

Off the Beaten Path

Adrenaline rush

There's nothing like capturing an alligator to get the blood pumping

It seems as if photos with alligators are a dime a dozen nowadays. If you've traveled to Florida, odds are fairly good that you've got one on your mantle or in a scrapbook or in a forgotten shoebox in the attic. Here's how it usually happens: you go to a gator park, pose with a little alligator that they keep on hand for just such an occasion, and bring the photo home. (Insert yawn here.)

Catching an alligator is something altogether different. Instead of "Here's a picture of me with an alligator," group members can say, "Here's a picture of the alligator I tracked, hunted, and caught by wrestling it to the ground with nothing but my bare hands." That last part – the wrestling to the ground with bare hands part – isn't true, of course, but that's how these stories usually go.

The first part of that sentence is true, though. During an excursion with Adrenaline Alligator Adventures, small groups can join alligator trappers as they scout for an alligator and reel it in. And the hunter can take the head home to prove it.

Adam Burch, the licensed Florida Wildlife Commission nuisance alligator trapper for St. John's County, started Adrenaline Alligator Adventures as a means of giving people an up-close look at the life of a trapper.

Adrenaline Alligator Adventures can accommodate small groups of three to eight people. Ride-along adventures are available for those who would rather watch the pros at work. For groups that actually want to hunt, however, the day promises to be full of adrenaline.

After getting in the truck, groups will begin cruising St. John's County in search of a gator. Once an alligator is found, the hunt is on. Groups will stalk the gator and, when they're within reach, spook it from its perch on the bank. The guides will cast for the gator, dropping a hook on the end of a 150-pound line, and when the gator takes the bait one of the group



Photo: ©iStockphoto.com/Pgjam

Adrenaline Alligator Adventures offers the thrill of a gator hunt.

members takes the reel and pulls the angry animal to the shore.

But it isn't over yet. Once the gator is on shore, the guide tosses a lasso over the beast and the group member at the end of the rope has the envious job of dragging the gator up the bank, settling the gator on its back, closing its eyes, and taping its mouth shut. Talk about an adrenaline rush.

Jill, who commented on the Adrenaline Alligator Adventures website, said this of her hunt:

"Wow, what an experience ... from the cast of the reel over the gator lurking in the water ... my heart was pounding. When I began reeling in my gator the fight was on. I was amazed at the sheer strength and determination of this animal. As the gator was rolling in the water, I thought I would certainly lose it, but you kept me focused and at last I had my 8.5-foot gator!!! What a thrill it was taping its mouth and tying it up."

Contact Adrenaline Alligator Adventures in advance to make arrangements for a group ride-along or hunt. •

Adrenaline Alligator Adventures
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