



# Nota De Soto

FALL 2017

## Who are Friends of De Soto?

**F**riends of De Soto National Memorial, Inc. was created for the purpose of supporting the National Park Service's De Soto National Memorial. We are a private non-profit corporation organized under the laws of the State of Florida. Our purpose and mission statement:

*To initiate, promote, and support the educational, historical, interpretive, and scientific activities of the De Soto National Memorial.*

Please visit [www.friendsofdesoto.org](http://www.friendsofdesoto.org).

## Friends Seek New Friends — Membership Opportunity

**P**lease take a moment to read the last page of this newsletter. More than ever we need your help to provide financial assistance for concerts, educational programs and park maintenance. Through your membership donation you join hundreds of other supporters who are committed to helping the Friends of De Soto National Memorial. Thank you for your support!

## Friends of the Friends

Captain Sherman, Paradise Boat Tours  
Backstreet Hair Designers  
J&J BBQ  
Sarasota Trolley  
Siesta Key Trolley

## SAVE the DATES

### February, 2018 (TBD) Sunset Cruise

With Paradise Boat Tours on  
Sarasota Bay

### March 10, 2018 Dog Days at De Soto

Come out and celebrate our four-legged friends. More information will be available at [www.friendsofdesoto.org](http://www.friendsofdesoto.org).

## Nathan Souder Selected as New De Soto Superintendent



*Nathan Souder takes reins at park*

**N**athan Souder officially became superintendent of De Soto National Memorial in late May, said National Park Service (NPS) Southeast Regional Director Stan Austin. Souder had been acting superintendent since March and entered permanent status in his new role May 28.

"I am truly honored to be trusted with the responsibility of caring for this amazing memorial," Souder said. "The park's staff, volunteers and partners form an outstanding team that I am excited to continue working with. Together we will continue to engage with the local community and introduce new audiences to this hidden treasure."

Regional Director Austin had high praise for Souder and his qualifications for the post in Bradenton.

"Nathan's deep commitment to public service and civic engagement makes him a great fit for the job," Austin said. "He brings with him broad experience and sound management skills. Nathan has dynamic employees he will lead in advancing the mission of De Soto National Memorial."

Souder began his NPS career as a seasonal backcountry ranger in 2001 at Rocky Mountain National Park in Colorado. His 16-year tenure with the agency has included assignments with increasing responsibility in legislative and congressional affairs, public affairs, budget, construction project management, and volunteer and youth programs.

For the past two years, Souder served as one of 10 Urban Fellows across the country charged with increasing relevancy and collaboration with the National Park Service. As the Urban Fellow for Jacksonville, he split his time between working at Timucuan Ecological and Historic Preserve and downtown Jacksonville in City Hall.

Souder holds a bachelor of science degree in public management from Indiana University's School of Public and Environmental Affairs. He and his wife, Sarah, have two children -- Elias, 6, and Ethan, 4, who are already fond of Bradenton's people, beaches and clear water. **De Soto National Memorial** commemorates the landing of Spanish explorer Hernando de Soto in Florida in 1539 and the first extensive organized exploration by Europeans of what is now the southern United States. The memorial, established in 1948, received nearly 233,000 visitors in 2016 who spent an estimated **\$13.6 million** in local gateway regions while visiting De Soto National Memorial.

These expenditures supported 210 jobs and \$19.1 million in total economic output in local economies surrounding the park.

## Join Friends on a Sunset Benefit Cruise November 4

**T**ickets are on sale for a Friends of De Soto sunset cruise Nov. 4 that will benefit De Soto National Memorial.

The Paradise Boat Tours cruise on Sarasota Bay departs from Historic Bridge Street Pier in Bradenton Beach. Boarding begins at 5:15 p.m., with departure at 5:45 p.m. for the leisurely and informative 90-minute cruise.

Tickets for the cruise are \$30 per person for paid Friends of De Soto members and \$35 for nonmembers. Tickets may be purchased online at <http://friendsofdesoto.org/november-4th-sunset-cruise>. For more information, call 941-704-6825.

Proceeds benefit De Soto National Memorial through the Friends of De Soto, a 501(c) non-profit organization.



## Hurricane Irma Pays Unwelcome Visit

The national champion gumbo limbo tree at De Soto National Memorial suffered significant damage from the high winds of Hurricane Irma in early September, but the recently established "living shoreline" successfully weathered the storm.

Arborists recently inspected the tree and discovered two cracks in the trunk, creating critical stress on the tree. While cables were installed several years ago to improve the gumbo limbo's structural integrity, they have been determined to be insufficient for the weight of the threatened portion of the tree, estimated to be 25,000 pounds.

The National Park Service has temporarily roped off a safe zone around the tree, but because of the tree's location, this blocks the main, wheelchair accessible walkway to the visitor center. Visitors can still access the building using an alternate trail.

"The national champion gumbo limbo is an icon in the Bradenton community and we will fight to save it if we can do so in a matter that does not negatively impact the safety of visitors or their experience," said Nathan Souder, superintendent of De Soto National Memorial. "We are gathering information from certified arborists and exploring options so that we can make an informed decision before moving forward."



De Soto National Memorial prepares for an unwelcome visit from Hurricane Irma.



The recently installed living shoreline stood up to Irma.



Hurricane Irma damaged the park's iconic gumbo limbo tree.

The De Soto National Memorial gumbo limbo tree was listed as an American Forests Champion Tree in 2007. At a height of 45 feet with a circumference of 195 inches, it is the national champion tree for the species, meaning it is the largest known tree of its kind in the country. Estimated to be 80 years old, this witness tree was present when the Colonial Dames of America dedicated the adjacent De Soto Trail monument in 1939 and is an important part of the park's cultural landscape.

"Gumbo limbo trees will always have a place at De Soto National Memorial," Souder said. A previous national champion gumbo limbo tree was lost years ago but several of its branches were planted to create new trees on the north side of the sidewalk leading to the visitor center.

Additionally, a large gumbo limbo located at the southwest corner of the visitor center was damaged and cannot be saved. The Category 2 hurricane winds of Irma cracked and twisted the trunk, bringing down a large section of the tree. Arborists have inspected the tree and determined it will have to be removed.

The Friends of De Soto in the past has provided financial assistance to the park in its efforts to save the tree.

On a positive note, the hurricane's impacts are limited on portions of the park's living shoreline, thanks to a resource management project completed just days before Irma roared through Central Florida.

On Sept. 3, 80 volunteer citizen scientists joined with National Park Service archeologists, marine biologists from the University of Central Florida, members of the Coastal Conservation Association and the Florida Public Archaeology Network, and De Soto National Memorial staff to create a "living shoreline" at the park to protect

against coastline erosion and loss of archaeological resources.

Comprised of 300 newly planted mangroves and 1,500 mesh shell bags placed just off shore, the living shoreline creates a natural shoreline ecosystem to diffuse wave energy caused by boat wakes, storm surges and other wave action. Unlike hardscapes, such as rip rap or seawalls, which are a fixed height, living shorelines grow and adapt as water levels change.

Less than 10 days after the project was completed, Hurricane Irma roared through. Incredibly, the newly planted mangroves and oyster bags held up against the storm, and protected the shoreline as planned.

Despite sustained winds of 100 mph and a storm surge of approximately two feet, 92 percent of the deployed mangroves survived the storm. Under normal conditions, a 50 percent survival rate is considered successful.

"The success of this newly installed living shoreline under the harshest of conditions previews how successful it can be over time in protecting De Soto's shoreline and archeological sites," said Dr. Margo Schwadron of the National Park Service's Southeast Archeological Center, which coordinated the project with the University of South Florida's Coastal and Estuarine Ecology Lab. "We are deeply appreciative of the timely work of our project partners and support from the community in getting the work completed."

De Soto National Memorial commemorates Conquistador Hernando De Soto's 1539 expedition through the Southeastern United States and tells the history of the Native American tribal societies they encountered. Learn more at [www.nps.gov/deso](http://www.nps.gov/deso) or follow De Soto National Memorial on Facebook at <https://www.facebook.com/DESO1539/>.



### Walk the Nature Trails

The Nature Trail winds along the shoreline and through several Florida ecosystems, including a mangrove forest like the one that De Soto's men would have encountered when they landed. Trails include interpretive signage and waysides that tell the story of the De Soto Expedition and the natural history of the area. Bicycling is allowed in the parking lot, but not on the sidewalks or trails.

Forty-five minute guided Trail Walks are offered by Park Rangers daily at 11 a.m., staff availability and weather permitting. Inquire at the Visitor Center. For tour availability, call 941-792-0458, ext. 105.

**Picnic Area:** A ten table picnic area is located adjacent to the parking lot and is available for visitors on a first come basis. Large groups and schools should call ahead to reserve seating. Grills and alcohol are not allowed within the park.

**Bird Watching:** The seasonal migration of birds brings many bird watchers to the park in the fall and early spring. The exact timing of migration is dependent upon weather. Come to our visitor center and inquire what new and rare birds have been sighted recently at De Soto National Memorial.

**Camping:** De Soto National Memorial has no facilities for camping. The park grounds are closed from sunset to sunrise.

**Beach:** Several small beaches are located within the park. The De Soto Point Beach is located west of De Soto Point and northwest of the Visitor Center. This beach is exposed to the current of the Manatee River and the waves of Tampa Bay. The Cove Beach located on the south side of De Soto Point and is more popular because it is sheltered from most current and waves. No life guards are on duty. Swimmers use park beaches at their own risk.

**Fishing:** Fishing with rod and reel is allowed within the park with a valid Florida drivers license and valid State of Florida fishing license. Fishermen are not allowed to stand on rip rap or to clear brush from any area in order to gain access to the water. For questions of licensure and eligibility please visit <http://myfwc.com/license/>

**Boating:** The Cove is a popular temporary anchorage for small pleasure boats. Canoes and kayaks may be launched and carried to the water by hand. They can be launched from the park beaches provided that vegetation, terrain, and wildlife is not disturbed. Loud motors and the creation of excessive wave action is prohibited.

**Dogs:** Dogs are permitted within the park only when on a hand held leash. For all of our dog walkers and four legged friends make sure to come to our Dog Days at De Soto event held annually in March.

**Exhibits:** The Visitor Center includes stunning displays of historic armor, weapons, and related period items. Helmets and armor are available to try on.

**Theater:** Our newly re-modeled theater and museum features a wide array of exhibits of Spanish and Native American artifacts. The new museum exhibits are designed to be rotating with new items and art that will be displayed periodically. Our theater shows our parks film Hernando De Soto in America throughout the year. During season the film is shown on a time schedule to coincide with scheduled living history programs.

**Bookstore:** The bookstore features an excellent selection of books about the De Soto Expedition and the Native American cultures encountered, as well as keepsakes to remember your visit by. Some items may be ordered on-line.

**Other Amenities:** Modern restrooms and a drinking fountain and a dog drinking fountain are available in the Visitor Center.

There are no entry fees for the park or the Visitor Center.

### Contact Information

#### Mailing Address:

Friends of De Soto National Memorial, Inc.  
P.O. Box 14422, Bradenton, FL 34280-4422

Email: [info@friendsofdesoto.org](mailto:info@friendsofdesoto.org)

Website: [Friendsofdesoto.org](http://Friendsofdesoto.org)

### Donations: How to Support Your National Parks

The National Park Service appreciates your support in the form of visitation and donations. Your donations directly contribute to the services and features you enjoy at De Soto National Memorial. Donation money supports the maintenance of our nature trails and boardwalk, they fund many of our special events like our living history programs and holiday events, and they support many of our youth programs like Junior Ranger Summer Camp.

There are several ways you and your family can make a donation to De Soto National Memorial or the National Park Service. These options include: on-line giving through our friends group and cooperating associations, Memorial gifts for living or deceased family or friends, Wedding party favors or gifts, holiday gift, and wills and bequests.

Your donation and gifts will be greatly appreciated and be given direct recognition if you and your family desires. You have the option to give anonymously as well. Recognition of your donation can be used to inspire others to give to De Soto National Memorial or to the National Park Service.

You can make a gift to benefit our park either directly to the National Park Service or to our primary non-profit tax exempt support organization the Friends of De Soto National Memorial. If you make the gift directly to the park, the entire gift will be used for the purpose you identify. No administrative costs are deducted from your gift to the National Park Service. Your check will be deposited in a government account and the full amount will be spent as you intended. Most parks have separate donation accounts for park-specific projects and programs for which you can earmark your gift. Government accounts are non-interest bearing and cannot generate interest between the time it is deposited and the time it is spent.

The advantage of making your gift check to the Friends of De Soto National Memorial, our parks Friends Group, is that the amount will be deposited in an interest bearing account to assist park-prioritized requested projects and programs.

To make a donation, go to [www.friendsofdesoto.org](http://www.friendsofdesoto.org) or mail your check to:  
Friends of De Soto National Memorial • PO Box 14422 • Bradenton, FL 34280-4422

Shop at **AmazonSmile** and **Amazon.com** will make a donation to **Friends of De Soto National Memorial Inc.**

### BOARD OF DIRECTORS

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# Nota De Soto



## FRIENDS OF DE SOTO NATIONAL MEMORIAL, INC.

**D**e Soto National Memorial adds \$22 million annually to our local economy, according to a federal study of tourism dollars spend by visitors to our National Park. Help the Park maintain the programs that bring over 350,000 visitors to De Soto each year. With federal funding cuts, the best way to maintain these programs is to join Friends of De Soto National Memorial. Our Friends group raises money to support important programs such as concerts, educational programs, and maintenance of our Park's facilities. **Join today!**

Shop at AmazonSmile and Amazon will make a donation to Friends of De Soto National Memorial, Inc.

## Become a Member

Yes, I would like to support my National Park by becoming a member. Memberships are tax deductible.

**(Check one)**

Individual Adult . . . . . \$25.00 \_\_\_\_\_

Family . . . . . \$40.00 \_\_\_\_\_

Youth/Student . . . . . \$10.00 \_\_\_\_\_

Business . . . . . \$75.00 \_\_\_\_\_

Senior Citizen 65 and over . . . . . \$20.00 \_\_\_\_\_

Active Military . . . . . \$20.00 \_\_\_\_\_

Additional donation to help save the Gumbo Limbo trees is enclosed in the amount of \$ \_\_\_\_\_

My check for \$ \_\_\_\_\_, (membership renewal plus an additional donation if desired) made out to "Friends of De Soto NM" is enclosed. Please send membership materials to the name and address below:

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Email: \_\_\_\_\_

I would like to help! (Check all that apply)

\_\_\_\_\_ Membership Committee

\_\_\_\_\_ Publicity Committee

\_\_\_\_\_ Fundraising/Special Event Committee

Print out and mail to:

**P.O. Box 14422, Bradenton, FL 34280-4422**

(Renewals and donations can also be completed on our website using PayPal at [www.paypal.com](http://www.paypal.com))