



Canoe Outpost-Peace River
2816 NW County Rd. 661
Arcadia, FL 34266
800-268-0083
www.canoeoutpost.com



Oak Hill/Guided Fossil Hunt/Walking Tour

Welcome to Fossil Hunting on the Peace River. It is a popular past time. Go to any boat ramp on the Peace and you'll see fossil hunters of all ages. The best way to find fossils though is to rent a canoe or kayak and work your way down the river or walk-in at Canoe Outpost's exclusive Oak Hill area.

Who: The fossils left behind include those of giant sharks, stingrays, fish, whales, dugongs (ancestor of the manatee), dolphins, alligators, turtles, mastodons, mammoths, bison, camels, ancient horses, dire wolves, giant armadillos the size of small cars, giant land tortoises, 20-foot sloths, and saber-tooth cats. The most popular fossils are the shark teeth, with Megalodon the most prized.

Why: Surface fossils found in Florida are approximately 50 million (Eocene Epoch) to 10,000 years old. There is a mix of the marine and land animals because of the rise and fall of the sea levels from glacial melting. The land would emerge, and then disappear. Most fossils in this area are from the middle Miocene, 16 million years ago, to the earliest Pliocene, about 4.5 million years ago. Dinosaur fossils are not found because Florida was under water at the time of the dinosaurs.

What: Look for black, hard shapes, with and without enamel. Look for textures, ribbing, and angular shapes. Black and shiny "rocks" can be anything so look closely. You can also check with office staff and/or your fossil i.d. sheet to figure out what you have. There is also a fossil i.d. book and laminated i.d. sheets for sale at the office. Go to <http://www.canoeoutpost.com/Peace/prfossil.htm> for links to sites to help i.d. fossils. If it once roamed or swam over Florida, it's hidden as a fossilized piece of history in the river.



When: The best time to fossil hunt is any time the river is low, preferably at least 12" below normal. March, April, and May are the usual low times of year, but sometimes in the fall the water is low. Keep an eye on [the water level link at the website](#) for the latest water levels, it is updated almost daily, especially when the river starts dropping. Sunny days are preferred because you can see the bottom better but sunny is not necessary if you are sifting. Sunny days are best for snorkeling and diving and the water clarity needs to be good. The higher the water, the less clarity there is.

Where: Fossils can be found anywhere on the Peace River. The favorite stretches are Gardner south to Arcadia with the Brownville and Oak Hill Runs being the most popular because they are shorter and you have more time to look. You can also leave from our dock and paddle upstream, then back when done. Lots of people go to the public boat ramps

but that means *lots* of people. At Oak Hill you can get to areas other than the ramps that haven't been picked over. You are looking for eroded banks and gravelly areas at the river's edge and on the bottom. Do not dig into the bank, it is private property! Most fossils are found on the bottom and at the edge of the water. Take your paddle, shovel, or a metal rod and probe the bottom occasionally. You're listening/feeling for a "crunch" under the sand layer. That will be the sound of a gravel layer. Darker colored (not tan sand) areas on the bottom are usually gravel spots. Check out bends in the river where there is a high bank or under overhanging Rocky areas are another indication of a possible fossil spot.

How: To find the fossils, you have to get in the water and get those feet wet! You need a sifter or screen and a shovel. Macaroni or spaghetti strainers work too. The screens are wooden frames with hardware cloth attached. Scoop up some gravel and dump it into the sifter. Shake the sifter in the water to wash the mud and sand away and start poking thru what's left in the sifter. The method is similar to panning for gold but you're panning for "black" gold.

We transport you to our exclusive Oak Hill area. Oak Hill is our private access to the river with picnic tables, portable toilets, and hiking trails. We know where the fossil beds are in this area and this area is only accessible to others by canoe or kayak. We have sole access to this section of river by vehicle and therefore walking to the fossil beds.

We can supply the sifters, shovels or trowels (usually two people per sifter, one to shake, one to shovel). We'll also include for each person: a sandwich bag for fossil finds, souvenir shark tooth postcard, info sheet on why there are shark teeth, and a double-sided i.d sheet. You can bring your own supplies if you desire. We do have on-site fossil displays so the kids can take a look and get an idea of what to look for. Our staff person will accompany you to the river and assist the kids in finding some fossils.

Planning your fossil hunt:

Price per person: \$15 per person (required chaperones are free, see below). Price includes parking, transportation to and from put-in point, use of fossil equipment, handouts, and use of facilities.

Add \$5 per person for lunch back at the Outpost. Cook hot dogs and marshmallows on a stick over a campfire. Hot dog roast would be at our picnic shelter and includes chips, lemonade, and ice water.

If you decide to bring your own lunch, we have tables at Oak Hill or back at the main office we have a picnic shelter with grills.

If you're interested in fossil hunting on a different part of the river, price may vary depending on distance from Canoe Outpost-Peace River and if transportation is needed.

This service is available weekdays only and by reservation.

Minimum 10 students.

Chaperone Requirements and Responsibilities

Pre-School/Elementary/Middle School– 1 adult per 5 kids
High School– 1 adult per 12 kids

All required chaperones receive free admission

Adults accompanying the group beyond the required number of chaperones pay adult prices

Chaperones and adults are responsible for the behavior of the group and are required to supervise and stay with the kids at all times.

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peacepaddler@canoeoutpost.com

