors also can see the Big Cypress Shootout, a reenactment of the Second Seminole War of the 1800s. Taking place from Friday, February 27, through Sunday, March 1, 2009, this mock battle illustrates the struggle and sacrifice of the Seminole people to stay in Florida.

Opened in 1993, Billie Swamp Safari began as a way to allow nontribal members access to this beautiful landscape and to expand the public’s knowledge of the Seminole way of life. “A lot of visitors really wanted to see Seminole lands, so the tribe