



## **Florida Circumnavigational Saltwater Paddling Trail**

### **Segment 10**

#### **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

##### **FPTA Region: E**

**Begin:** Anna Maria/Bayfront Park

**End:** Wanna B Inn near Stump Pass Beach State Park

**Distance:** 51 miles

**Duration:** 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**

This part of the trail runs parallel to Sarasota Blueways and a [Blueway's Guide](#) for boaters has been developed by the [Sarasota Bay National Estuary Program](#). Sarasota Bay is an important estuary for fish spawning and reproduction, and the outlying barrier islands support numerous loggerhead sea turtle nests each year.

Whether paddling on the Gulf or Intracoastal Waterway route, this segment provides paddlers with a variety of birdlife 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 Florida State Parks or call at 1-800-326-3521.

The Lemon Bay Aquatic Preserve is at 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. Bradenton Beach or Anna Maria/Bayfront Park to Lido Beach Sandcastle Resort, 15 miles (or 21 miles on the inside route)**

Once again, you can take either the Intracoastal Waterway or Gulf side for this stretch, depending on weather and preference. The Intracoastal Waterway side adds a few more miles. On the Intracoastal Waterway side, one point of interest is the Joan Durante Park, where you can beach your boat (see map) and walk down several scenic trails and boardwalks. Birdlife is abundant in the lagoons and coastal hammock of this wetland's restoration project, and restrooms are available near the parking lot. Further south, if you land at the boat ramp on the south side of Ken Thompson Park, you can visit the Mote Marine Lab and Aquarium.

The Gulf side includes several scenic county beaches, including Coquina Beach, for pleasant stops and bathroom breaks, most of which include outdoor showers and snack bars. On the Gulf side, for a shorter day, you can stay at the Turtle Crawl Inn or other motels on the southern Gulf side of Longboat Key.

Whether you are paddling the Gulf or the Intracoastal Waterway side, to access the Lido Beach Sandcastle Resort, there is a canoe/kayak launch on the Intracoastal Waterway side in South Lido Beach Park (see map). The resort is about a half mile north on Benjamin Franklin Drive. For more lodging information visit Manatee County Lodging or Sarasota Lodging.

On your journey, look for some of the approximately 100 bottlenose dolphins that reside year-round in Sarasota Bay. 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 in the bay, especially during warmer months. Whether paddling on the Gulf or bay

side, this segment provides paddlers with a variety of birdlife, scenic beaches and parks, fascinating attractions, and historic sites.

## **2. Lido Beach Sandcastle Resort to Oscar Scherer State Park, 13 miles**

You can begin this segment either at a canoe/kayak launch from South Lido Beach Park (see map), or by launching at Lido Beach on the Gulf side.

You can paddle along the Gulf side or the Intracoastal Waterway side, depending on winds, weather and preference, although there are more parks on the Gulf side that are ideal for rest breaks. On the Gulf side there is also the Turtle Beach Campground, about 8 miles from Lido Beach. The campground is accessible from the Gulf, or from the Intracoastal Waterway side using the Turtle Beach Parking lot located up Blind Pass (a lagoon about 1.5 miles off route; see map). Advance reservations are highly recommended: 941-349-3839 or reserve online. 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. 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 Intracoastal Waterway 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 Oscar Scherer 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. 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 a 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 Turner Key, 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.

## **3. Oscar Scherer State Park to Wanna B Inn, 22 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 (see Data Book: Alternate Gulf route from Turner Key to Wanna B Inn) 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 Wanna B Inn on the bay side, 24 total miles 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 22 miles from Oscar Scherer to Wanna B Inn. Wanna B Inn is a large resort 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 onshore. Like most motels in the area, there is a two-night minimum stay for weekends and three nights for holidays. Call 941-474-3431 for reservations. Spring is considered the busy season.

If staying at the Wanna B Inn, 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.