















# St. Mary's River Paddling Trail Guide



### The Waterway

Originating in the famed Okefenokee Swamp, the scenic St. Mary's River serves as the border between southeast Georgia and northeast Florida. The river is known for its gentle curves framed by picturesque hardwood forests. Plentiful white sandbars make for inviting rest stops and overnight camping opportunities. They are found at almost every bend, contrasting with the dark, tea-colored water. Fishermen enjoy healthy populations of smallmouth and largemouth bass, black bass, catfish and bream. The Georgia River Network provides more information about the river.

# The Paddling Experience

The St. Mary's River is an excellent paddling destination, slicing through truly "wild Florida." Paddlers can choose from several access points along the 60-mile trail, and the slow current makes for easy paddling. However, due to the remote location of the river, some access sites are challenging and may be unsafe for leaving vehicles overnight. A better option is to leave personal vehicles at the outfitter located at Scotts Landing and arrange shuttling for overnight trips. If the gauge is below 2 feet in height, paddling may be challenging with numerous sandbars and snags in the upper reaches of the river near Macclenny. Call outfitter for conditions at (904) 845-4440. In former map editions Thompkin's Landing was noted as an access point but this site is now closed. Note it is a ~30 mile distance between SR 2 Bridge and Traders Hill Recreation Area.

#### **Access Points**

#### #1, Start of the Trail, CR 121 Bridge

There is no designated parking at this access point and access is difficult. It should only be used for drop-offs. There is a private campground, Cypress Landing on The St. Mary's River, with easy access and safe parking nearby. Call (904) 259-7574. From Macclenny, follow CR 121 about five miles to the bridge over the St. Mary's River.

# #2, Mile 6.0, St. Mary's Cove

<u>St. Mary's Cove</u> has a launch and picnic and camping facilities. There is also a private beach adjacent with secure overnight parking. Call (904) 259-9980 for information. *From Macclenny, follow CR 121 about three miles to Steel Bridge Road. Turn right, and follow 3 miles to St. Mary's Cove Rd. Turn right and after .5 mile, bear left at fork and follow 1 mile to the park.* 

### #3, Mile 10.5, Stokes Road Bridge

There is no designated parking at this access point and it should only be used for drop-offs. From the intersection of US 301 South & US 90 in Baldwin, go west on US 90, 1.5 miles to CR 121/Brandy Branch Road. Turn right and go 6.3 miles to Stokes Rd. Turn Left and drive 0.5 miles to bridge.

### #4, Mile 25, SR 2 Bridge/Bell Boat Ramp

Ramp is located on the southwest (GA) side of the bridge. Note it is a ~30 mile distance between SR 2





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Bridge and Traders Hill Recreation Area, the next access point. From the intersection of US 301 South & US 90 in Baldwin, take US 90 west 1.5 miles to CR 121/Brandy Branch Road. Turn right and go 16.4 miles to SR 2. Turn left on SR 2 and go about 1.8 miles to the boat ramp road on the left.

# #5, Mile 54.5, Traders Hill Recreation Area



Once a fort and settlement, <u>Traders Hill</u> today is a 32-acre recreation park with primitive camping on the banks of the St. Mary's River. For an observant visitor the park can be an excellent bird-watching site, with a variety of wading and woodland species. *From Macclenny, take CR 121 north, across the St. Mary's River and into Georgia. After a total of 36 miles from Macclenny, turn right (east) onto Tracy's Ferry Road. Follow 1.5 miles to Trader's Hill Recreation Area.* 

## #6, Mile 60, End of the Trail, Scotts Landing



An outfitter is located here, <u>St. Mary's River Fish Camp/Canoe Country Outpost</u>, where there are two primitive campsites on the Ralph E. Simmons State Forest near Scotts Landing, available on the first-come, first-serve basis with no permit required, although they are closed during most established hunting seasons (904-259-2157). *Take US 301 / US 1 north from Hilliard about 8 miles. Turn right (east) on Lake Hampton Road just before the bridge and go 0.7 mile to Scotts Landing Rd on left.* 

#### **Outfitters**

St. Mary's River Fish Camp/Canoe Country Outpost, 29506 Scotts Landing Rd., Hilliard, FL, 32046; 904-412-3001 or 904-982-7788.





St Mary's Cove Landing, FWC

Chris Beasly



St Mary's River, FWC