



















## **Florida Circumnavigational Saltwater Paddling Trail**

### **Keys Alternate Mainland Route**

### **Segments 15-16**

#### **Emergency Contact Information:**

**911**

Everglades National Park 24-hour search and rescue: 305-247-7272

Collier County Sheriff's Office: 239-774-4434

Monroe County Sheriff's Office: 305-289-2430

Dade County Sheriff's Office: ADD phone #Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation  
Commission 24-hour wildlife emergency/boating under the influence hotline: 1-888-404-3922

#### **FPTA Regions: G and H**

**Begin:** Flamingo, Everglades National Park

**End:** Teacher's Island, Miami

**Estimated Mileage:** 75-85 miles depending on route options

**Special Considerations:** The alternate Florida Keys route stays close to the mainland, creating a more sheltered passage when weather conditions are challenging. The original route that borders the Atlantic side of the Keys is more exposed and has long stretches of open water between stops. Most through paddlers time their long trek around the state to be in the Keys and Everglades during the winter months when bugs are fewer. However, winter in the Keys may bring high winds and many days come with small craft advisories. Be aware that temperatures can also get surprisingly cold in the evenings, even into the 40s on rare occasions. Make sure to check the weather forecast frequently and pay attention to tides that make some areas challenging at low water; follow the depths outlined on your navigational charts. Even though the alternate route is more sheltered, you'll still be entering some long stretches of open water and you must be vigilant. Avoid getting too close to fishing boats poling in the shallows as anglers are often sight-fishing for bonefish, permit, and tarpon on these flats.

You will have a choice of several routes from North Nest Key to Miami depending on wind and weather conditions, a need for resupply, etc. It is also possible to join the original

Circumnavigational Trail (CT) route on the Atlantic side of the Keys at several points if conditions are favorable.

### **Permits in Everglades National Park:**

A permit allows the permit holder and their group to overnight camp at designated campsites within the Marjory Stoneman Douglas Wilderness. Permits are required for camping on Shark Point Chickee and North Nest Key and permit reservations can be made online year-round 90 days before on a rolling basis. During the winter season (mid-November through mid-April) backcountry permits must be obtained in person at the Flamingo Visitor Center or the Gulf Coast Visitor Center between the hours of 8 am - 4:30 pm. The earliest you may obtain a permit is 24 hours before your departure and a fee of \$10 per permit and \$2 per/person per day will be charged. During the summer season permits are free but are still required (mid-April through mid-November), not a favorable time to paddle in the Everglades due to intense heat, insects, and frequent storms. Permits are available 24/7 by following self-registration instructions at either visitor center. Permits are not issued over the telephone except for visitors coming in from the Keys to camp at North Nest Key, Little Rabbit Key, Shark Point Chickee, Johnson Key Chickee, and Cape Sable. Please call 239-695-2945.

### **1. ENP Flamingo to ENP Shark Point Chickee, 9 miles**

The U.S. National Park Service, Everglades National Park manages a campground at Flamingo and a small store, your last chance to buy supplies for several days depending on which route you select to get to Miami. The campground is about a mile before the marina and is accessible by water at high tide. At low tide, you might have to wade through muds. During the busy winter season, Flamingo Campground reservations can either be made online or call 1-877-444-6777 after November 20<sup>th</sup>. Reservations are not required in the summer.

The Shark Point Chickee is a favorite roosting spot for birds and is usually coated in thick droppings. Bring a tarp or plastic sheet to keep your tent and gear clean. There is a portable restroom on the platform.

### **2. ENP Shark Point Chickee to ENP North Nest Key, 20 miles**

From Shark Point Chickee paddle eastward through the 'Croc Drag' opening and north of Pass Key to approach Nest Key on the north side, the only place where camping is permitted. The waters are shallow and it may be challenging to find a passage through the confusing landscape. Follow navigation charts closely. There is a portable restroom on the west end of Nest Key at the end of a dock. There are no amenities on the island and it is a popular destination for powerboats, especially on weekends and holidays.

### **3. ENP North Nest Key to Card Point, there are three options to continue your journey to Miami. Refer to map**

**Red Route:** Nest Key via Pelican Cay to Card Point is about 18 miles. This will be the most sheltered option with the presence of north/northwest winds. From Nest Key head N/NE about 4.3 miles to a small opening at Shell Creek (N 25.210047 W -80.486618) and paddle a short



distance through mangroves to enter Long Sound, then head east towards distant buildings on the west end of the U.S. 1 Bridge. Look for an opening in the mangroves (N 25.235978 W - 80.436184) and head under the bridge just past a couple of private marinas to Pelican Cay RV Park, (305-451-5223) for more information. It offers limited amenities with a rustic private campground, Wi-Fi, and friendly retirees. Either get two gallons of potable water here or at Alabama Jacks, about seven miles further up the coast. Paddling eastward toward Card Sound Bridge, be sure to stop for conch fritters and classic Keys fare at iconic Alabama Jacks, an open-air bar floating on barges at the edge of Card Sound Road. Enter through a mangrove opening at N 25.290192 W -80.379509 or follow the canal on the west side of the bridge north about 0.4 miles. Card Sound was once a fishing community, full of characters and pioneers. Today it is a favorite destination for bikers, tourists, and colorful locals.

**Green Route:** Nest Key to Gilbert's Resort is eight miles and about another 10 miles on to Card Point. This route is more exposed, crossing both the Blackwater Sound and Barnes Sound before joining the 'Red Route' along the mainland to Card Point. This option includes a favorite watering hole of the Keys, Gilbert's Resort. This old-style resort has rooms on the water, a tiki bar, a restaurant, and full-service marina. Get two gallons of water here. From Nest Key paddle about 3.6 miles east to the entrance of a pleasant mangrove tunnel leading to Blackwater Sound known as the 'Bogies' (N 25.174200 W -80.451642). Exiting the 'Bogies', paddle about four miles east looking for channel markers of the Intracoastal Waterway (ICW) that passes by Gilbert's on Jewfish Creek leading to Barnes Sound. (Select the 'Orange Route' if you wish to bypass Gilbert's and part of the ICW).

**Yellow Route:** Paddling from Nest Key to Key Largo and John Pennekamp Coral Reef State Park offers two route options, southeast, and east, and both choices are about 10 miles in distance. This is also where you can resupply and join the original Keys route (Segment 16). Southeast option: From Nest Key paddle southeast towards the ICW channel and follow it through Grouper and Dusenbury Creeks into Blackwater Sound. After leaving Dusenbury Creek proceed east one mile to Adams Cut, then paddle about 1.5 miles through the Cut and south to Pennekamp State Park. Boat traffic and wake, and water currents can be intense in the Cut, so exercise caution. East option, about 10 miles: From Nest Key paddle about 3.6 miles east to the entrance of a pleasant mangrove tunnel known as the 'Bogies' (N 25.174200 W -80.451642), leading to Blackwater Sound. Exiting the Bogies, head 3.6 miles southeast to Adams Cut and paddle a further 1.5 miles south to Pennekamp State Park.

Arriving at your destination on one of the routes described above, you will find that Card Point is a remote and beautiful spot sheltered by Australian pines and mangroves. During a 2015 visit, a picnic table, yard furniture, and a fire ring were present. If you visit this site on weekends or holidays don't be surprised if power boaters are present during daylight hours.

#### **4. Card Point to Homestead Bayfront Park, 11 miles**

Follow the coastline northeast, keeping a good distance from the Turkey Point Nuclear Facility. Approaching the shoreline here between the cooling canals and the facility may attract a visit by security. About 1.5 miles north of the cooling towers is Homestead Bayfront Park. Look for a

narrow mangrove-covered channel at the south end of this well-developed park to access a primitive camping area screened by a concrete wall. Be sure to get permission for camping here ahead of time by calling 305-230-3033 (9 am- 5 pm) or see night security if after hours. Camping is for one night only and the group size is limited to a maximum of four tents with eight kayaks. There is a restaurant (closed on Mondays), restrooms, and an outdoor shower next to a swimming lagoon, picnic pavilions, and potable water. Make time to see the visitor center at Biscayne National Park, adjacent to Homestead Bayfront Park. Biscayne Bay is the largest marine park in the National Park System, with more than 180,000 acres of islands, mangrove shorelines, and undersea life. The park has a number of interesting conservation programs including a sea turtle nest monitoring project, which aims to survey and monitor sea turtle nesting beaches within the park to protect nests from natural predation and unintentional damage by park visitors.

### **5. Homestead Bayfront Park to Teacher's Island (Pace Picnic Island), 27 miles**

Proceeding along the shoreline there are a couple of good rest stops—the Black Point Marina about five miles north of Homestead Bayfront Park, and Deering Point County Park five miles further north. Manatees may be seen in the Black Point area. Keep your distance to avoid disturbing them and also evade their powerful tail action if one dives to get away from you. Deering Point offers picnic pavilions, restrooms, potable water, and a few restaurants within walking distance. Heading north along the shore, you will pass a distinct Florida landscape feature, Mount Trashmore, a 225-foot high landfill site located between Coconut Creek and Deerfield Beach in northern Broward County. This is where Dade County's solid waste is disposed of.

Matheson Hammock Park offers a good rest stop. If you have time, walk about a mile through the park to the fantastic Fairchild Tropical Botanic Gardens to enjoy the lush landscape and Butterfly Conservatory.

Leaving Matheson Hammock Park, head north along the opulent coastline of the City of Coral Gables. Exploring historic homes, and enjoying exotic cuisine, and the culture of Miami is an adventure but access from the water is a challenge. There are a few public access points if you want to secure your boat and create your own walking tour. It's well worth the effort to visit Vizcaya Museum and Gardens and The Barnacle Historic State Park, for a glimpse into the fascinating history of Miami's early founders. The coastline becomes increasingly developed and paddling past the mansions and high rises of Miami with fast boat traffic may seem like an assault on the senses after several days of winding through the pristine Everglades and Keys.

If the Bay's waters are calm, it may be worth your while to paddle east to historic Stiltsville and stay at nearby Bill Baggs Cape Florida State Park, at the primitive youth camp. It is possible to stay if the camp is not in use and if you make prior arrangements by calling 305-361-8779, M-F 8:00 am - 4:30 pm. The campsite is primitive with no restrooms, shelters, or power and is accessed from the No Name Harbor on the west side of the park. You must climb ladders over the seawall, secure kayaks to the bike rack near the harbor's restaurant, and then carry gear a quarter-mile east to the youth camp. When the park is closed (between sunset and 8:00 am),

campers must remain in the youth camp. No after-hours access to the state park will be granted during sea turtle nesting season—May 1<sup>st</sup> through October 31<sup>st</sup>.

While at the state park, walk about a mile to visit the Cape Florida lighthouse that was first built in 1825, destroyed by Seminole Indians in 1836, and rebuilt in 1846. The 95-foot lighthouse is the oldest standing structure in Miami-Dade County. Ponce de Leon was believed to have landed in this area in 1513 during the first Spanish expedition to Florida.

Leaving Matheson Hammock Park, paddle northeast past the horizon of high-rise buildings to Teacher's Island, just past the Venetian Causeway near the mainland. This is the first of several spoil islands that Dade County is restoring into a tropical paradise with native vegetation. Most of the islands are nearly surrounded by riprap (large rocks) to stem erosion, but small beaches or docks on each island offer handy landing spots. With the exception of Bird Key, which is a bird rookery and off-limits, each island has a picnic area, and some have nature trails and shelters. No long-term camping is permitted, but the islands make great stopovers for circumnavigation paddlers as long as Leave No Trace Principles are utilized. Nearby parks on the mainland, such as Morningside Park, offer public restrooms. Bear in mind that on most weekends, the islands are very popular with boaters.

At Teacher's Island, rejoin Segment 16 and continue paddling 10.5 miles north to the next overnight stay at Oleta River State Park.





# Office of Greenways & Trails

## Keys Alternate Route

### Segments 15-16

## Circumnavigational Trail Data Book

**PC** = Primitive campsite  
**O** = Outfitters  
**LA** = Laundromat  
**L** = Lodging  
**PO** = Post Office  
**S** = Shower  
**g** = convenience/camp stores  
**G** = medium/lg supermarkets

**C** = Campground  
**POI** = Point of Interest  
**W** = Water  
**I** = Internet computer  
**R** = Restaurant  
**B** = Bathroom  
**PI** = Put-In

<i>Mile #</i>	<i>Type of amenity</i>	<i>GPS # on trail (decimal-degrees)</i>	<i>CT Segment and Map #</i>	<i>Directions</i>
0	C, L, R, S, PI, W, PO, G  Flamingo, (Everglades NP)	N25.1368 W-80.9380	Map 1A	On trail
9	PC, B  Shark Point Chickee	N25.1407 W-80.8024	Map 1A	On trail  Permit required
29	PC, B  Nest Key, (Everglades NP)	N25.1510 W-80.5136	Map 2A	On Trail  Permit required
	Three Route options from Nest Key to Miami:  Red Route, Green Route, Yellow Route			
RED	<b>Most</b>			

ROUTE:	<b>sheltered route</b>			
33.5	Opening to Shell Creek between Nest Key and Pelican Cay	N25.20780 W80.48710	Map 2A	On red route
38	C, W, B, S, LA  Pelican Cay Harbor	N25.2361 W80.43141	Map 2A&B	On red route
45	R, W  Alabama Jacks	N25.29012 W80.379509	Map 3A	On red & green route
48	PC  Card Point	N25.3233 W80.3426	Map 3A	On red & green route
	<b>Red &amp; Green Routes join at Card Point and proceed to Miami</b>			
GREEN ROUTE	Nest Key to Card Point via 'the Bogies' & Gilberts			
33	The Bogies	N25.175688 W80.453860		On green route, mangrove tunnel entrance
37	L, I, PI, R, W  Gilberts	N25.18286 W80.38947	Map 2A & B	On green route
	R, W  Alabama Jacks	N25.29012 W80.379509	Map 3A	On red & green route
47	PC  Card Point	N25.3233 W80.3426	Map 3A	On red & green route
YELLOW ROUTE	Nest Key to Segment 16 Atlantic Coast Route			
39	Grouper Creek	N25.121640 W80.446235	Map 2B	Opening to channel
41.5	Dusenbury Creek	N25.131184 W80.442245	Map 2B	Opening to channel
43.5	Adams Cut	N25.13791 W80.40295	Map 2B	Opening to channel

45	C, S, R, I, POI  John Pennekamp State Park	N25.12429 W80.40687	Map 2B	Resume Segment 16 information
Red & Green routes merge at Card Point to proceed north to Miami				
58	PC, R, S, W, R, PI  Homestead Bayfront Park	N25.459269 W80.337512	Map 4A	On trail
58.5	POI, B, W, PI  Biscayne Park Visitor Center	N25.463366 W80.334027	Map 4A	On trail
63.5	PI, W, R, g, B,  Black Point Marina	N25.538482 W80.327508	Map 4B	On trail
68	B, W, R  Deering Point County Park	N25.610956 W80.306895	Map 4B	On trail, short walk north on Old Cutler Rd. to several restaurants
75	W, R, B  Matheson Hammock Park	N25.677105 W80.259238	Map 5A	On trail
86	PC  Teacher's Island	N25.7432 W80.1442	Map 5A	On trail route rejoins Segment 16