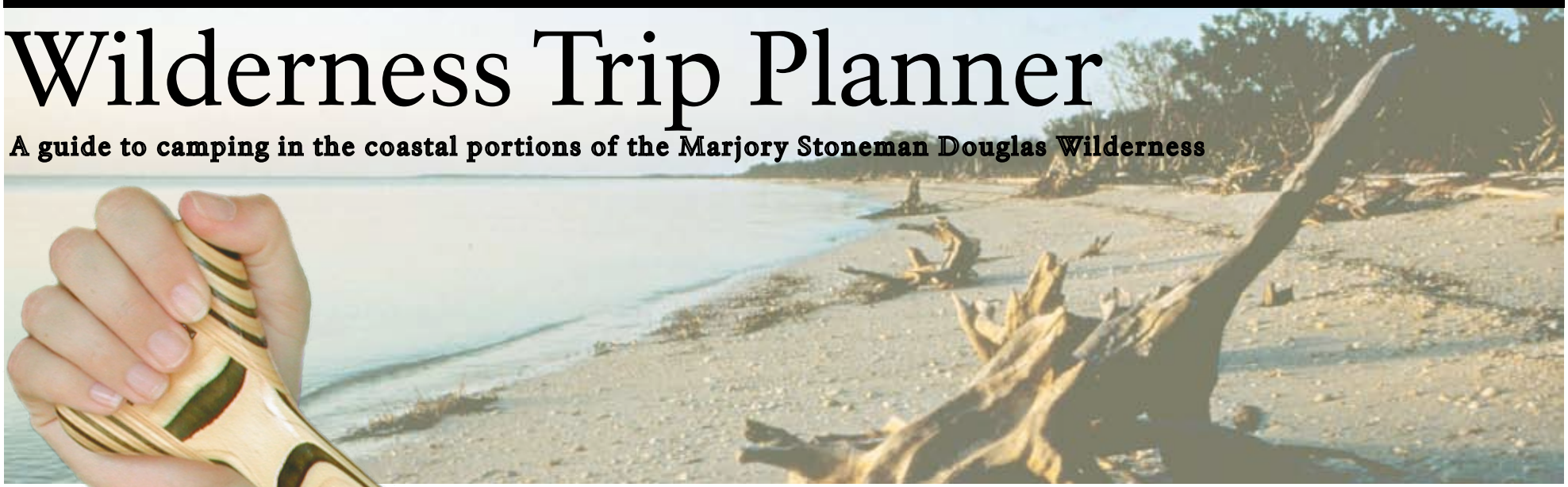
Wilderness Trip Planner

A guide to camping in the coastal portions of the Marjory Stoneman Douglas Wilderness



You can often experience solitude at a beach site like the one above. But be prepared for a primitive camping experience—there are no toilets or tables at most beach sites in the wilderness of Everglades National Park.

Plan Ahead

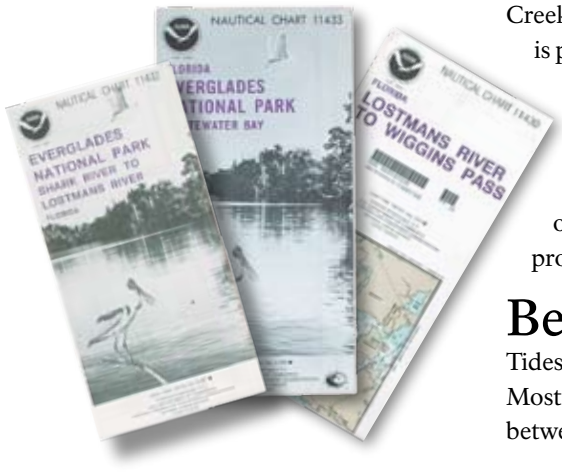
Safely exploring a wilderness by water requires careful preparation and planning. Plan at least two routes before arriving at the park in case your first choice is already filled. If you require assistance planning your trip, call or stop by the Gulf Coast (Everglades City) or Flamingo Visitor Centers. You may also find the answers to your questions by visiting the Everglades National Park website at http://www.nps.gov/ever.

Seasons

Because of the heat, severe storms, and intolerable numbers of mosquitoes, summer (June –October) is not the best time of year for a wilderness trip. The winter months (December–April) tend to be more pleasant.

Obtain Charts

Nautical charts are necessary for finding your way in the wilderness, and are useful in planning your trip. Chart numbers are displayed on the campsite map on page 3. Charts may be purchased at the Coe Visitor Center, Gulf Coast Visitor Center, Flamingo Marina, and Everglades City Boat Tours, or ordered from the Florida National Parks and Monuments Association. (page 3)



Routes

Possibilities are unlimited for overnight wilderness trip routes from Flamingo or Gulf Coast. Plan your route in advance. Park visitor centers have maps, guide books, and advice.

The 99-mile **Wilderness Waterway** attracts interest because it connects Flamingo and Everglades City. Most paddlers allow at least eight days to complete the trip. *This route is recommended for experienced paddlers only*. Some sites are not indicated with a tent symbol on nautical charts. Consult visitor center maps before departure. Arrange in advance for a vehicle shuttle.

There are many areas of very shallow water that may be encountered along the Wilderness Waterway. Powerboats over 18' long may have to detour around Alligator Creek and Plate Creek. The "Nightmare" is passable only to paddlers at high tide. To prevent prop dredging, which results in increased turbidity and the destruction of submerged natural features, boats with drafts of two feet or more, including the propeller, should not utilize the waterway.

Be Realistic

Tides and winds can make paddling difficult. Most experienced paddlers plan to travel between 8 and 12 miles per day.

You'll Need a Permit

Wilderness permits are required for all overnight camping, except in auto campgrounds or when sleeping aboard boats. There is a $10 fee for processing permits, as well as a $2 per person/per day camping fee. Fees are subject to change. Permits may be obtained in person on the day before or the day your trip begins.

Insect conditions are so severe during summer months that wilderness use is minimal and permit writing desks may not be staffed. Permits are still required—follow self–registration instructions at the Flamingo or Gulf Coast Visitor Centers, or the Key Largo Ranger Station (May to mid-November).

Winter Hours (subject to change)

Flamingo Visitor Center: 9:00 a.m. to 5:30 p.m. daily; (239) 695-2945
Gulf Coast Visitor Center: 8:00 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. daily; (239) 695-3311
Main Entrance Station: 7:30 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. daily. Wilderness permits are written from the Main Entrance Station for **only** two ground sites in the Long Pine Key hiking area: Ernest Coe and Ingraham Highway.

Winter wilderness users originating from the Florida Keys will be able to obtain permits by phone for the following sites only: North Nest, Little Rabbit, and Carl Ross Keys. Call (239) 695-2945, no more than 24 hours prior to the start of your trip. Visa or Mastercard is required. During the summer, self–register for these sites at the Key Largo Ranger Station.

First trip?

The wilderness of Everglades National Park will be very different from other places you may have boated, paddled, or camped. It can be confusing and difficult to navigate as the mazes of mangrove–lined creeks and bays all begin to look the same. With proper planning, you can avoid the frustration and hours wasted from getting lost.

If this is your first wilderness trip in the Everglades, ease into it with a one or two night trip instead of jumping into a several night Wilderness Waterway excursion. From the Flamingo area, camp along the marked Hell's Bay Canoe Trail (no motors allowed on the trail) at either Pearl Bay or Hell's Bay Chickees. Or, follow the shore of Florida Bay to camp on the beach at East Cape Sable.

From the Gulf Coast area, follow the marked route through Indian Key Pass to Kingston Key and Picnic or Tiger Keys, for an opportunity to experience camping on both chickees and beaches.

Campsite Information

The limit for number of nights at a campsite apply to the peak use season from mid-November through late April. Campsite capacities apply year-round, and are subject to change. Campsites must be vacated by noon.

* = Facility provided
(1) = Not shown on map; located in Florida Bay
(2) = Not shown on map; accessible by foot
(3) = All beach sites have shallow water approach; motor boats use caution.
(4) = No campfires are allowed on chickees or ground sites. Campfires are only allowed on beach sites. Use dead and downed wood only and place the campfire where the high tide will wash away the fire scar.
(5) = Picnic table may be available.

Looking for Solitude?

Choose a single chickee, a campsite with a smaller capacity, or camp far from others on the long stretches of the Cape Sable beaches. Paddlers: remember that motorboats are allowed in most areas of the wilderness, including the Wilderness Waterway.

Special Note:

In 2005, the park was damaged by strong winds and high storm surges from Hurricanes Katrina and Wilma. Many of our backcountry sites were damaged or destroyed. The park is planning on building chickee sites near Carl Ross Key and Kingston Key. We hope to have the sites completed in 2007.

Campsite Name	Type of Site	No. of People	No. of Parties	No. of Nights	Toilet	Campfire	Dock
Alligator Creek	Ground	8	3	2			
Broad River (5)	Ground	10	3	2	*		*
Camp Lonesome (5)	Ground	10	3	3	*		*
Canepatch (5)	Ground	12	4	3	*		*
Cape Sable							
East Cape Sable	Beach	60	15	7		*	
Middle Cape Sable	Beach	60	15	7		*	
Northwest Cape Sable	Beach	36	9	7		*	
Carl Ross Key (1) (3) (4)	Beach	Site Closed	0	0			
Clubhouse Beach	Beach	24	4	3		*	
Darwin's Place (5)	Ground	8	2	3	*		
East Clubhouse Beach	Beach	24	4	3		*	
Ernest Coe (2)	Ground	8	1	3			
Graveyard Creek (5)	Ground	8	2	3	*		
Harney River	Chickee	6/6	1/1	1	*		*
Hell's Bay	Chickee	6/6	1/1	1	*		*
Highland Beach	Beach	24	4	3		*	
Hog Key (3)	Beach	8	2	2		*	
Ingraham (2)	Ground	8	1	3			
Joe River	Chickee	6/6	1/1	1	*		*
Kingston Key	Chickee	Site Closed	0	0			
Lane Bay	Chickee	6	1	1	*		*
Lard Can	Ground	10	4	2	*		
Little Rabbit Key (1) (5)	Ground	12	4	2	*		*
Lopez River (5)	Ground	12	3	2	*		
Lostman's Five	Ground	10	2	3	*		*
Mormon Key	Beach	12	2	3			
New Turkey Key	Beach	10	2	2	*	*	
North Nest Key (1)	Beach	25	7	7	*	*	*
North River	Chickee	6	1	1	*		*
Oyster Bay	Chickee	6/6	1/1	1	*		*
Pavilion Key	Beach	24	5	3	*	*	
Pearl Bay	Chickee	6/6	1/1	1	*		*
Picnic Key	Beach	16	3	3	*	*	
Plate Creek	Chickee	6	1	1	*		*
Rabbit Key	Beach	8	2	2	*	*	
Roberts River	Chickee	6/6	1/1	1	*		*
Rodgers River	Chickee	6/6	1/1	1	*		*
Shark River	Chickee	6	1	1	*		*
South Joe River	Chickee	6/6	1/1	1	*		*
Sunday Bay	Chickee	6/6	1/1	1	*		*
Sweetwater	Chickee	6/6	1/1	1	*		*
Tiger Key	Beach	12	3	3		*	
Turkey Key	Beach	12	3	3		*	
Watson's Place	Ground	20	5	2	*		*
Watson River (5)	Chickee	6	1	1	*		*
Willy Willy	Ground	10	3	3	*		*

Types of Sites

Chickees

Chickees are located along interior rivers and bays where no dry land exists. They are elevated 10' x 12' wooden platforms with roofs. A narrow walkway leads to a self-contained toilet. You'll need a free–standing tent, since stakes or nails are not allowed. No campfires are allowed on chickees.

Ground Sites

Ground sites are mounds of earth a few feet higher than the surrounding mangroves, located along interior bays and rivers. They tend to have more insects than chickees or beach sites. No campfires are allowed on ground sites.

Beach Sites

Beach sites are located on coastal shell beaches. During ideal conditions, insects may be scarce, but always be prepared for mosquitoes and no-see-ums (tiny biting insects), especially at sunrise and sunset. People in small craft should be aware that Gulf waters at beach sites can become extremely rough; seas can exceed 3 feet. Campfires must be below high-tide line.

Sand beaches are often stabilized by tall, grassy plants called sea oats. Take care not to damage them. Sea turtles nest on beaches in late spring and summer. Avoid camping or building a fire where sea turtle nesting evidence exists. Many beach sites have no toilets. Bury human waste at least six inches below the surface, away from shorelines and tent sites. Urinate directly in the water.

Wilderness ethics dictate that visitors to the area try to leave no trace of their passage. While not regulations, the seven **Leave No Trace** principles will help you get the most out of your wilderness experience, and help you to preserve the park's unique values for other visitors, both today and in the future.

- Plan Ahead and Prepare
- Travel and Camp on Durable Surfaces
- Dispose of Waste Properly
- Leave What You Find
- Minimize Campfire Impacts
- Respect Wildlife
- Be Considerate of Other Visitors

Learn more about these principles at: www.lnt.org.

Marjory Stoneman Douglas Wilderness

Wilderness is an anchor to windward. Knowing it is there, we can also know that we are still a rich nation, tending our resources as we should—not a people in despair searching every last nook and cranny of our land for a board of lumber, a barrel of oil, a blade of grass, or a tank of water.

Senator Clinton P. Anderson, 1963

Everglades National Park contains the largest designated wilderness east of the Rocky Mountains. A wilderness is defined as an area *"where the earth and its community of life are untrammeled by man, where man himself is a visitor who does not remain."* Established in 1978 and named for the Everglades' most famous champion, the Marjory Stoneman Douglas Wilderness is comprised of 1,296,500 acres—most of Everglades National Park!

Florida National Parks and Monuments Association

You may find it helpful to purchase the charts you will need in advance, in addition to other trip planning literature. These items can be purchased by phone, fax, or mail from the Florida National Parks and Monuments Association (FNPMA). Proceeds from sales support educational programs in Everglades National Park.

Mailing Address
10 Parachute Key #51
Homestead, FL 33034–6735
(305) 247–1216 • (305) 247–1225 FAX
Website
Visit FNPMA's Natural History Mail Order Bookshelf website at:
www.nps.gov/ever/fnpma

FNPMA accepts Mastercard, Visa, or Discover.

Canoe/Boat Rentals

Inside the Park:

Flamingo Lodge, Marina & Outpost Resort
(800) 600-3813 & (239) 695-3101
www.flamingolodge.com
Located near the end of the Main Park Road in Flamingo
- Canoe and kayak rentals
- Fishing skiff rentals (no overnight rentals)

Everglades National Park Boat Tours
(239) 695-2591
Located at the Gulf Coast Visitor Center in Everglades City
- Canoe rentals

Outside the Park:

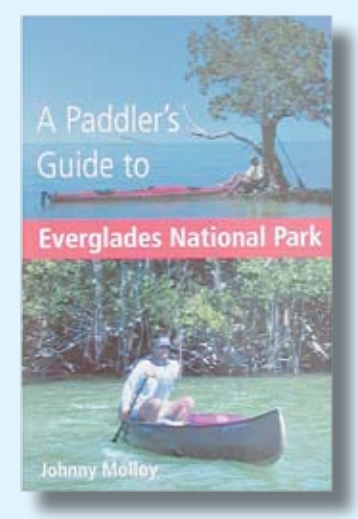
Everglades Hostel and Tours
(800) 372-3874 or (305) 248-1122
www.evergladeshostel.com
Located in Florida City

Florida Bay Outfitters
(305) 451-3018
www.kayakfloridakeys.com
Located in Key Largo

North American Canoe Tours
(239) 695-3299
www.iveyhouse.com
Located in Everglades City

Outdoor Resorts
(239) 695-2881
www.outdoor-resorts.com
Located in Everglades City/Chokoloskee

Use of rental equipment may be limited to certain areas of the park. Some of the above outfitters offer guided overnight trips. Please check with outfitters directly.



***A Paddler's Guide to Everglades National Park* describes 53 routes—including the Wilderness Waterway—and has 22 trailmaps, a rating system with hazards, mileage and paddling time, and descriptions of every campsite.**

Paddler's Checklist

- ☐ Coast Guard approved life vests required
- ☐ Paddles (and a spare)
- ☐ Anchor
- ☐ Bailer
- ☐ Bow and stern lines
- ☐ Waterproof bags for gear
- ☐ Flares
- ☐ Light for operating at night

Navigation

- ☐ Nautical Chart—mark your route
- ☐ Compass
- ☐ Tide Chart—note tide variations for your route
- ☐ Binoculars to look for markers

Permits, etc.

- ☐ Wilderness Permit
- ☐ Wilderness regulations
- ☐ Fishing license and regulations
- ☐ Weather forecast

Shelter

- ☐ Tent with "no-see-um" netting—must be free standing for chickees
- ☐ Sleeping bag
- ☐ Sleeping pad for chickees

Water and Food

- ☐ Water—one gallon/person/day (no fresh water is available in the backcountry)
- ☐ Food—extra day supply
- ☐ Raccoon-proof storage container (not styrofoam) for food and water

Cooking

- ☐ Portable stove or grill
- ☐ Fuel for stove
- ☐ Waterproof matches and lighter
- ☐ Cooking gear and utensils
- ☐ Biodegradable soap
- ☐ Strong plastic bags for storing trash

Clothing

- ☐ Rain Gear
- ☐ Cold and warm weather clothing
- ☐ Lightweight long-sleeve shirt and pants for sun and bug protection
- ☐ Wide-brimmed hat

Personal Equipment

- ☐ First Aid Kit
- ☐ Flashlight and spare batteries
- ☐ Wristwatch for calculating tides
- ☐ Sunglasses
- ☐ Sunscreen
- ☐ Insect repellent
- ☐ Weather radio for weather forecasts
- ☐ Knife
- ☐ Personal items

Toilet

- ☐ Trowel for burying human waste
- ☐ Biodegradable toilet paper

Powerboater's Checklist

(Review above list. Note pertinent items)

- ☐ Safety Equipment—Boats must carry safety equipment on board which conforms to U.S. Coast Guard requirements. A brochure outlining this equipment is available on request 1-800-368-5647.
- ☐ Marine/VHF Radio—to monitor weather.
- ☐ Fuel—1/3 to get there, 1/3 to get back, 1/3 for reserve
- ☐ Tool Kit—with spare parts

Important Regulations

Protected Resources

All plants, animals, and artifacts are protected; do not collect or disturb them. Do not cut mangroves and other vegetation in any manner. Unoccupied shells may be gathered—up to one quart per person.

Pets

Pets are not permitted at backcountry campsites, beaches, or ashore anywhere in the wilderness. Pets can disrupt feeding, nesting, and mating activities of wildlife.

Wildlife

It is illegal to feed wildlife. Do not leave food unattended. Store food in a secure compartment aboard a vessel or in a hard–sided cooler (not foam). Raccoons are

aggressive and may chew through plastic water jugs. Do not approach wildlife so closely that it interrupts their natural behavior. Enjoy the diverse wildlife, but from a safe distance. Do not feed any animals, regardless of whether they have feet, fins, or feathers.

Your Vessel

All vessels must conform to Coast Guard regulations. Air boats and personal watercraft (jet skis) are prohibited.

Portable Motors

Generators, chain saws and other portable motors are prohibited at wilderness sites.

Fires

Fires are not permitted at ground sites or chickees. Fires are only allowed at some beach sites. Build fires below the highest tide line, and use only dead and downed wood.

Weapons

Possession of weapons is prohibited.

Closed Areas

All keys (islands) in Florida Bay are closed to landing, except Bradley Key (open sunrise to sunset), and those designated as campsites. In Florida Bay, the mainland from Terrapin Point to U.S. 1 is closed to landing.

Sleeping on Board

If you sleep aboard a vessel, anchor out of sight of chickees and ¼ mile from other sites.

Trash

Carry out all your trash; do not bury it or dispose of it in toilets. Use toilets where provided, for human waste only. International laws prohibit dumping trash at sea.

Fishing Regulations

Park fishing regulations are available from visitor centers. A state fishing license is required; purchase one at the Flamingo Marina or from area bait and marine supply stores. You may also obtain a fishing license by calling 1-888-347-4356.

Human Waste

Use toilets where provided. Bring a trowel for use at other times. If there is no toilet, dig a hole at least six inches deep and cover it after use. At beach and coastal ground sites, urinate directly in the water. Pack out toilet paper. To avoid soap pollution in local waters, wash dishes (and yourself) away from waterways and sprinkle the gray water over the ground to soak in.

For Your Safety:

Important Supplies

Carry fresh water (1 gallon/person/day), compass, nautical charts, anchor, sunscreen, sunglasses, rain gear, mosquito repellent or bug jacket, and tent (with insect netting).

Float Plan

File a float plan with a friend or relative before leaving home, and call that person when you finish your trip. If you do not call by the pre-determined time, that person should notify the park's 24-hour dispatch at (305) 242-7740.

Boating Safely

Canoeists will encounter powerboats. Angle into the wake of a boat to minimize the chance of overturning. Powerboaters should reduce speed in narrow channels. Idle past canoeists and give them plenty of space. Approach last 100 yards of any backcountry campsite at idle speed to avoid prop dredging and excessive wave action. Watch for manatees! Paddlers: when powerboats slow to idle speed, please stop paddling to allow them to pass you, and try to stay to sides of channels.

If You're In Trouble

Stay with your vessel near a navigational marker or campsite. Set anchor immediately. Try to attract the attention of other boaters. If you have a marine radio, transmit on channel 16.

Tides

Beware of swift currents and tides when securing vessels overnight; tidal ranges can exceed four feet in some locations. Beach canoes above high tide line or anchor from three points at landings/docks. Use tides to your advantage in travel. Tide tables are available at Flamingo and Gulf Coast VC's.

Winds & Weather

Numerous canoes and boats have been swamped by rough seas on windy days. Thunderstorms occur frequently in summer. Hurricane season is June through November. Be prepared for sudden wind and weather changes at any time.

Attention Boaters:

Manatees

Manatees frequent many of the waterways in Everglades and Biscayne National Parks. Because they are slow–moving and feed in shallow water, many manatees are killed each year by boat propellers. Be especially careful in areas posted with manatee signs. If you see an injured or dead manatee, please report it to the Florida Marine Patrol at (800) DIAL FMP.

What's back there?

Remember to secure everything in your boat before heading home. Valuable items including fishing poles, life vests, seat cushions, coolers, and clothing often blow out of boats and are found along the roads. Garbage left in boats also finds its way to the roadsides. Please help keep south Florida national parks litter–free!

Boat Wisely

Boating in Florida Bay and the Everglades backcountry can be a challenge. Much of the water is quite shallow, and you can ground your boat quickly. In addition to damaging your boat, groundings destroy precious seagrasses that provide food and shelter to creatures inhabiting these waters. Always refer to nautical charts as well as tide charts for a safe boating excursion. When in doubt, go with someone familiar with the area.

Water

There is no fresh water available anywhere along the coastal portions of the Marjory Stoneman Douglas Wilderness or the Wilderness Waterway. You must bring all of your drinking and cooking water. As a minimum, plan on bringing one gallon of water per person, per day. Hard–sided containers should be used, as raccoons often chew through soft–sided containers (such as "milk jugs") to get to your drinking water. In addition to ruining your trip, when raccoons get your drinking water, it allows artificially large numbers of them to survive in a given area. In the summer, sea turtles nesting on these same remote Everglades beaches lay their eggs, only to have over 90% of the nests destroyed by the hungry raccoons. Don't upset the balance of nature. Keep all water and food away from park wildlife.