

# green machines

*Explore the Natural Beauty of Fort George and Little Talbot Islands on a Segway*

BY JENNIFER SYMMES • PHOTO BY ECOMOTION TOURS

Imagine floating through a majestic maritime forest, shaded by a canopy of sprawling oak trees and dangling Spanish moss. Brightly colored butterflies flutter across your path as you snake your way through enchanting island scenery. Cheerful birds serenade you, and gopher tortoises greet you as they soak up the sun. It may sound like a midsummer night's dream, but this experience was a very real treat for my husband, David, and me. Lucky for you, the portal to this captivating encounter with nature is just around the corner. Oh, and by the way: you'll be riding on a Segway.



A Segway is a personal transportation device that travels on two wheels and is controlled mainly by the direction in which the driver leans. It sounds like a delicate balancing act, but we ten adventurers who gathered on Fort George Island one recent morning found them to be just perfect for this contemporary voyage of exploration. We began our Segway

journey with EcoMotion Tours, a company owned by environmental enthusiasts Maren and Greg Arnett. Once we were given helmets and earpieces, we were each handed our very own battery-powered transporter. With the help of Maren and Greg, we learned pretty quickly how to get on and off, move forward and backwards, and how to turn. Segways are self-stabilizing because they sense your center of gravity. Pretty neat, huh? We thought so, especially once we began cruising through the island at around six miles per hour.

Single file, our group paraded through miles of sub-tropical terrain. I was taking in the natural splendor and enjoying the thrill of riding my Segway. One look at David and I knew he was having a fine time, too. Meanwhile, Greg shared through our earpieces interesting facts about the surrounding vegetation. These tid-bits included details about plants used by Timucuan Indians for shelter, food, and medicine. The group eventually rolled onto Kingsley Plantation. We put our Segways to rest for about 15 minutes while we walked around the expansive property. Famous for its sea-island cotton, gardens, and historical structures, Maren shared with us stories about the rich past of the plantation. After boarding our mobile units once again, Greg enlightened us with history of the slave quarters and their unique tabby construction. Just ahead on our tour was a series of small hills. This small yet manageable challenge offered up some last minute excitement before, sadly, our two-hour adventure came to an end.

Besides being battery powered, these XT cross-terrain Segways boast wide low-pressure wheels, which make little impact on the trails. "Mountain bikes create more of a disturbance on the trails than one of these segways," says Greg. With the exception of a light hum, the machines are also pretty quiet, which means wildlife inhabitants are not disturbed as guests explore the island. "These things are 'green' machines!" says Maren.

Everyone can enjoy a Segway tour. "We have plenty of young couples and families," adds Maren, "but we have a lot of people over 50 who enjoy the tours, too." EcoMotion Tours are great fun, offering an all-in-one experience in nature, history, technology, and adventure.