



# Quiet Season On the River

Unwind at Florida's Steinhatchee Landing Resort.

My idea was to make this like a village in Florida in the 1920s," says Dean Fowler. "We get a lot of people who want to get away from the crowds."

Autumn settles as softly as a sigh over Steinhatchee Landing Resort, the village for vacationers that Dean built at the river's edge. The resort's out-of-the-way setting on Florida's Nature Coast, between Tallahassee and Tampa, makes it a relaxing escape. Most visitors come in summer; the lucky few who are in the know come this time of year.

Tin-roofed cottages and handsome Victorian-style homes, set beneath massive live oaks, look as if they've been here for a century. Inside the honeymoon cottages, you'll find modern comforts from oversize, jetted tubs to rock-fronted fireplaces.

Guests spend their nights in comfort, but days are filled with activities. The resort offers canoe trips, horseback riding, bicycling, and swimming.



Guests make themselves at home in one of the cozy honeymoon cottages, the most popular rental houses.

## Staying Small

To keep growth scaled down, the nearby fishing town of Steinhatchee limits building height to 35 feet. "We don't have white-sand beaches," Dean points out. "That's one reason this area didn't boom like other parts of the Florida coast."

Cell phone service fades away when you get to Steinhatchee. Even the river does a disappearing act a few miles

Visitors paddle canoes to see wildlife on the Steinhatchee River.

from the resort. Dean often takes visitors to the state-owned refuge where the water dives underground beneath sinkholes. Fueled by many bubbling springs, the flow re-emerges above a low waterfall. It's a leisurely three-hour canoe trip from the falls to the resort.

The river charms almost everyone, just as it did Dean. Not long after he sold the company he founded, the Georgia native came to Steinhatchee to fish and relax. He wound up buying a stretch of the scenic riverfront to build a home for himself and his wife, Loretta, and start the resort that he raised house by house over the past quarter century.



The resort evokes the feel of a vintage Florida village. One cottage is styled to look like a country store.

"The river is what I love about this place," Dean says. "It's what brought me here. After a long, hot summer, you get these nice cool breezes and temperatures in the 80s." Drift along in a canoe on a fall afternoon, and you'll see what he means. It's magical. —LES THOMAS

**Steinhatchee Landing Resort:** 1-800-584-1709 or [www.steinhatcheelanding.com](http://www.steinhatcheelanding.com). Value season rates range \$132-\$438 per night, depending on the size of accommodations. ♦