



# Office of Greenways & Trails

## Florida Circumnavigational Saltwater Paddling Trail

### Segment 19

#### Palm Beach/Loxahatchee

##### **Emergency contact information:**

**911**

Palm Beach County Sheriff's Department: 561-688-3000

Martin County Sheriff's Department: 772-220-7000

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

##### **FPTA Region: I**

**Begin:** Lake Worth/Fairfield Inn or Sabal Palm House B&B

**End:** Spoil Island MC3

**Distance:** 42 miles

**Duration:** 3 days

**Special Considerations:** Since the route follows the Intracoastal Waterway (ICW), special precautions should be taken in the narrow portions of the ICW regarding boat traffic; be wary of large boats and their wakes. Boat wakes often rebound off sea walls. Boat traffic is higher on weekends and holidays. Do not tie kayaks to docks along the ICW as boat wakes may cause swamping or damage; always lift them out of the water.

##### **Introduction**

In 1867, Almeda Armour, the new wife of Jupiter Inlet Lighthouse keeper Captain Armour, learned to her chagrin that the nearest doctor lived 120 miles away, and that

occasional roving bands of Seminole Indians and visiting ship crews would be their main company. Still, Almeda Armour bore seven children during her family's 40-year stay. They saw many changes, and certainly, many more changes occurred since their departure, but the Jupiter Inlet Lighthouse still stands. It is one of many interesting points of interest in this segment for the paddler to investigate.

Besides historical sites, this segment features two premier state parks and several county parks and islands, offering a diverse experience for the paddler. The state parks are John D. MacArthur and Jonathan Dickinson. John D. MacArthur Beach State Park features up to 1,500 annual sea turtle nests on only 1.8 miles of beach, and Jonathan Dickinson State Park, at 11,500 acres, boasts 13 different plant communities and miles of hiking and paddling trails.

Two Florida Aquatic Preserves are part of this segment. The Loxahatchee River-Lake Worth Creek and Jenson Beach to Jupiter Inlet Indian River. Both preserves contain seagrass beds, marshes, mangroves, oyster bars, and tidal flats—vital nursery habitats for a variety of fish and marine creatures.

In 1696, Quaker merchant Jonathan Dickinson became shipwrecked along the coast near Peck Lake. He and his crew were captured by Jobe or Hobe (Hoe-Bay) Indians, later released, and they walked to St. Augustine. In his book *God's Protecting Providence*, Dickinson writes of first setting foot on the coast: "the wilderness country looked very dismal, having no trees, but only sand hills covered with shrubby palmetto, the stalks of which were prickly, that there was no walking amongst them."

Later, Dickinson's group was marched south by the native inhabitants to their main village along Jupiter Inlet. "After we had traveled about five miles along the deep sand, the sun being extremely hot, we came to an inlet," Dickinson wrote. "On the other side was the Indian town, being little wigwams made of small poles stuck in the ground, which they bended one to another, making an arch, and covered them with thatch of small palmetto-leaves." The shipwreck survivors learned to bury themselves in the sand to avoid the mosquito hordes while the Indians often used bear grease and fish oil. Eventually, they were released, whereupon they walked north to St. Augustine.

Much has changed in this part of Florida since Dickinson's day. The Jobe and other area Indians became extinct, and the human population growth in the area has skyrocketed. But thanks to the efforts of state and local officials and private citizens, several premier parks provide a glimpse into seventeenth-century Florida.

This segment features three state parks: St. Lucie Inlet Preserve, Seabranck Preserve, and Fort Pierce Inlet. All are accessible from the ICW and are good spots to explore natural

Florida. Only Jonathan Dickinson, at the beginning, has a regular family campground. Ft. Pierce Inlet has a primitive youth/group campsite.

This guide covers spoil islands available for camping along the next several segments. The Spoil Island Project, headed by the Florida Department of Environmental Protection's Indian River Lagoon Aquatic Preserves Office (IRLAP), is aimed at providing recreational opportunities on the many spoil islands throughout Florida's Treasure and Space Coast regions, while at the same time, working to preserve or enhance ecological function. With help from partner agencies and organizations, aquatic preserve staff and volunteers work from October through April of each year to enhance the numerous spoil islands along the ICW by creating campsites, installing fire rings and picnic tables, blazing trails, stabilizing shorelines, removing trash and exotic species, and building informational kiosks. Many groups have adopted spoil islands and regularly remove debris and do enhancement work.

Free downloadable maps to spoil islands can be accessed at the Spoil Island Project or [fosifl.org](http://fosifl.org). The maps clearly identify where camping IS permitted (recreational islands) and IS NOT permitted (conservation islands). Leave No Trace principles should be utilized for any primitive camping outlined in this guide.

### **1. Fairfield Inn or Sabal Palm B&B to Peanut Island, 11 miles**

As you paddle north through Lake Worth, you may notice that this urban estuary supports a variety of habitats such as mangroves, tidal flats, seagrasses, and oyster bars. Hard to believe that this water body was once a freshwater lake until the Lake Worth Inlet (now the Boynton Inlet) was created in 1877. Later, in 1915, the Port of Palm Beach created a permanent inlet at the northern end of the lagoon, completing the transformation to a brackish estuary. Water clarity will often change with the tides. The majority of shoreline that you'll pass has bulkheads, although restoration and enhancement projects are ongoing.

The Palm Beach Maritime Museum in Currie Park (Map 1B) is worth a stop since it showcases artifacts and exhibits about the regional marine environment along with artifacts from the bunker that was built for President John F. Kennedy on Peanut Island. The bunker was constructed as a temporary command post during the Cuban Missile Crisis of 1962.

If you are a camping enthusiast and coming from the south through the lagoon, the 86-acre Peanut Island will be a welcome sight. This county park offers fee sites at a full-service campground on the island's east side. The west side once offered free primitive beach camping but the area is now closed due to erosion. Reservations are required, so

call 561-845-4445 up to three months in advance. One tent is allowed per site. The park also features a nature trail and an observation deck.

Peanut Island was created from dredged spoil material in 1918 and was enlarged with subsequent dredging. The island is not peanut-shaped; its name came about from an early plan to store and ship peanut oil. In more recent years, managers have created tidal channels and lavishly landscaped the island with native vegetation, part of a \$13 million environmental enhancement project completed in 2005. The tall sides of a mound in the island's center are borders for a huge crater that is still used to store dredged material. Peanut Island is also known for John F. Kennedy's 1961 Cuban Missile Crisis bunker. It is currently closed to the public.

## **2. Peanut Island to Jupiter Waterfront Inn, 15.2 miles**

In a little less than 3 miles, a good rest stop and point of interest is Munyon Island, part of John D. MacArthur Beach State Park. Accessible only by boat, the island was once the site of James Munyon's lavish five-story resort hotel, "The Hygeia," named for the Greek goddess of health. Paw-Paw elixir, a tonic Munyon concocted from sulfur water and papaya juice was featured at the resort and billed as a cure-all. The hotel burned down in 1917. More recently, wetlands and native vegetation have been restored on the island, helping to reverse the detrimental effects of past dredging and filling.

The main body of the state park can best be accessed along the Lake Worth Cove. The park features a kayak launch, a long boardwalk, and nature trails, as well as an unspoiled beach. From early May through late August, large numbers of leatherback, green, and loggerhead sea turtles nest on the beach.

Soon after Munyon Island, the ICW bears left and narrows for a long stretch. Fortunately, three local parks—Juno, Bert Winters, and Burt Reynolds--will provide welcome rest breaks before the ICW opens up into the Loxahatchee River. If you have time, two points of interest along the Jupiter Inlet are worth visiting (see map for access points). On the inlet's south side is Dubois Park, the site of the Dubois Pioneer home which sits atop a tall Indian midden. Open Tuesday and Wednesday afternoons, the spot is also the site of the Indian village of Jobe or Hobe (Hoe-Bay) where Jonathan Dickinson and his shipmates were held captive in 1697 after being shipwrecked along the coast.

On the north side of the inlet, you can tour the impressive Jupiter Lighthouse and museum. Built in 1860, the lighthouse stands 105 feet tall and continues to warn approaching ships of treacherous reefs near the Gulf Stream. The beam also marks the point where northbound ships can catch the northern flowing current. On a clear night, the beam can be seen for about 18 miles.

Proceed northward up the ICW about two miles, on the west side of the ICW, just across from the Blowing Rocks Preserve, and land at the [Jupiter Waterfront Inn](#) (888-747-9085). **Note:** The Jupiter Waterfront Inn dock can be challenging during low tide. Several restaurants are nearby.

One point of interest in this stretch is Coral Cove Park. The park is north of Jupiter Inlet along the east side of the ICW. This natural area provides walking access to the beach side and the Blowing Rocks Preserve, managed by the Nature Conservancy, just to the north. The beach here boasts uniquely shaped Anastasia limestone outcroppings that consist of coquina shells, other seashells, and sand.

Another point of interest is [Jonathan Dickinson State Park](#). You'll need to paddle about 5 miles up the Loxahatchee River to the park boat ramp. You can leave your kayak and walk about 200 yards to the campground. For camping reservations, visit [Reserve Florida State Parks](#) or call (800) 326-3521.

The state park features several miles of hiking trails, and it is worth paddling upriver to an old homestead known as the Trapper Nelson Interpretive Site. The 11,500-acre park is named for Jonathan Dickinson, a Quaker merchant whose vessel shipwrecked nearby in 1696. During World War II, the land the park now occupies was home to [Camp Murphy](#), a top-secret radar training school with over 6,600 men. The land became a state park in 1950. [Trapper Nelson](#) came to this area in the 1930s and lived off the land, trapping and selling furs. He became famous as the 'Wildman of the Loxahatchee,' opening his 'Trapper's Jungle Gardens and Wildlife Zoo' to the public.

The upper 9.5 miles of the Loxahatchee includes the designated [Loxahatchee River Paddling Trail](#). This is the first of two federally designated wild and scenic rivers in Florida and a favorite among paddlers. Kitching Creek, about a mile upriver, is also worth exploring by kayak where you can marvel at giant leather ferns that can reach impressive heights of 12 feet. Both of these popular waterways are encompassed by the [Jupiter Waterway Trails](#).

### **3. Jupiter Waterfront Inn to Spoil Island MC3, 15.8 miles**

If beginning at the Jupiter Waterfront Inn along the ICW, it will be about 15.8 miles to Spoil Island MC3.

Continuing north on the ICW, you'll enter the 1000-acre [Hobe Sound National Wildlife Refuge](#), home to over 70 endangered species. You can access the refuge's nature center on the west side of the ICW and learn more about the area's wildlife and ecology.

About 5 miles farther north, Peck Lake Park features a quarter-mile boardwalk with impressive interpretive panels about the area's history and environment. In summer, you may spot the elusive mangrove cuckoo or hear its sweet song.

St. Lucie Inlet Preserve State Park on the eastern side of the ICW also features a long boardwalk, this one to a 2.7-mile public beach. A winding tidal creek through the park is also an inviting kayak trail. St. Lucie was named for an early blockhouse built by Spaniards in 1565. They were searching for survivors of a lost Spanish treasure fleet and built the blockhouse when the area's Native Americans proved to be hostile. Failing to convert the Indians to Christianity, constant attacks prompted the Spanish to abandon the area within two years.

Spoil Island MC3 is large with high and dry camping and some shade. Best access is on the south and west sides.