



Florida Circumnavigational Saltwater Paddling Trail

Segment10

Sarasota / Venice

Emergency Contact Numbers:

911

Sarasota County Sheriff's Office: 941-861-5800

Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission 24-hour wildlife emergency/boating under the influence hotline: 1-888-404-3922

Begin: Lido Beach

End: Weston's Resort near Stump Pass Beach State Park

Distance: 36 miles

Duration: 2-3 days

Special Considerations: As with most South Florida segments, boat traffic can be heavy, especially on weekends.

Advance reservations are recommended for motels and campgrounds, especially during holidays and the spring season. The situation regarding motels may change as motels are rapidly being converted to condominiums and resorts that require multi-day rentals. Also, the existing motels have a preference for multi-day rentals, especially during the busy spring tourist season.

Introduction

Whether paddling on the Gulf or bay side, this segment provides paddlers with a variety of bird life and scenic beaches and parks. Sarasota Bay and numerous other small bays are highlights of this segment, with their rich marine life. On your journey, look for bottlenose dolphins that reside year-round in Sarasota Bay and other waters. In spring and summer, mothers and calves

can be seen in shallow waters as newborns are more protected from deep-water predators such as bull sharks. Manatees can also be seen, especially during warmer months.

This segment includes [Oscar Scherer State Park](#) along scenic South Creek, where a large tract of scrubby flatwoods is home to the threatened Florida scrub jay, a species found only in Florida. For camping reservations visit [Reserve America](#) or call at 1-800-326-3521.

The [Lemon Bay Aquatic Preserve](#) is in the southern end of the segment. Two Gulf passes and seven tributaries have helped to create a diverse network of mangroves, marsh grass, and vast expanses of seagrass meadows. The diversity includes more than 150 species of birds, 100 species of invertebrates, and 200 species of fish.

1: Lido Beach to Oscar Scherer State Park, 13 miles

You can begin this segment either at a canoe/kayak launch on the bay side in South Lido Beach Park (see map), or by launching at Lido Beach on the Gulf side. If you are a long distance paddler, simply continue from one of several motels just south of Lido Beach on the Gulf side. For more information visit [Manatee County lodging](#) or [Sarasota Lodging](#).

You can paddle along the Gulf side or the bay side, depending on winds, weather and preference, although there are more parks on the Gulf side that are ideal for rest breaks. There is also the [Turtle Beach Campground](#), about 8 miles from Lido Beach. The campground is accessible from the Gulf or from a lagoon about a half mile in from the bay side (see map). Advance reservations are highly recommended: 941-349-3839. Restaurants are within walking distance.

Since [Oscar Scherer State Park](#) is on South Creek along the mainland, you'll either need to paddle to the bay side just after Lido Beach through Big Sarasota Pass or portage to the bay across a 100-foot stretch of sand in between Siesta and Casey Keys at a spot known as Midnight Pass (see map for GPS point). The pass filled with sand in the early 1980s.

If you want to stay on the Gulf side past Midnight Pass, you can stay at the [Gulf Surf Motel](#), about 11 miles from Lido Beach (call 941-966-2669 for reservations).

Along the bay side, you'll pass several bird rookeries and birding hot spots such as Skiers Island in Roberts Bay and the Neville Preserve in Little Sarasota Bay. To stay at the state park, paddle up South Creek a short distance and stop at the small beach landing near the entrance station to register for a site at the campground (see map for GPS point). Then, paddle to the park canoe launch site (a total of about a mile from the bay). You'll have to leave your boat here

and walk a nature trail along the creek less than a half mile to the campground, which is accessible by bridge on the south side of the creek.

For an overnight alternative, you can paddle another 4 miles from South Creek to the Venice Inlet where you can primitive camp on Snake Island, a popular spot for boaters. Parks are on either side of the inlet and a marina and restaurant are along the south bank. This will shave off 4 miles from your paddle the next day.

2: Oscar Scherer State Park to Weston's Resort, 23 miles

Paddle down South Creek to Blackburn Bay and continue south along the mainland. At Venice, you'll have a choice of paddling out the Venice Inlet and into the Gulf or paddling the Intracoastal Waterway, which snakes its way inland for more than five miles. Along the Gulf, you can either stay at the small [Beach Croft Motel](#) at Englewood Beach after 20 miles (941-474-6509 for reservations) or circle through Stump Pass to the larger Weston's on the bay side, 24 miles total from Oscar Scherer State Park. Be wary of strong currents in Stump Pass. An outgoing tide will make paddling through the pass to the bay side difficult.

If paddling the Intracoastal route, it is about 23 miles from Oscar Scherer to [Weston's Resort](#). Weston's is conveniently located on the bay and Gulf adjacent to Stump Pass Beach State Park. Paddlers can use the ramp right at the motel, check in, and secure kayaks on shore. Like most motels in the area, however, they do not take reservations for one-night stays. These are on a first-come, first serve basis, so don't arrive late. If you want to reserve for more than one night, or check on potential availability, call 941-474-3431. Spring is considered the busy season.

If staying at Weston's, you can walk to [Stump Pass Beach State Park](#) and hike a mile or so to Stump Pass, either along the undeveloped beach or down the park's nature trail through the interior. Look for shells and shark teeth along the beach, especially after a storm.