

Enjoy Legacy's Great Outdoors

The Legacy trail and pond system is one of our community's most cherished assets. This guide will introduce you to the many walks you can take throughout the community and the natural scenic beauty and plant and animal life you are likely to encounter.

Mileage for all Trails is in Parentheses

Please enjoy over five miles of walking trails in our community that have been an active quarry, cattle ranch and orchard. The benches on the trails have been donated by the Legacy Nature Garden Club. Please appreciate the many animals that live here with us but remember that as tame as they may seem, they are still wild animals, so RESPECT THEIR SPACE. Also respect the people in their homes as several trails pass very close to their residence.

Trail #1 is the Entry Trail (0.3 mi) and travels from River Edge Lane to the Sales Office on Legacy Blvd. It is completely paved but does have one steep hill in the middle of the path and is moderate in difficulty. Enjoy the beautiful Spanish moss covered oak forest near Legacy Blvd.

Trail #2 is the River Loop Trail (0.3 mi) and migrates from Nature View Street through River Park and then ends on Aurora Drive. This trail follows the Palatlahka River via a looped trail. When starting at River Park you have a choice of the short loop straight ahead, or the longer loop to your right, which takes you past the old railroad trestle of the Florida Atlantic Coastline that traveled from Okahumpka to Howey-in-the-Hills. Part of the path is paved, but being mostly gravel with some grade changes, the difficulty of this trail is moderate. Be aware of a possible snake sunning itself on the trail in the summer.

Trail #3 is the Club House Trail (0.2 mi) and takes the walker to or from the Club House on Meandering Trails Blvd to Nature View Street. The trail is paved but with some elevation changes is considered moderate in difficulty.

Trail #4 is the Clock Tower Trail (0.5 mi) and travels from Clock Tower Blvd to Aurora Drive. This trail takes you through the local neighborhood and includes a bench near a retention pond. The trail is easy in difficulty.

Trail #5 is the Nature Trail (1.1 mi) and is the longest trail in Legacy. The trail starts on Aurora Drive and exits two more times on Aurora Drive and once on Discover Court. This trail travels from a forest canopy to open areas around two retention ponds and finally ends at the Connector Trail #6, which leads you to the East side of the community and around the Old Quarry Pond Loop Trail #7. This trail is moderate in difficulty due to some elevation changes. There is a bench at the approximate halfway point for walkers to sit down, rest and enjoy the beauty of the area before moving on.

Trail #6 is the Connector Trail (0.2mi) and leads you to either the Nature Trail #5 or the Old Quarry Pond Loop Trail #7. This short trail follows an old narrow gauge railroad bed which was used to haul kaolin that was mined from Quarry Pond. As you travel on the railroad bed, you will notice the beautiful native oaks that are all around you and shade your path. Difficulty of trail is moderate due to a mixed medium of grass and sand.



low the trail across the grass to your left, you will notice a multicolored kaolin deposit on your right. Continuing on, there are wetlands to your left and the Old Quarry Pond on your right. Also on your right you will notice a small island in the pond that serves as a night time protective roost for egrets and herons. As you walk past the Connector Trail #6, you notice more wetlands to your left where Florida Sandhill Cranes sometime build their nests and raise their young. You will notice a Sabal palm, an oak grove, and then ascend a steep, short incline to a gravel trail. At this point, you can walk to your left to the Church Pond Trail #13 or stay to your right to keep on the same trail. The shallow pond on the left is known as Church Pond. Red-winged blackbirds often sing in the reeds to your right. A bench awaits you for a well-deserved respite. This area is now the newest neighborhood in Legacy; formerly it was called the Enclave, but now is referred to as the Tumbleweed neighborhood. As you restart your journey, you notice a tall, old oak covered with Spanish moss. Spanish moss is a silvery trailing epiphyte (air plant) without roots. It likes sun and dappled shade and grows well in old trees without healthy foliage. Epiphytes such as Spanish moss do not damage the tree but they do prevent sunlight from reaching all the branches. The trail then passes Pine Straw Retention Pond, and then goes past the connecting trail to Pine Straw Road. Along this part of the trail, you may see some of the blue birds that nest in the bird houses residents have put up for them. The plates underneath the bird houses are meant to discourage snakes from crawling in and eating the nestlings. American Lotus bloom close to this shore of Old Quarry Pond but they can only be viewed from across the pond. Now you are back to your starting point; if you wish, you can walk across Meandering Trails Blvd. to continue on Otter Pond Trail #9.

Trail #8 is the Sage Leaf Trail (0.4mi) behind the Sage Leaf neighborhood and next to the Mt. Bethel Baptist Church. The trail moves from the corner of Flint Rock Road and Meandering Trail

Trail #7 is the Old Quarry Pond Loop Trail (0.7mi) which can be started from Connector Trail #6, from Meandering Trails Blvd, or from Pine Straw Road. When you start the trail at Meandering Trails Blvd, the first thing you will notice is the forest to the left. This is where the old railroad track came out of the trees on its way from Okahumpka to Howey-in-the-Hills. Next to the railroad track is a beautyberry bush that has purple berries in the fall. The berries of this native shrub are an important bird food in the winter. Continuing past the trees, the expanse to your left was once a cattle pasture and now boasts a beautiful live oak. This area was planted with small scrub oaks in 2009 for the benefit of the endangered Florida scrub jays. As you fol-

low the trail across the grass to your left, you will notice a multicolored kaolin deposit on your right. Continuing on, there are wetlands to your left and the Old Quarry Pond on your right. Also on your right you will notice a small island in the pond that serves as a night time protective roost for egrets and herons. As you walk past the Connector Trail #6, you notice more wetlands to your left where Florida Sandhill Cranes sometime build their nests and raise their young. You will notice a Sabal palm, an oak grove, and then ascend a steep, short incline to a gravel trail. At this point, you can walk to your left to the Church Pond Trail #13 or stay to your right to keep on the same trail. The shallow pond on the left is known as Church Pond. Red-winged blackbirds often sing in the reeds to your right. A bench awaits you for a well-deserved respite. This area is now the newest neighborhood in Legacy; formerly it was called the Enclave, but now is referred to as the Tumbleweed neighborhood. As you restart your journey, you notice a tall, old oak covered with Spanish moss. Spanish moss is a silvery trailing epiphyte (air plant) without roots. It likes sun and dappled shade and grows well in old trees without healthy foliage. Epiphytes such as Spanish moss do not damage the tree but they do prevent sunlight from reaching all the branches. The trail then passes Pine Straw Retention Pond, and then goes past the connecting trail to Pine Straw Road. Along this part of the trail, you may see some of the blue birds that nest in the bird houses residents have put up for them. The plates underneath the bird houses are meant to discourage snakes from crawling in and eating the nestlings. American Lotus bloom close to this shore of Old Quarry Pond but they can only be viewed from across the pond. Now you are back to your starting point; if you wish, you can walk across Meandering Trails Blvd. to continue on Otter Pond Trail #9.

Trail #9 is the Otter Pond Trail (0.6 mi) and goes from Meandering Trails Blvd to Stoney Brook Drive. This trail passes two retention ponds, three natural ponds/wet-lands and is moderate in difficulty with some elevation changes on this graveled path. Watch for the abundant water fowl and occasional alligator on the retention and natural ponds. During the rainy season this trail can be underwater and impassable.

Trail #10 is the Scrub Jay Trail (0.5mi) that starts on Meandering Trails Blvd and ends on Blue Savannah Drive. This area was set up to observe the endangered, but very friendly scrub jays in their natural habitat. Coming from Meandering Trails, the trail leads along a blackberry hedge and a Florida native Sabal Palm. Before the trail turns left, you see a large camphor tree, one of the non-native species in Legacy, next to an area planted with small Scrub Oaks for the benefit of the endangered Florida Scrub Jay. Walking toward Scrub Jay Pond, you will see a native wax myrtle bush that provides food for wildlife. A beautiful Live Oak grows at the end of the trail behind the house on Blue Savannah. This is a smaller version of the huge live oak seen on the Old Quarry Pond Loop Trail. The difficulty of the trail is moderate due to some elevation changes as well as a change from gravel to grass.

Trail #11 is the Railroad Connector Trail (0.2 mi) and connects the Nature Trail #5 to the River Loop Trail #2 and has no signage. This trail is an old railroad bed of the Florida Atlantic Coastline that is grass covered and moderate in difficulty. This trail travels between homes on Aurora Drive and, at present, wooded grazing land that may eventually be developed into single family homes. Enjoy the nature and the occasional cattle you might observe on this trail.

Trail #12 is the Legacy Trail (0.3mi) which is moderate to difficult and can be approached from two different directions, but has no signage. When walking the Clock Tower Trail #4, pass through the neighborhood until you come to the conservation area marked by an orange tipped stake. Turn right, but stay next to the conservation area for about 150 feet until you come to another orange tipped stake. You turn left here, but stay to the right of the stake and go through 75 feet of trees and vines that have been opened up so you are able to get to the rest of the trail (Do not travel in this area if you have trouble lifting your feet when you walk). Once on the other side of the trees, you can go left on the common ground that goes around Old English Court (follow the orange tipped conservation ground stakes); cross the berm on the Nostalgia Retention Pond and you will arrive at the corner of Nostalgia Drive and Celebration Way. Or after passing through the trees, you can turn right, follow the swale for a few hundred feet, turn right at the end of the trees and you are now headed to the Club House. When you start the trail from Nostalgia Drive, just reverse these instructions. This is a wonderful trail to travel but be aware there are some difficult areas on this trail.

Legacy of Leesburg Trail Guide

Trail #13 is the Church Pond Trail (0.2 mi) and is the newest trail in Legacy. You can get on the trail in two places, either from the Tumbleweed neighborhood (the Enclave) or from the Old Quarry Pond Loop Trail #7. This trail passes under several large live oaks, next to a horse farm and a church.

A Brief History of Kaolin

The word kaolin is derived from Kao Ling or high ridge, which is a town in Southeast China. Rocks that are rich in kaolinite are known as kaolin or white clay. Kaolin is a clay mineral that is usually white or colored a pink-orange-red which gives it a distinct rust hue and can be seen in many places throughout Legacy. Several different variations of kaolin can be seen around the Old Quarry Pond. A few of the uses of the mineral are: main component in porcelain, production of paper, toothpaste, white incandescent light bulbs, cosmetics, paint, rubber and treatment of diarrhea. The Lake County Clay Company was the only kaolin company in Lake County and was owned by the Edgar family of New Jersey, which mined approximately 2,400 acres of the clay in Lake County from 1895 to 1930. Though exact records are hard to find, it is a safe bet this was the company that mined the Kaolin from our Quarry.

Land Use in the Legacy Area

Once the kaolin mining had played out, the surrounding area probably became a farm for growing watermelons, since this locale in and around Okahumpka was known as the 'Watermelon Capital of the Country'. The acreage eventually became a working ranch with cattle and citrus groves. The last cattle were removed about 2004 but you can still see the last vestiges of a citrus grove next to Meandering Trails and the Celebration neighborhood. During World War II, this area was used for training Army Spotlight groups and the footings of one of the buildings can still be seen on the right side of the entrance to River Park. There were two attempts at building a 55+ community before Legacy came about. The Lake Oaks HOA was supposed to have 404 homes on 120 acres of land. The second attempt to build occurred in 1994 when the development was to be named the Hillsdale Estates with 799 dwellings and a golf course on 476 acres. Even though these two projects were approved, nothing happened. Finally in 1999, the Rodgers Brothers Land Company was approved to build a 999 home for 55+, active adult community with no golf course. Additional stipulations by the Army Corps of Engineers were to keep at least 90 acres in conservation easement and establish a Florida scrub-jay habitat.

Conservation Easements

Legacy has approximately 90 acres of land designated as 'Conservation Easement' by the St. Johns River Water Management District (SJRWMD). The purpose of a conservation easement is to conserve open space, protect water recharge areas, wetlands, and environmentally sensitive lands, and preserve wildlife habitat or historic features. Any activity that alters the Conservation Easement (e.g., mowing, clearing, trimming, construction) is prohibited unless specifically permitted by SJRWMD. Many of our trails meander through Conservation Easement areas where these restrictions apply.

Local Watershed

The Palatlakaha River is part of the Clermont Chain of Lakes. Cedar stained water from the Green Swamp in southern Lake County drains into Lake Louisa in Clermont and flows as Crooked River into Lake Minnehaha, then into Lake Minneola from which the Palatlakaha drains north through Cherry Lake and a series of smaller lakes. The river flows between PEAR Park and Arlington Ridge and along the edge of Legacy into Lake Harris. The Lake Harris Chain of Lakes is connected with the St. Johns River through the Oklawaha River and eventually with the Atlantic Ocean near Jacksonville, Florida. One of Lake County's Blueways can be paddled from Lake Louisa to Cherry Lake. Several dams prevent continuous paddling from Cherry Lake to Lake Harris, with portage being required. One of these dams is located just north of Legacy.

Retention Ponds

Retention ponds are seen everywhere in our community and serve two very important functions. In case of hurricanes, the retention pond is used as flood control. Water from impermeable surfaces is collected in a pond and if needed, allowed to overflow into a control structure where it is usually discharged into a nearby wetland or lake. The second function is for pollution control. Water from parking lots, streets and lawns is directed via underground pipes into a retention pond. By catching the water here, fertilizers from lawns, gasoline, oil and other pollutants from the roads are allowed to breakdown naturally. All of our retention ponds are checked and treated (when needed) monthly for algae and aquatic weeds. The algacides and herbicides used are EPA approved and registered for use in the state of Florida and are applied by a licensed technician. Our retention ponds serve very useful purposes, but are not to be used for swimming, wading or allowing pets to drink from them.

Threatened and Endangered Species

These animals, even though they are on the 2013 Federal or State designated endangered lists, can be seen with some regularity in Legacy. American Alligator, Florida Sandhill Crane, Florida Scrub Jay, Gopher Tortoise, Little Blue Heron, Snowy Egret, Tricolored Heron, and the White Ibis. These animals are the reason that Legacy was allowed to be built, but with the provision that a certain amount of our land had to be set aside and kept as a conservation area. Two additional animals that are also on this list but are seldom seen here are the Whooping Crane and Wood Stork.

Other animals you might encounter

Wading birds found in Legacy are: Cattle Egret, White and Glossy Ibis, Great Blue Heron, Great Egret, Snowy Egret, Green Heron and if you are very lucky the American Bittern. Some other birds that you will view with regularity in Legacy are: Bald Eagle, Red Tailed & Red Shouldered Hawks, Double-Crested Cormorant, Hummingbird, Mocking Bird, Black and Turkey Vulture, Northern Harrier, Anhinga, Killdeer, Great Horned Owl, Barred Owl, Blue Jay, Eastern Bluebird, Red-winged Blackbird, Northern Cardinal, Common Grackle, and the American Crow. Waterfowl that will catch your eye are: Pied-Billed Grebe, Common Moorhen, American Coot, Mottled Duck, the very shy, but colorful Wood Duck, and from November through March the Hooded Merganser.

