

**AVON PARK AIR FORCE RANGE  
PUBLIC RECREATION HIKING REGULATIONS  
for the 2011 - 2012 Season**

**1. Introduction**

The Avon Park Air Force Range is 106,000 acres in size. It has been an active military training complex since 1941 providing realistic training to all branches of the military. To ensure safety, the Public Recreation Area is divided into 18 Management Units with certain portions permanently closed and other areas are temporarily closed to public access. Access is only allowed in open Management Units. Approximately 78,000 acres are available for public recreation, Thursday through Monday, depending on the military mission and the general hunting seasons. Please call 863-452-4254 or visit our website at [www.avonparkafr.net](http://www.avonparkafr.net) to see what hiking trails are open to public access.

There are 32 miles of hiking and nature trails available: Lake Arbuckle Nature Trail and Boardwalk, Lake Arbuckle National Recreation Hiking Trail (16 miles), Sandy Point Wildlife Refuge (6 miles) and the Kissimmee River Section of the Florida Natural Scenic Trail (12 miles). There is no charge for using the Lake Arbuckle National Recreation Hiking Trail. For more information on hiking, contact the Outdoor Recreation Office.

a. Lake Arbuckle Nature Trail and Boardwalk

This trail is located approximately 1.2 miles north of the Outdoor Recreation Office west of Frostproof Road. This trail is a boardwalk looping 0.5 miles through cypress and hardwoods on the edge of Lake Arbuckle. At the lakeshore, there is a 30-foot observation tower. An Outdoor Recreation Permit is required to use this trail. This trail is closed to use during the opening weekend of each hunting season and during all of Muzzleloading and General Gun Seasons, unless you have a Hunt Permit.

b. Lake Arbuckle National Recreation Hiking Trail

This is a 16-mile hiking trail originating at Willingham Campground with a primitive campsite (pitcher pump available) at the 10-mile point. The trail winds through a variety of habitats including cypress, pine plantations, pine flatwoods, and sand pine/oak scrub. Access is normally from Thursday noon till Monday at 8:00 p.m. Use of this trail requires no fee, but hikers must stop at the Outdoor Recreation Office to obtain a permit and vehicle pass and sign a release of liability. This trail is closed to use during the opening weekend of each hunting season and during all of Muzzleloading and General Gun Seasons, unless you have a Hunt Permit.

c. Sandy Point Wildlife Refuge

This trailhead is located at the entrance of Austin Hammock Campground, north of the Sandy Point Wildlife Refuge. The trail winds through a variety of habitats, including Florida flatwoods, bay-head swamp and oak hammock. This 6.5 mile trail has several loops enabling the hiker to hike as little or as much as they choose. An Outdoor Recreation Permit is required. The use of this trail is allowed during the hunting season.

d. The Florida National Scenic Trail

This is 12-mile portion of the Kissimmee River Section of the Florida National Scenic Trail. It crosses the eastern side of the installation, running north-south along the river. The trail winds through oak hammocks, freshwater marshes, and pine flatwoods. Use of this trail requires no fee if the hiker(s) enter the trail from the north or south trailhead. Prior to entering the installation, through-hikers are required to obtain a self-serve permit which includes a Release of Liability: (Through-hikers are individuals who enter the trail from the north or south trailhead and stay on the Florida National Scenic Trail the entire time they are on Air Force property.) Kiosks located at either end of the trail

provide these materials and information regarding safe access. During certain military missions, this trail is closed for safety reasons. Please be certain the trail is open for hiking before you proceed. Hikers who wish to drive across the installation to access the trail are required to obtain an Outdoor Recreation Permit. During the opening weekend of each hunting season and during all of Muzzleloading and General Gun Seasons, access across the installation to use this trail is closed unless you have a Hunt Permit. Through-hikers are not permitted to camp more than one consecutive night at any one campsite. Individuals interested in hiking portions of the Florida National Scenic Trail outside the installation should refer to the Florida Trail Association Manual.

## **2. Access Procedures for Hiking:**

a. The following procedures must be observed by all hikers):

(1) All hikers must enter the installation at the Main Gate and proceed directly to the Outdoor Recreation Office to obtain the proper permit and take the required safety course. Exception, those using the Florida National Scenic Trail and entering from the north or south trailheads can obtain permits at one of the trailheads.

(2) All users must then:

(a) Check the status map located at all sign-in locations. This map identifies which Management Units are open.

(b) Check the Forecast Sheet and read all recreational notes. The Forecast Sheet gives the estimated opening and closing times of each Management Unit and is intended to help the hiker plan their weekend. Recreational notes provide important information such as prescribed burns, timber sales, road closures, etc. Since schedule changes may occur, it is the hiker's responsibility to check the Management Unit status each day. Information kiosks are provided at the Outdoor Recreation Office and Willingham and Morgan Hole Campgrounds.

b. All hikers must sign-in and sign-out each time they enter or leave the installation. If for some reason you fail to sign out, call the office immediately at (863) 452-4254 and let them know that you have left the installation.

c. All hikers (except through-hikers on the Florida National Scenic Trail) should complete a Weekend Report Form and leave it at the Outdoor Recreation Office at the end of their stay.

## **4. Use of Vehicles, Decals, and Passes**

a. Each vehicle with hikers will be issued a Temporary Vehicle Pass. This pass is to be placed on the dashboard on the driver's side of the windshield.

b. Any vehicle entering the installation must have a current license plate and insurance, meet all federal and state laws, and be operated by a licensed driver.

c. Vehicles must be operated only on improved and unimproved roads as designated on the Public Recreation Area Map.

d. No airboats, ATVs, or motorized cycles of any type are allowed except under special circumstances as designated by the Installation Commander. Only rubber-tired vehicles are permitted.

e. Vehicles may not be parked in such a manner as to obstruct traffic flow on any roads or fire lanes.

f. The use of vehicles is prohibited in the Public Recreation Area between 10:00 p.m. and 4:30 a.m. except on Frostproof and Kissimmee Roads or during verifiable emergencies.

g. During Archery and Spring Turkey Seasons, vehicular traffic is prohibited between one-half hour before sunrise and one and one-half hours past sunrise in Management Units 10A and 13 except on Van Eeghen and Kissimmee Roads.

h. Persons may ride in the bed of a pickup truck, but they must remain seated. The only exception is that persons under the age of 18 may not be in the bed of any pickup truck while traveling on Kissimmee, Frostproof, Smith, and Old Bravo Roads.

i. By accepting an APAFR Recreational Permit and Vehicle Decal/Temporary Vehicle Pass, users are giving consent to search their vehicles while on the installation. If a vehicle is towed or impounded, users agree to reimburse the towing agent on behalf of the vehicle owner/operator.

## **5. Dogs**

a. Dogs are allowed on the hiking trails, but they must be on a leash. They must wear a collar bearing the name, telephone number, and address of the owner. All dogs must have a current rabies vaccination and have the rabies vaccination tag attached to their collar.

b. Campfires may not be left unattended at any time. Fire bans must be observed when in force.

c. Dumpsters at campgrounds are for trash accumulated while hiking. They shall not be utilized for any household trash, tires, propane bottles, live coals or ashes. No trash of any sort shall be left on any of the trails.

## **6. General Regulations**

a. Plants, animals, or historic or cultural artifacts shall not be taken or collected. No plants or animals of any shall be left on the installation.

b. Members of the public may not feed or bait wildlife in any manner.

c. All closed gates must be kept closed. If you open a gate, you must close it. Gates found open may subsequently be locked without notice.

d. Littering is prohibited.

e. Recreating while intoxicated or possession of open alcoholic beverage containers in a moving vehicle is prohibited. Public intoxication in general is prohibited. Good order and discipline must be maintained at all times while a guest of Avon Park Air Force Range. Failure to comply with this policy will result in suspension or barment from the installation.

f. All persons 16 years or older must carry some form of current photographic identification while on the installation.

g. No ordnance or any other military material shall be tampered with, handled, or removed from the installation. Sightings of such objects are to be reported to the Outdoor Recreation Office.

## **7. Violations**

a. A written report will be filed on any individual apprehended/detained by law enforcement or Outdoor Recreation Program personnel for violation of any federal, state, or installation law or regulation. A report on all violations will be made to the Installation Commander, who will decide whether or not to suspend the recreation privileges of the individual for a period ranging from 1 to 15

years. The individual will be informed of this decision by mail. Violation of some regulations may result in the immediate confiscation of permits and vehicle passes along with being escorted from the installation.

b. Archeological and historical resources on Avon Park Air Force Range are protected under federal law, and it is a crime to remove or disturb them from their original location. Removal of protected materials is punishable by a fine of \$10,000.00 and/or one year in federal prison for the first offense: punishment is a fine of \$100,000.00 and/or five years in a federal prison for the second and other subsequent offenses. Additionally, any equipment and vehicles used in the removal of archaeological materials will be confiscated.

## **8. General Information**

a. To get general information about hiking for an upcoming weekend, call the recorded message at (863) 452-4254, after 11:00 a.m. on Wednesday mornings. You may also check the website at [www.avonparkafr.net](http://www.avonparkafr.net). If you need additional information, call the Outdoor Recreation Office at (863) 452-4254.

b. If someone needs to contact you in case of an emergency, have them call the Outdoor Recreation Office at (863) 452-4254 with the type of vehicle, tag number, and trail you are hiking.

c. If any kind of emergency occurs while you are on the range, call the Avon Park Air Force Range Fire and Emergency Services Office at (863) 452-4117. The telephone at Morgan Hole Campground may be used to call the Outdoor Recreation Office (dial 452-4254) or the Fire and Emergency Services Office (dial 452-4117).

d. These regulations are subject to change at any time. Special exceptions may be requested, but they must be approved by the Installation Commander.

## **9. Commander's Comments**

The mission of Avon Park Air Force Range is to provide the Department of Defense with a realistic air-to-ground training facility. Any other use of the facility, to include hunting and recreation, is on a non-interference basis. The Outdoor Recreation Program is a self-revenue-generating operation. The fees recreationists pay directly support the cost of operations and the expenses incurred. The Outdoor Recreation Program is not for profit.

Good order and discipline are essential to all military operations; therefore, adherence to the posted rules and taking direction from Air Force employees/agents, as well as state and federal officials, is paramount. Avon Park Air Force Range is an active military training site and, as such, a potentially dangerous environment. Failure to comply with the rules puts not only your privilege to access this facility at risk but that of others as well.