

**GEORGIA TRAVELER 205
CAPTION SCRIPT**

Music

Phil:

On this episode of Georgia Traveler, we're driving down U.S. 84, the Wiregrass Highway, from Valdosta to Bainbridge in search of family fun.

Keely:

A place to eat, a place to sleep, and an outdoor activity.

David:

And don't forget, a local legend. We begin here at the Visitor Information Center in Valdosta.

Music

Music

On the road most every day, looking for a place where you can play, looking for the best place you can stay. From the mountains to the coast, looking for a trip you'll like the most, we may even find a friendly ghost, we're Georgia Traveler. Well, we're from Georgia and we travel, that's why we call it Georgia Traveler, and nothing rhymes with Georgia Traveler, but still we're called the Georgia Traveler.

Music

Woman VO:

Georgia Traveler is made possible in part by...

Music

Man VO:

Few places on earth match Georgia for natural beauty, and we plan to keep it that way. We're Georgia Power, a proud sponsor of public broadcasting. We're on, so you can be. Georgia Power, a Southern Company.

Music

Woman VO:

And by supporters of Georgia Public Broadcasting. Thank you.

Music

David:

Hello, I'm David.

Cathy Sasnett:

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Hi, David. I'm Cathy.

David:

Nice to meet you, Cathy. We just got into Valdosta, and we're looking for a place with some family fun. Do you have any suggestions?

Cathy Sasnett:

Absolutely. Wild Adventures Theme Park is located in Valdosta. It's wild animals, thrill rides; great fun for the entire family. There's a water park.

David:

Well, that sounds thrilling! We're on our way.

Cathy Sasnett:

You have a great trip!

Music

Phil:

Guys, we finally got here! Wild Adventures down in Valdosta, Georgia!

Keely:

That's right, home of roller coasters, water rides, and exotic animals!

David:

Oh, I can't wait! Come on, guys, let's go!

Phil:

Why is it that he went that way?

Music

Jimmy Holmes:

Part theme park, part zoo, 100 percent fun. Get to enjoy the rides, get to see the animals. Great shows. There's so much that a family can do. We've got the largest collection of rides of any park in the south. We've got Splash Island Water Park, over 500 wild animals, so there's really something the whole family can do, whether you've got teenage kids or you've got little kids, we've got something for everybody.

David VO:

With nine big roller coasters to choose from, the only question to ask is who will be able to last through all of them?

Keely VO:

Our first ever "Georgia Traveler Coaster Challenge" has begun.

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Phil VO:

We'll start off easy at a ride called Swamp Thing!

Keely:

You excited?

Phil:

Oh, terribly...

Music

Phil:

Don't be afraid. Now Keely said something about you may scream, and that's okay. Uh-oh, we're clear! We're up outta here!

Keely:

Woooo!

Phil:

Alright...

Keely:

Here's the big climb!

Phil:

Alright, here we go, gotta lean back! Aw, yeah!

Keely:

Up, up, up, up!

Screaming

Music

David:

Hey, Phil, you wanna ride with me?

Keely:

I don't know if he'll hold your hand in the same way that I did. Protect you.

Phil:

No, he probably won't.

David:

This one's called the boomerang!

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Phil:

Yes, it is! And one thing about this ride, it's not for the weak of stomach!

David:

That's right!

David and Phil:

We're manly men!

Phil:

Uh-oh!

David:

I thought we were going forward!

Screaming

Phil:

You think going back's gonna be more interesting?

Screaming

David:

And once is enough!

Keely:

Again, again, again!

David:

Are you crazy?

Music

Phil:

Did you notice we're gonna be hanging upside down for just a moment? Alright, Keely, here we go!

Music

Phil:

Now I know what David felt like! Okay... No.

Music

Keely VO:

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After my well-fought victory, I need to try out some tamer rides.

Keely:

Wild Adventure has rides for kids of all ages. We're gonna enter Bugsville where they have rides for little ones like my daughter, Tuesday. Are you ready? Come on, let's go! Let's run!

Music

Jimmy Holmes:

Bugsville is our children's themed area, and it's a place where you see things through the eyes of a bug. And there's lots of great rides within Bugsville, and lots of things for little kids to do.

Keely VO:

Tuesday and I are having a great time on these rides which are perfect for her age, but the day is getting hot and David has set out to find a way for us to cool down.

David:

If the rides in the African Pride Lands, the Australian Outback, or even the Wild West aren't enough for you, then you oughtta dive in to the adventures of Splash Island!

Music

David VO:

While I continue investigating my water entertainment options, Phil is enjoying one on one time with some special friends...

Phil VO:

I might be a big guy, but there is something that has always made me feel pretty small, and that's snakes. So I decided to face my fears with the help of some knowledgeable reptile wranglers at the demonstration called Fangs.

Music

Lisa:

Alright! So this here is Freckles, and he is also known as a water boa. Does anybody know what kind of snake Freckles is? Anaconda, very good!

Phil:

Hey, whoa! What's that?

Lisa:

This is Freckles, he's a yellow anaconda.

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Phil:

He's a yellow anaconda?

Lisa:

Yes.

Phil:

Okay...

Lisa:

Now you just let him do what he wants to so he doesn't get all aggravated!

Phil:

Oh, let him do what he wants to do...okay. He's crawling. No problem...let him crawl all over me. I grew up not really enjoying snakes, and I'm not really enjoying Freckles right now, however it is a good way to kind of get over your phobia. Yeah, there you go. Oh, this is all interesting. Lisa, you know what, Freckles and I have had a chance to get to know each other. Thank-you so much. Alright, Freckles, good hanging out with you.

Lisa:

Thank-you.

Phil:

Oh, thank-you. You can let go now.

Lisa:

I think you made a new friend.

Phil:

Yeah, Freck, you can let go. Oh, Freck!

Music

Keely:

So whether you love racing roller coasters...

David VO:

Water rides...

Phil VO:

Or reptiles, Wild Adventures has it all.

Music

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Keely:

All up and down the eastern seaboard you can find these perfectly circular swamps called Carolina Bays. But the mystery is how did they get that way? Well, David is going to visit one of the largest, called Grand Bay just north of Valdosta, to find out.

Music

David VO:

As you travel along Georgia highways, you may notice several wetland areas that look quite simple from ground level, but if you see them from a bird's eye view, you may learn to appreciate them quite a bit more, specifically the hundreds of isolated wetland areas all across east Georgia known as the Carolina Bays.

Lisa Kruse:

I like coming here 'cause it kinda takes you back in time.

David VO:

Lisa Kruse is a botanist with Georgia's Department of Natural Resources, and took me for a tour of Grand Bay, located about ten miles northeast of Valdosta.

Lisa Kruse:

Grand Bay itself is part of a large complex of wetlands. It's around 18,000 acres, this whole complex. Black water swamps, cypress forests, tupelo forests, and Grand Bay is a part of that.

David:

This massive wetland area known as Grand Bay is one of just thousands of Carolina bays which stretch all the way from Georgia northeast up to Maryland. But the mysterious thing about them is that every single one is the exact same shape.

Lisa Kruse:

One point, one of the narrow points is always in the northwest and the other side's always in the southeast. So they're always facing the same way. And there's thousands of them! How strange is that?

David:

A meteor shower?

Lisa Kruse:

Maybe so. Another thought is that over time winds...so if you had a wind coming from the northwest to the southeast, it literally could blow sand deposits and form depressions that are all shaped the same and in the same direction.

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David:

So those are the two main theories...

Lisa Kruse:

'Course there is your alien theory.

David:

Okay. Let's hear it.

Lisa Kruse:

I mean, who else could do something like that but a power from the celestial sky? It could be aliens...

David VO:

Another theory is that giant prehistoric beavers impounded small streams and created large ponds behind their dams, or the theory that thousands of fish fluttered their tails together to create a giant nest.

Lisa Kruse:

It's called a bay, originally, 'cause of all the bay trees on the outside. That's where it comes from. It doesn't come from the fact that it's like a bay on the ocean. You come down into it. The water's getting deeper and deeper. What's really cool is that you can just walk right over it. You're not trudging through...you don't have to worry about the snakes or anything, but you can still see what's growing here.

David:

You said snakes. What kind of snakes might we see here?

Lisa Kruse:

You might see water moccasin snakes; you might see brown water snakes.

David VO:

The bays are a haven for alligators, as expected, but the black water wetlands also make a perfect habitat for some lesser known animals, such as the two-legged amphibian known as a siren, or even stranger looking is the two-toed amphiuma. The amphiuma is also known as a Congo eel, even though it's not an eel, or a snake for that matter. This evasive creature is actually the longest member of the salamander family in the United States, and the Carolina bays serve as the perfect habitat for both of these amphibians.

Lisa Kruse:

Water dictates the kind of plants, which then dictate the kind of animals.

David VO:

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Lisa kept the bay creatures at Bay during our boardwalk tour, and she kept me dry in the wetlands, except for when she pulled the old wet branch trick on me. Nevertheless, the boardwalk through Grand Bay is a fascinating journey. Lisa added that sunrise and sunset are the best times to visit. So if you have a couple of hours and want a unique outdoor experience, trek a few miles off the Wiregrass Highway and explore just one of many Carolina bays.

Music

David:

When driving along the Wiregrass Highway, you may want to take a detour on Georgia 319, also known as Plantation Parkway.

Music

Keely VO:

When looking for a place to stay along the Wiregrass Highway, Thomasville is an obvious choice. It's chock full of historic B&Bs. Back in the late 1800s, Thomasville was the terminus of the railroad, and the town was well-known as a retreat for the rich and famous. Harper's Magazine even called it the "best winter resort on three continents." Many of those who came to Thomasville during the "grand era" bought property and built magnificent mansions on what is now known as Plantation Parkway, south of Thomasville.

Music

Keely VO:

The Coalson Plantation is one that is open to overnight guests.

Music

Swifty Watkins:

Well the Coalson Plantation originally started in 1825. The plantation went through a series of owners and it migrated into a five star resort that was more geared to a European style. It was an idea who had some great concepts, just didn't go in this part of the south. And when it was taken over a couple of years ago, we kind of went in a new direction. We wanted it to be a place you could get away and escape and spend a quiet weekend. I know when I took over up here my blood pressure dropped 30 points, so we invite everybody to come down and see what we can do for your blood pressure.

Keely VO:

The Coalson Plantation offers 33 unique rooms and cottages.

Swifty Watkins:

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I think the first thing they can expect is relaxation. It's a style of living that we don't see anymore because it is slower. All of us are cell phones and PDAs and computers and everything else. While we have those amenities out here, we don't find a lot of people using them. They get here and they seem to take on the atmosphere. I think the real key is that you can take on a slower style of lifestyle and just get away for a couple of days , and go back feeling refreshed.

Keely VO:

One of my favorite areas is the pool.

Swiftly Watkins:

Pool was built about 1932. It was one of the first indoor pools. It was made with roughly 53,000 one-inch Italian tiles.

Keely VO:

When these plantations were built, the idea was to have a self-contained oasis complete with everything that the family enjoyed. So if you loved movies, that included building a theater.

Swiftly Watkins:

He built that for his wife because he was a hunter and she had nothing to do, and the wife wanted a movie theatre and the wife got a movie theatre!

Music

Keely VO:

Two other plantations located nearby are the Pebble Hill Plantation and the Greenwood Plantation. Pebble Hill is open to visitors as a museum. Tours of the house and gardens are available Tuesday through Sunday. The Greenwood Plantation is managed by the Nature Conservancy for its 5,200 acres of the ecologically significant longleaf pine forest. So take a step back in time and make a stop on the Plantation Parkway.

Phil:

What? No cheese! Hey, if you're looking for some of America's finest gourmet cheese, look no further than the Sweet Grass Dairy in south Georgia. It's utterly delicious!

Music

David VO:

Ever found yourself on the back roads in south Georgia craving cheese? Well I sure did, and lucky me, I found the Sweet Grass Dairy.

Music

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David:

In Thomasville just a few miles north of the Wiregrass Highway, you'll find the Sweet Grass Dairy. Now this place is well-known amongst some of the country's top chefs; that's because some of the world's best cheeses are made right here. Let's go inside and figure out how it's done.

Music

Jeremy Little:

Right now I am cutting the curd. And you can see that it's firm enough to where if you cut it, it'll hold its shape.

David:

And we wouldn't want to eat this quite yet?

Jeremy Little:

You could; it doesn't have much flavor. I mean, there's no salt to it...

David:

It tastes more like milk.

Jeremy Little:

Yeah, yep.

David:

That makes sense, doesn't it? Cut!

Jeremy Little:

Goat's milk comes from here on the property and then all of our cow's milk comes from one of our family-owned farms, within 30 miles away.

Music

Jeremy Little:

We've taken our curd, put it into this white tub here, rolled it into this room, and we are moulding. Once all the curd is used up, we will let the curd settle down into the mould. It's kinda like what you see over here. Our Lumiere, which is a heart-shaped goat's milk cheese. You can see the black on the outside is grapevine ash. We're waiting for it to get a nice, full bloom on the outside of it. So it takes a good 18 days or so from going from milk to actual finished product where it's capable of being sold. This is the Green Hill; this is our most popular cow's milk cheese.

David:

This just won an award...

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Jeremy Little:

Yeah, we just won first place at the American Cheese Society for its category. Anything that's new and unusual or something that we're trying to work with is on that shelf right there. And then these other three racks are cheeses that are ready to go.

David:

I saw there was a lot of experimental cheese in there. Have y'all come up with some great cheese that only y'all have from experimentation?

Jeremy Little:

The experimental cheeses are some of my favorite ones to do. We're always trying to better ourselves; come up with interesting stuff. Grab a little scoop. I'll take a little. This is my favorite part. My wife gets so mad at me because I'm the guy that digs out the center. And she's always, "Why do you do that?" My mother-in-law started it in 1999. She started with eight goats, and now we have right around 200, and we've got another 35 or 40 babies that will be entering into the herd probably within the next 18 months or so.

David:

Another way the Sweet Grass Dairy is different from other places is instead of having them on concrete where their hooves are hitting the concrete; they put them out in fields and have acres and acres of land to roam. This is called the New Zealand style.

Karen Harper:

Conventional dairying, the animals are kept on concrete or they're kept in small stalls. You'll never see that at Sweet Grass Dairy. We've got 140 acres for the animals to roam freely, all day every day. Just the way that nature intended.

David VO:

If all this cheese making has gotten you hungry, there's a retail store at the dairy, where you can swing by and grab some cheese and cheese accessories.

Karen Harper:

We have tours and even if it is not our tour season, which is from February through June, anybody in the retail shop can take the time to take customers around to give them a tour of the dairy on any given day.

David VO:

And most importantly, get some free samples.

David:

Jeremy told me a little about the experiment cheeses, so...

Karen Harper:

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This is an experimental cheese. That is with herbs d'province, which is a blend of about 14 different herbs; it's a French blend.

David:

You notice my samples keep getting bigger.

Karen Harper:

That's fine!

David:

Okay.

David VO:

Well, by the end of the day, I was so fascinated with the Sweet Grass cheese-making process that I figured I had to get a hands-on experience with the source.

David:

You been milked, milked, anyone? Milked, milked, huh?

Goat:

Hey, David, come milk me!

David:

Well, now it's time to actually milk the goats; this is how we get that good cheese! Gotcha...okay. They have machines now that do this. You want to do it right or else you'll get kicked in the face. Alright! Thank-you very much, ma'am. Nice and bubbly! Ahhhhh....

David VO:

I left the Sweet Grass Dairy with a van full of cheese and a goat milk moustache, but I will never forget my new furry friends out here in Thomasville.

David:

Hey, stop eating my shirt. Hey, no, seriously! You're sweet...ahh!

Keely:

So Cathy, Phil wants to enjoy the outdoors somewhere in southwest Georgia. What would you recommend?

Cathy Sasnett:

I would recommend Lake Seminole in Bainbridge, Georgia. It's in southwest Georgia. It's along Highway 84. Great bass fishing and boating there. I believe you'll enjoy that area.

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Phil VO:

Lake Seminole. It's about as far southwest as you can go and still be in the state of Georgia. I met up with professional angler and Bainbridge native Pam Martin-Wells early one fine August morning. After a casting lesson, we got right down to the business of fishing.

Phil:

Hey coach, I feel like my casting's getting better.

Pam Martin-Wells:

You're doing excellent.

Phil:

It is pretty warm up here, how important is temperature to fishing? For the fish especially?

Pam Martin-Wells:

It's extremely important; especially this time of year when the water temperature is so hot the fish get really sluggish. They're opportunistic feeders and they're only going to hit something if it comes relatively close to them. They're not going to expend a lot of energy to run around.

Phil:

They're opportunistic feeders, we have something in common! I take an opportunity every chance I get to feed myself!

Music

Phil:

Now for a novice fisherman as myself, or someone who doesn't get to go out that often, what do you recommend? How do you recommend we get started?

Pam Martin-Wells:

That's the beauty of fishing; you don't necessarily have to have a big fancy boat. You don't even have to have a boat at all. You can fish off a bank. Fishing is one of the non-discriminative sports that there is, 'cause the fish don't know if you're male or female, four years old or 70 years old. That's the beauty about fishing.

Phil:

So what are some of the fish that I can catch in this lake?

Pam Martin-Wells:

Well, we have large mouth bass, which we are trying to catch this morning. All kinds of pan fish. You got blue gill, crappie, you got a lot of hybrids and stripers

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in this lake. Catfish, you name it. If you want to catch it, it's pretty much in this lake.

Phil:

Okay, if I was a bass which one would I be?

Pam Martin-Wells:

Here? A large mouth.

Phil:

What are you saying, Pam, what are you saying? I think she's right though...

Pam Martin-Wells:

Oh I didn't mean it that way . . .

Pam Martin-Wells:

Oh, okay. I didn't take it as such.

Pam Martin-Wells:

I just meant large mouths are more predominant here.

Phil VO:

The bass were in there, but they weren't biting. Apparently I had a lot to learn about winter fish as well. You see, a hot August day was not ideal. Bass season is more like March to May.

Phil:

What's the largest fish you've ever caught?

Pam Martin-Wells:

I caught a bass in a tournament one time that weighed 10.53, so it was a little over 10 and half pounds. Largest bass I've caught here was around nine pounds, but there are some really big bass here.

Phil:

Is there a fifteen-pounder out here somewhere? That would make some good eating!

Pam Martin-Wells:

We release all the bass; we eat the pan fish.

Phil:

Okay we eat the pan fish, okay. Now I understand that. We eat the pan fish; we let the bass go.

Pam Martin-Wells:

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That's right; let them grow up.

Phil:

Protect your local bass.

Music

Phil:

I am not going down. It's on now; it is on. I got to get me one. Notice how you got me right up herewith all the treetops. Okay, Pam, so give me my assessment, so how did I do so far?

Pam Martin-Wells:

You've done excellent, I mean, really, you've done excellent, the fish just didn't do their part, so what we're gonna do is go to the other side of the lake and try another spot.

Phil:

Okay. Well, I'm settled in; I'm ready.

Phil VO:

Knowing how much I wanted to catch a fish, Pam switched equipment and our prey. Now we were pole fishing for brim and blue gill.

Phil:

I keep coming up empty.

Pam Martin-Wells:

Get him, get him, get him!

Phil:

Got him! Coming up, alright Mitch, there he is! Aw, yeah, come back here!

Pam Martin-Wells:

Knock-Him-Out Phil!

Phil VO:

You too can experience the great outdoors on Lake Seminole. Head down to Jack Wingate's Lunker Lodge off of U.S. 84. It's a place for fishing enthusiasts in all parts of the state, and the base of operations for Pam and Steven Wells's guide service.

Music

David:

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That concludes this episode of Georgia Traveler, so we'd like to thank Cathy and all our friends here at the Valdosta Visitor Information Center.

Keely:

We hope you'll join us next time on Georgia Traveler. Until then, I'm Keely Muse...

David:

I'm David Zelski...

Phil:

And I'm Phil Proctor, wishing you pleasant journeys.

Music

Woman VO:

Georgia traveler is made possible in part by...

Music

Man VO:

Few places on earth match Georgia for natural beauty, and we plan to keep it that way. We're Georgia Power, a proud sponsor of public broadcasting. We're on, so you can be. Georgia Power, a Southern Company.

Music

Woman VO:

And by supporters of Georgia Public Broadcasting. Thank you.

Music

Man VO:

Georgia Traveler is produced in partnership with the Georgia Department of Economic Development and the Georgia Tourism Foundation.

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Man VO:

This has been a production of Georgia Public Broadcasting.