



# DIVE SHOP

## New Orleans

### Florida Springs/Manatee Trip January 27-29, 2012

Can you think of another wild animal that seeks contact with humans? Like the American Buffalo, the West Indian Manatee, a harmless aquatic mammal is on the endangered species list. Biologists are not overly optimistic about their long-term survival. Protected under strict laws, there are fewer than 2,200 manatees in the USA. Considering they mate every three years with gestation taking 19 months, they still look extinction square in the eye. Power boats, dams, red tides and cold weather spells are their biggest threats.

Join us as we head south to Florida where the manatees arrive each year to escape the cold, harsh environment of the Gulf. Snorkel with the manatees or stay topside along the glass-slick waters of Kings Bay and Homosassa. Though there is no guarantee you will see a manatee, we have always been successful in seeing, swimming with, touching and filming them.

In addition to snorkeling with the manatees, we will be doing an afternoon drift dive on famous Rainbow River, and an optional dive at Devil's Den.

The trip includes two nights' accommodations in Crystal River, boat and admission fees, and use of tanks and weights. You provide transportation and personal dive equipment, including at least a 5mm full wet suit.



Here is more information on what we will see and do:

**Manatee Snorkel Trips (Saturday and Sunday Morning):** Say the words "Crystal River" to most divers and one thing will come to mind: manatees. Crystal River is home to the nation's largest population of West Indian manatees — especially during the colder months of the year, when manatees flock to Crystal River's year-round, 72-degree spring water in an effort to avoid the cold water of the Gulf which, believe it or not, could cause them to contract a fatal case of pneumonia.

As we said going in, the "dive" most visitors make is not really a scuba dive at all but, rather, a snorkeling experience (exhaust bubbles annoy manatees). You will need a wetsuit for warmth and to help you stay off the bottom, where your thrashing about can stir up silt and bother the manatees.



Prior to allowing you in the water, your tour operator will brief you on how to responsibly interact with the manatees you encounter — without violating the many federal, state and local regulations designed to help protect them. The bottom line: If a manatee chooses to interact with you, fine. Otherwise, look — but don't touch.

### The Trip at a Glance

**Departs** January 27, 2012

**Returns** January 29, 2012

**Duration** 2 Nights/2 Days

**Cost** \$300/person  
(Ask about family rates)

- Balance due at sign up
- No refund unless someone else takes your place

**Included** Price includes:

- Accommodations
- One Rainbow River drift dive
- Two manatee snorkel trips

**You Provide** Not included in price:

- Transportation
- Meals
- Personal dive gear
- Devil's Den admission

**Rainbow River (Saturday Afternoon):** This is a rather unique opportunity to participate in a freshwater drift dive. Here you will drift effortlessly for up to a mile or more in the incredibly clear, spring-fed waters of the aptly named Rainbow River.



After launching at the KP Hole Park boat ramp, your boat captain will take you up to a mile or more up river. Along the way, you'll have the opportunity to see a variety of birds and animals, including cormorants, box turtles and — possibly — an alligator or two (don't worry; the 'gators don't want anything to do with divers).

Your captain will also brief you on the procedures you will follow. Generally, he or she will anchor just down river from the head spring. Here, the captain will have you and a small group of other divers enter the water with a float and flag. Then, for the next hour or so, the he or she will follow you and your group as you drift for up to a mile or more, most or all of the way to KP Hole Park.



Strictly speaking, Rainbow River is not a river at all, but rather a gigantic spring run. In addition to the head spring, located in Rainbow River State Park, the "river" has many smaller springs, vents and sand boils that contribute to the flow, and to the excellent visibility.

As you drift effortlessly over the bottom at speeds up to two knots or more, you'll see a variety of fish, turtles and aquatic plants. If the sun is overhead (and it usually is), among the most breathtaking sights will be the sun's rays as they cascade through the trees and docks that line the river's banks.



At one point in your journey, you may even encounter a school of large alligator garfish. These utterly docile animals can grow to lengths of up to four feet or more.

**Devil's Den (Sunday Afternoon):** Divers visiting north-central Florida's spring and cavern-diving country expect breathtaking underwater scenery. Imagine their delight, then, when discovering a friendly, convenient dive site where the topside scenery is every bit as awe-inspiring as that they find under water. That site is Devil's Den.

Among the many things that distinguish Devil's Den is that it is a site where divers of all experience levels can participate on equal footing. Because the site contains no accessible underwater caves, there are no restrictions on where recreational divers can or cannot go, nor on whether or not they can take dive lights.

Devil's Den is arguably the most picturesque natural dive site in the state, and provides an opportunity that is unique among the region's freshwater springs.



This unique natural formation is what has attracted divers to the site for nearly two decades. From the surface, the only clue to what lies below is a beautifully landscaped opening, just 20 feet across. Looking down, you see that there is water some 30 feet below. Yet, even this does not reveal all that awaits divers.

To reach the water, divers must descend a set of stairs carved in the limestone, several feet from the natural opening. At the base of the first set of stairs, divers find themselves on a ledge, overlooking a giant, air-filled room several times the diameter of the natural entrance. At this point, nearly everyone utters the same, one-word response: "Wow!"

From this vantage point, the view is absolutely breathtaking. This, however, is only the start. Continuing their descent, divers arrive at a wide platform at the base of the stairs. From here, they can enter the 100-foot-wide surface pool in any of several directions.

Below the surface, divers will find a number of training platforms and a variety of 33-million-year-old rock formations. What you quickly realize, though, is that just as the walls slope rapidly outward to meet the water's edge, they continue to bell outward below the surface. By the time the walls meet the slope of the debris cone in the center of the sinkhole, some 25 to 55 feet below the surface, the diameter of the site is as much as 200 feet.



Access to the very silty cave system leading from the sinkhole is barred by a combination of chain-link fence and metal grates. With this risk eliminated, divers may take lights with them to fully explore the myriad nooks and crannies that are always within sight of natural light. Despite its initial appearance, divers often find they can remain under water up to an hour or more, and still not see all that there is to see.

**PLEASE NOTE:** This dive is optional. If you choose to make it, you will be responsible for admission and tank rental.

Space on this trip is limited and it will fill fast. For more information or to sign up, stop by or call Harry's Dive Shop.