

Inverness, Florida Hotel Bicycle Summary

The Inverness, Florida hotel property presents a unique opportunity to immediately capture and service leisure bicycle riders visiting the area. The City of Inverness strongly advocates for bicycling as an active form of recreation and transportation. Inverness is an award-winning “bike friendly city”. In 2016, the League of American Bicyclists recognized the City of Inverness with a Bronze Bicycle Friendly Business award. “Inverness is committed to being a bike-friendly city, and is dedicated to the future of cycling.” (1)

Due to the strong cycling infrastructure in the city, the proximity to various regional bicycle trails, and several organized cycling events, many leisure cyclists choose Inverness as a destination.

There are literally hundreds of miles of designated bicycle trails located in Citrus county. Inverness is the county seat. Citrus and neighboring Hernando County collaborated to create a *Bikeways and Trails Master Plan* that was adopted in June 2018. One of the goals of the plan is to “Promote tourism and economic opportunities by developing a safe, connected network of biking and walking facilities.” (2)

Counties and cities like Inverness have recognized the economic benefit of accessible bikeways by looking at what is taking place in nearby Florida locations with developed bicycle infrastructure. For example, The Coast-to-Coast Trail that runs between St. Petersburg and Titusville is projected to provide \$120 million annual benefit to that Central Florida region. The Pinellas Trail in Dunedin has an estimated 1,000 daily trail users on an average weekend day. This trail has completely transformed the city of Dunedin from economic decline with vacancy rates of 30% to a vibrant attraction with vacancy rates at 1% in 2017. (2)

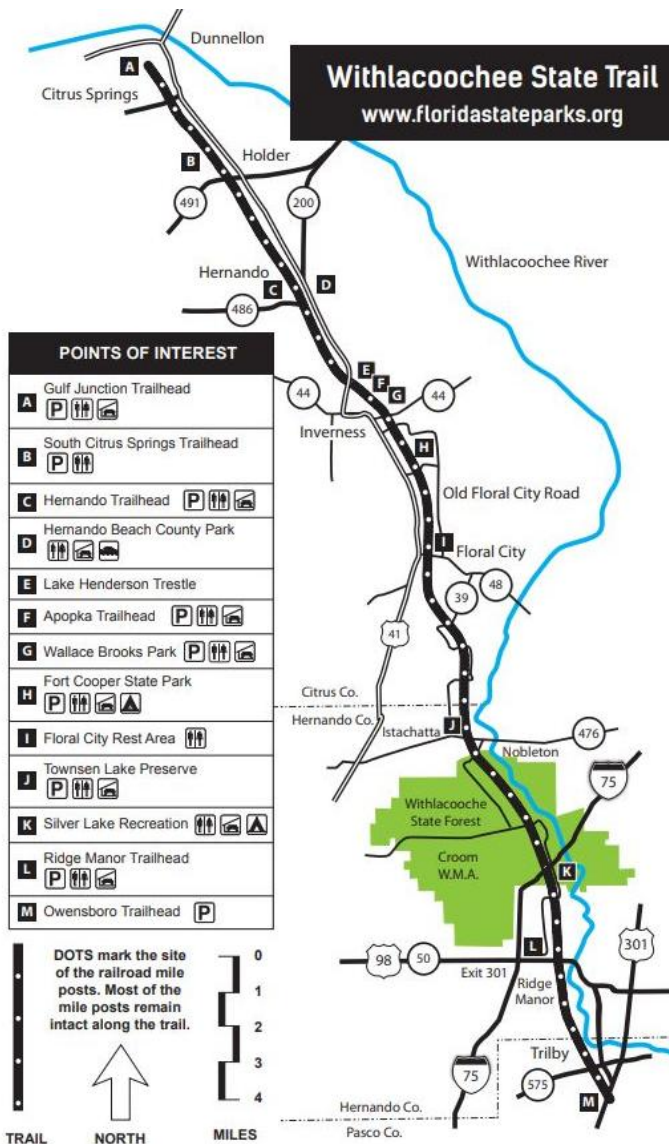


Image courtesy of livability.com

According to livability.com, “Small cities that invest in bike culture see huge payoffs in health, tourism dollars and quality of life... cycling infrastructure can result in a significant boost to tourism dollars.”

Withlacoochee State Trail

The proposed hotel property is located directly adjacent to the Withlacoochee State Trail (WST). The eastern edge of the property is bordered by the trail buffer zone. This trail attracts over 400,000 annual visitors. The vast majority of these visitors to the trail are bicycle riders.



The Withlacoochee State Trail is a 12-foot wide, paved multi-use trail that runs 46 miles through 3 Florida counties. The trail opened for use in 1992 and is currently one of the longest in Florida. It was listed as one of the top ten destination trails in the nation by Trail Traveler magazine in May 2015.

The trail extends from near Dunnellon to Dade City passing through numerous scenic small towns along the way as well as the Withlacoochee State Forest. (3)

The main access points of recreational trails such as the WST are called “trailheads”. These are designated areas that usually have parking, map kiosks, and often feature restroom facilities, covered shelters and other amenities. Designated trailheads are created and marked as such for trail users, although a trail may be accessed at any point along its route. The nearest designated WST trailhead to the hotel property is the Apopka trailhead in downtown Inverness. This trailhead is approximately 1.5 miles from the hotel location. Currently, there are five designated trailheads along the WST. To access the Apopka trailhead via automobile from the hotel property, take US 41 north to Inverness and turn left on North Apopka Avenue. The marked trailhead is a few blocks up North Apopka. (4)

The hotel property could become a trailhead as well due to the direct proximity to the WST. Cyclists and other trail users will be attracted to the hotel amenities.

Facilities Considered for Hotel Property

- Dedicated Automobile Parking Area
- Restroom Access
- Drinking Water Access
- Bicycle Parking Racks
- Bicycle Repair Station
- Bicycle Rentals
- Sales of Bicycle Accessories and Branded Items
- Overnight Bicycle Storage Facility
- Food and Beverage Service (including full service & grab-and-go)
- Sheltered Seating Area (Outdoor Lounge)
- Map Kiosk and Hotel Signage
- Trash Receptacles
- Aesthetic Lighting and Landscaping

Building these facilities into the hotel property creates the opportunity to strongly establish as “The Bicycle Hotel” and attract recreational cyclists from around the country who look to central Florida for its year-round cycling climate and vast network of dedicated bicycle paths.

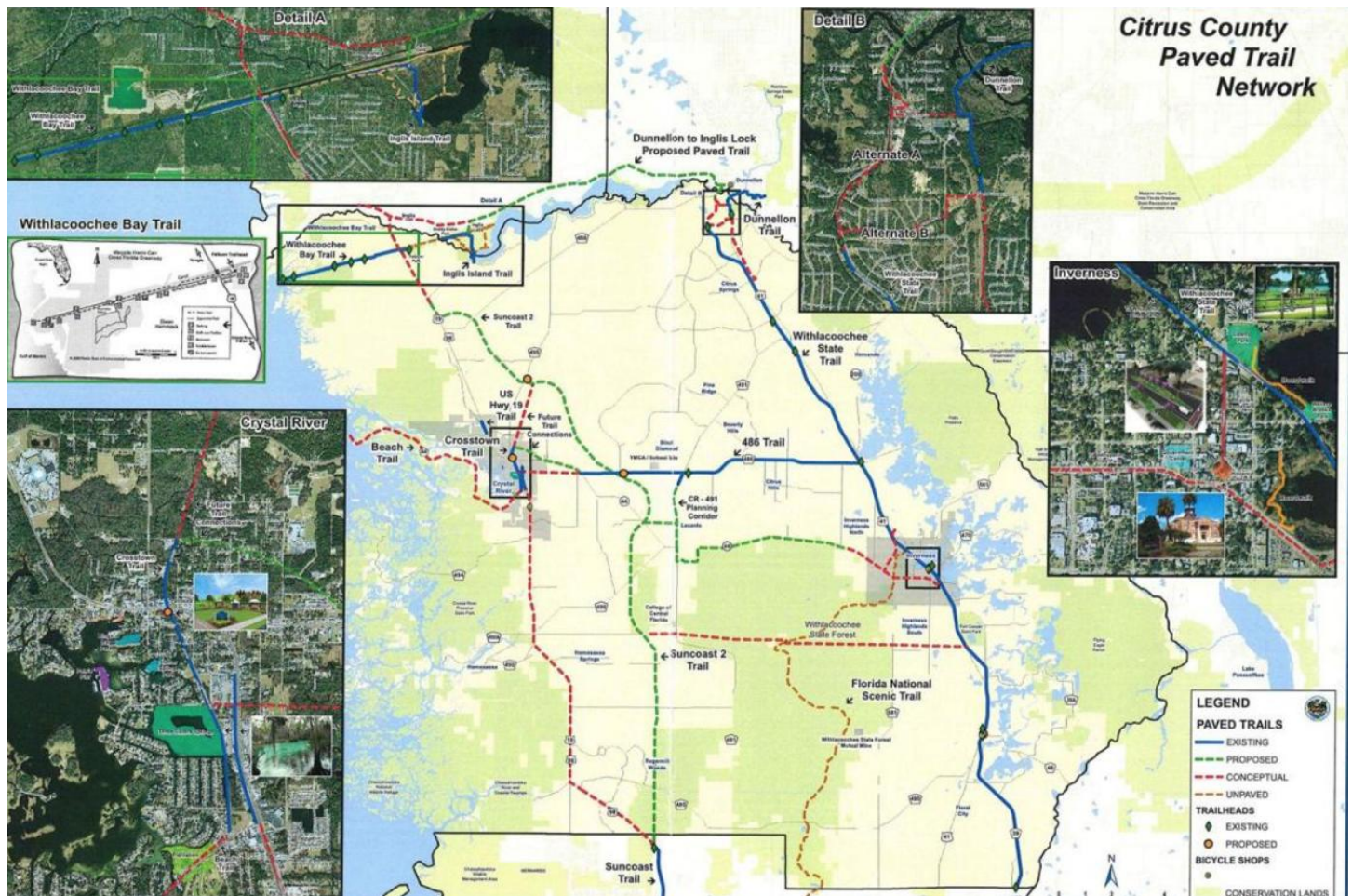


Trail Connections Accessible from Hotel Property

Other trails connect to the WST that give visiting cyclists many options for multiple days of exploration. The Good Neighbor Trail is a 10-mile trail that links to the WST near Brooksville.

Also, there is easy bicycle access to downtown Inverness with bike lanes on the main roads to accommodate safe travel. Since 2013, “Bicycle Boulevard” safely allows cyclists to ride between downtown and the WST North Apopka Avenue.

For more adventurous guests, the WST and Inverness are a starting point for bicycle rides to noteworthy regional destinations. Cyclists can ride to the Crystal River, Homosassa Springs, the Withlacoochee State Forest and even up to the Ocala Horse farms and the pastoral rolling hills of Marion County.



In addition, construction is scheduled to begin soon on a trail connector from Citrus Springs toward SR 41 to the Dunnellon Trail, which is part of the Marjorie Harris Carr Cross-Florida Greenway. When complete, cyclists will be able to begin a ride in Inverness and cycle all the way to the Gulf of Mexico without leaving the safety of a dedicated bicycle trail.

Bicycle Attractions Near Inverness

Inverness is an ideal destination for leisure and recreational cyclists due to its proximity to numerous other well-known regional bicycle attractions in addition to the WST. The Marjorie Harris Carr Cross-Florida Greenway mentioned above is a 110-mile recreational greenway system that runs from the St. Johns River near Satsuma to the Gulf of Mexico.

The 42-mile Suncoast Trail runs along the Suncoast Parkway from Hwy 98 in Hernando County south into Hillsborough County. The Trailhead at SR 98 North is just a 30-minute drive from Inverness.

The largest mountain bike trail system in Florida is the Santos Trail System, which has 85 miles of dirt trail and has received the designation of an "Epic Ride" location from the International Mountain Biking Association. This is accessible from the Ross Prairie Trailhead, which is only a 23-minute drive from Inverness.

<https://www.floridastateparks.org/parks-and-trails/santos-trailhead-campground>

Bicycle Events

There are a multitude of bicycle events based in Inverness that bring cyclists to the city for potential overnight stays. (5)

Clean Air Bike Ride - March 2020

A bicycle ride benefitting the Key Training Center will begin at the Inverness Trailhead with stops at Ridge Manor, Istachatta, and Citrus Springs. The Trailhead is 2/10 mile north of the Old Historic Courthouse in downtown Inverness. Cyclists choose from four distances on this springtime nature ride: 14 miles; 28 miles; 48 miles or 100 miles. Organized by DRCSports.com and register CleanAirRide.com.

Sunshine Grand Prix & Inverness Criterium - March 2020

The Downtown Inverness Criterium is the highlight of the 3-day Sunshine Grand Prix omnium cycling event. The start and finish line is located at Dampier and Apopka Blvd where over 200 pro and amateur cyclists will race through the downtown streets of Inverness for points and prize money. "Bicycle Blvd" is party central for the race and draws crowds from all over the region. Free for spectators. Race participants must register in advance. (6)

Rock the Ridge with Frank D - March 2020

Join City Manager, Frank DiGiovanni as he heads up a unique cycling tour of the Rock Ridge Phosphate Trail. This free ride includes insights on the history of the phosphate mines along the Withlacoochee State Trail.

Ride of Silence - March 2020

The Ride of Silence commemorates cyclists killed and supports those who were injured while riding on public roads. This police-escorted one-hour ride on city streets raises awareness among motorists regarding the dangers cyclists face.

Kids Bike Safety Day - March/April 2020

Event takes place throughout the day. The Citrus County Sheriff's Office presents bike safety to students at Inverness Middle School during gym class. Students will get a hands-on experience with safety exercises throughout the day.

Inverness History Bike Ride - April 2020

Join Inverness Bicycle and Fitness and the City of Inverness on a tour of Historical sites through the city and beyond.

Bike to Work Day - May 2020

Join Inverness City Staff and Sherri Bechtel of Inverness Bicycle & Fitness for a ride in the spirit of cycling to work (estimate 30 minutes). The ride will end at Cattle Dog Coffee Roasters with coffee and updates on the future of cycling in Inverness and Citrus County. Free and open to the public.

7:30 a.m. Start (arrive 15-minute prior)

Start: Inverness Visitor Center 203 E. Dampier Street

End: Cattle Dog Coffee Roaster 502 W. Highlands Blvd.

Annual Bike Ride of Rail to Trails – October 2020

This event is in its 25th year. The ride begins and ends at the Inverness Trailhead at 315 N Apopka Ave, Inverness. Continental breakfast is available for cyclists and lunch is also served. There are multiple distances on the trail to choose from. The rides are supported and there are post-ride refreshments available to all. The event is organized by the Rails to Trails nonprofit organization and registration is at rttwst.org.

Hearts for Our Hospital Big Bike Weekend – November 2020

Only 27 miles from the hotel property is one of the largest bicycle events in the state. This event has five different route options to accommodate all ability levels. There is also a bicycle expo, a health fair, and live music in the evenings.

With the above base of events, there is great potential to attract more cycling events to Inverness especially with the addition of hotel rooms in the city.

Potential Bicycle Retail Partners

There are a few bicycle retailers in the area of the hotel who may be willing to partner to varying degrees. Being able to offer hotel guests access to bicycle rentals and all the related equipment and accessories needed for bike rides would be a valuable service. There is a potential to offer kiosk space to a bicycle retailer on the hotel property to directly service hotel guests and other WST trail users. These bicycle “professionals” could be available on site to offer route suggestions, guide services, and bicycle repairs.

Inverness Bicycle & Fitness – in historic downtown Inverness

Dealer for: Cannondale, Sun, Elipitigo bicycles <http://invernessbicycle.com/bicycles/index.html>

David's World Cycle – Inverness at WST trailhead (13-store Florida chain)

Dealer for: Trek, Electra bicycles <https://www.davidsworld.com/>

Trailside Bike – Floral City

Dealer for: recumbent trikes (no upright bikes) <https://www.trailside.bike/>

Other Existing “Bicycle Hotel” Properties

The model of a hotel that caters to bicycle riders exists to varying degrees in other locations.

This type of development mindset is already happening in other areas of Florida. In west Orange County, the Oakland Manor House bed and breakfast opened “with plans to offer overnight respites for trail riders. The prospect of capturing groups riding across all – or even parts – of the state was one reason the owners decided to invest in re-purposing the historic home... That was a huge draw.”, said the proprietor. Entrepreneurs across Central Florida have opened inns and bike shops all in hopes of benefitting from the bike paths. (7)

The following accommodations are situated in bicycle-friendly areas and feature amenities specifically for bicycling guests and visitors:

Hotel Domestique - Travelers Rest, SC

Inspired by the world travels of elite professional cyclist and owner, George Hincapie, the hotel offers luxurious stays, cuisine and well-appointed, custom cycling adventures. <http://hoteldomestique.com/cycling/>

Garda Bike Hotel – Lake Verona, Italy

Offering customized services for bicycle tourists including guided bicycle tours and bike rentals for all levels of bicycle enthusiasts. <https://www.gardabikehotel.com/en/>

Buffalo Lodge Bicycle Resort – Colorado Springs, CO

Designed as a haven for cyclists and adventurers with cycling events, weekly guided rides, and professional bike coaches. <http://bicycleresort.com/>

Bicycle Street Inn & Suites – Mackinac Island, MI

Offering bicycle rentals and service from outside providers adjacent to the hotel property. The hotel also provides bicycle storage for overnight guests. <http://bicyclestreetinn.com/>

References

1. <http://www.visitinvernessfl.com/283/Bike-Friendly-City>
2. <https://www.hernandocounty.us/Home/ShowDocument?id=5281>
3. <https://www.rttwst.org/about-rails-to-trails.php>
4. <https://www.trailink.com/trail/withlacoochee-state-trail/>
5. <http://visitinvernessfl.com/276/Cycling-Events>
6. <http://www.sunshinegrandprix.com/events/>
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