



Office of Greenways & Trails

Florida Circumnavigational Saltwater Paddling Trail

Segment 20

Hobe Sound/Ft. Pierce

Emergency contact information:

911

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

St. Lucie County Sheriff's Department: 772-462-7300

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

Begin: Jonathan Dickinson State Park

End: Ft. Pierce

Distance: 44.5 miles

Special Considerations: Special precautions should be taken in the narrow portions of the Intracoastal Waterway (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. Lack of camping opportunities and the erosion of some spoil islands are the reasons for the 20-plus miles that need to be covered each day. [Leave No Trace](#) guidelines should be followed for all primitive camping. Staying at the Jupiter Waterfront Inn instead of Jonathan Dickinson State Park can shave off about 7 miles from the day one total.

Introduction

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 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 four state parks: [Jonathan Dickinson](#), [St. Lucie Inlet Preserve](#), [Seabranh 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.

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

1. Jonathan Dickinson State Park to Spoil Island MC3, 23.5 miles, (Other options reduce distance)

From the park boat ramp, proceed almost five miles down river to the ICW. Since the ICW makes a sharp bend here, keep heading east to Jupiter Inlet and make a sharp turn north. The inlet marks the beginning of the 155-mile Indian River Lagoon. See segment 19 text for information about [Jonathan Dickinson](#) State Park and points of interest along

the Jupiter Inlet. If beginning at the Jupiter Waterfront Inn along the ICW, it will be about 16.5 miles to Spoil Island MC3.

Numerous points of interest in this stretch will help to break up the day's paddling. Coral Cove Park is a short ways north of Jupiter Inlet along the east side of the ICW. This natural area provides walking access to the beach side and to 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.

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.

2. Spoil Island MC3 to Ft. Pierce, 21 miles

The Indian River is up to two miles wide in this stretch, so it is easy to avoid the sometimes busy boat channel. Only a mile and a half from the island along the east side of the waterway is the [Gilbert's Bar House of Refuge Museum](#) on Hutchinson Island. This fascinating historical site is worth a stop. The building, located on a rock

outcropping that provides a commanding view of the Atlantic shore, is the last of ten houses built along this once remote East Florida coast in the 1800s to provide comfort and shelter to shipwreck survivors. It fulfilled its mission on several occasions.

Besides taking a museum tour, you may want to walk the beach here as it is lined with Anastasia limestone outcroppings similar to those found at the [Blowing Rocks Preserve](#) to the south. Hurricanes uncovered Native American artifacts near the museum that date back several thousand years. It is also fascinating to note that black bears once frequented Hutchinson Island and were shot and eaten by early pioneers.

A mile north of the museum, just before the bridge, is a motel opportunity, the [Hutchinson Island Marriott Beach Resort and Marina](#). Call 772-225-3700 for more information.

Take advantage of the parks near Jensen Beach for water and restroom breaks because few opportunities exist until Ft. Pierce. Just north of the Hutchinson Island nuclear power plant, several local park preserves along the eastern shore offer a scenic unspoiled view and rest stop opportunities, but no facilities. Wetlands in these parks are being restored by ditch removal and re-flooding with salt water. Some small spoil islands in the area, once open for primitive camping, have disappeared due to storms and erosion. [Fort Pierce Inlet State Park](#) has a primitive youth/group campsite, but for regular primitive camping, you'll need to proceed north of the inlet to a recommended spoil island (see segment 21).