

Trip Tips and Safety

- Do not paddle alone
- If inexperienced, join with experienced paddlers and/or outfitters and try short trips first. Peruse books and articles about sea kayaking in Florida and talk with experts.
- File a float plan that contains departure location, time and date, and expected arrival date, time and location
- Five short blasts on a whistle is the international signal for an emergency
- Waving a brightly colored shirt or towel can attract the attention of a passing boater
- Take careful note of weather conditions and forecasts. If in doubt, don't proceed into open water. Be especially vigilant during hurricane season, from June through November. Warm weather thunderstorms can also bring high winds and heavy rains, along with the risk of lightning strikes.
- The prime paddling period in Florida is from October through April
- Parts of the trail may require motel stays as there is no legal camping available. Budget accordingly, and bring a locking security cable for securing your craft to pilings, docks, fences, etc..
- Stay well hydrated. Paddlers should carry at least one gallon of freshwater per person per day. In remote areas such as the Big Bend and Everglades, there can be two or more days between replenishment stops.
- Carry a tide chart. Some areas can be very shallow at low tide. In certain tidal creeks, rivers and passes, changing tides can cause strong currents that might help or hinder.

- When primitive camping, employ leave no trace principles (www.lnt.org). In high use areas, you may even be required to carry out human waste in bags designed for this purpose.
- If fishing, a Florida fishing license is required for persons 16 years of age and older (free for Florida residents 65 or older). Visit <http://myfwc.com/license/> or call 1-888-347-4356
- Sub-freezing winter temperatures can be experienced in almost all parts of Florida. Plan accordingly.
- Snakes, including venomous ones, can be active in coastal environments, even in salt marshes. Proceed with caution when you can't see the ground. If encountering a snake, back away and admire these beautiful animals as they go about their lives.
- Poison ivy, poisonwood trees and other plants that cause allergic reactions can be found along the trail. If in doubt, do not touch.
- Don't walk on oysters or coral barefoot. Cactus, sandspurs, glass and other items can cause problems, too. Wear appropriate footwear.
- Long-distance paddling can be rigorous. Adverse tides, currents and head winds can hinder progress and challenge physical endurance. Be physically fit before embarking.
- By setting a relaxed pace for your trip, with plenty of time set aside for side trips and land explorations, you will likely have a richer experience.