

# Neapolitan

LIFESTYLE & CLASSIFIED

A heron flies Nov. 12 at Fakahatchee Strand Preserve State Park near Copeland.



Dee and Don Leonard begin the monthly moonlit tour with a park overview.



A full moon rises above the prairie Nov. 12, at Fakahatchee Strand Preserve State Park near Copeland. PHOTOS BY H. LEO KIM, NAPLES DAILY NEWS

OUR WORLD

## See the moon, the stars on Fakahatchee tour

**Dave Osborn**  
Naples Daily News  
USA TODAY NETWORK - FLORIDA

Heron fly above, as tiny fish swim in ponds below.

Heading into Fakahatchee Strand Preserve State Park just before dusk reveals the wonders of what some call “real Florida,” a Sunshine State more than theme parks, pink flamingos and cheesy tourist shops.

It’s certainly a bucket list checkoff,

journeying into the preserve — the largest state park in Florida at 120 square miles — to see the full moon rise above the prairie.

“We’re not tree huggers, but we do love all the natural resources Florida has to offer,” said Melissa Mourey. Melissa and her husband John were excited about embarking on the tour.

The Bonita Springs couple joined 18 others for the monthly tours that fill up fast, especially every season with the cooler temperatures. The Fakahatchee was made more famous a few decades

ago by the Susan Orlean book “The Orchid Thief” and the 2002 film “Adaptation” starring Meryl Streep and Nicolas Cage.

Wisconsin natives Dee and Don Leonard served as tour guides this warmer-than-usual November weekday. Don drives the pickup pulling the trailer.

“This is an interactive tour that lets you get acquainted with the Fakahatchee,” Dee tells everyone before heading into the wild. “The Fakahatchee is the longest strand-swamp in the world.”

After driving everyone nearly three hours into the swamp, and a few hours later, Don Leonard reflected on why he and his wife make the annual trek south from their home state.

“Our first year here, we fell in love with the Fakahatchee,” he said, noting this was his first time driving the moonlit after driving other ones for the past three years.

Dee Leonard echoed her husband, adding her favorite part of volunteering at the park is “engaging with people every day.”



A full moon rises above the prairie.



A group enjoys the sights, including a few orchid buds. Fakahatchee is the largest state park at 120 square miles.

**Where:** Fakahatchee Strand Preserve State Park. Enter the main park entrance off State Road 29 at Janes Scene Drive in Copeland.

**When:** Moonlit tram tours during a full moon

**Cost:** \$35 and you need to make a reservation and they fill up fast; the next available ones are Feb. 9, March 9, and April 7

**Tips:** Bring mosquito repellent (but don’t spray it on the tram near others!), and wear jeans or slacks instead of shorts. Bring a jacket or sweater for winter tours. **Information:** orchidswamp.org or 239-695-1023

# LA BOHÈME

December 11th & 12th at 7:30 PM  
Artis-Naples Hayes Hall  
Tickets from \$25  
Tel. 239-963-9050 or visit [operanaples.org](http://operanaples.org)

Ramón Tebar, Artistic Director  
Timothy Todd Simmons, Executive Director