

# Locating South Florida's National Parks

**Subject:** Science, Social Studies

**Duration:** 45 minutes

**Location:** Classroom

**Key Vocabulary:** Caribbean Basin, national park, national preserve, national monument, national seashore, national memorial

**Related Activities:** What's So Special About the Everglades?

**Florida Sunshine State Standards:** SS.B.12



**Objectives:** The students will be able to locate Everglades National Park and the three other national park areas in South Florida in relation to: a) the continental United States, b) the Caribbean Basin, and c) Miami, Naples, Key West and other surrounding urban communities.

**Method:** The students will locate and identify the four South Florida national parks and the national park area closest to their home, as well as related communities, islands, and bodies of water, by labeling and coloring maps of the Caribbean Basin and Florida.

**Background:** Everglades National Park is the last piece of a vast wilderness which once extended from Lake Okeechobee to Florida Bay. The many kinds of plants and animals found there make the park so unique that it has been recognized by the United Nations as a "World Heritage Site" and an "International Biosphere Reserve." (It was designated a national park in 1947.)

Big Cypress National Preserve adjoins the northwest section of Everglades National Park and helps to protect the freshwater supply that is crucial to the Everglades' survival. The preserve is the ancestral home of the Seminole and Miccosukee peoples, and abounds in subtropical plant and animal life. (It was designated a national preserve in 1974.)

Dry Tortugas National Park is located 68 miles out at sea, west of Key West. The park protects several islands, associated coral reefs and marine life, and Fort Jefferson, a huge pre-Civil War masonry fort. The name "Tortugas" was given to these islands by Ponce de Leon in 1513. He named them for the large numbers of sea turtles ("tortugas") found in the area. If you go there today you can still see the turtles plus many kinds of birds and fish. (It was designated a national monument in 1935 and enlarged and designated a national park in 1992.)

Biscayne National Park is 95% water and includes the northern-most extension of a living coral reef in the continental U.S. The area has 45 islands called "keys" extending from Key Biscayne on the north to Key Largo on the south. (It was designated a national monument in 1968 and a national park in 1980.)

Castillo de San Marcos National Monument is in the city of St. Augustine, the first permanent European settlement in the continental United States. This fort was built in 1672-95 to protect early Spanish settlers. (It was designated a national monument in 1933.)

## Materials

- Copies for each student of "Where Are We?" - South Florida
- Copies for each student of "Where Are We?" - Caribbean Basin
- Projections of the "Where Are We?" maps
- Colored pencils or crayons

Fort Matanzas National Monument is 14 miles south of St. Augustine. It too, was built to protect Spanish settlers. Two hundred and forty-five Frenchmen were killed by Spaniards here in 1565. These Frenchmen had challenged Spanish dominion. The name Matanzas means “slaughters.” (It was designated a national monument in 1933.)

Fort Caroline National Monument, 10 miles east of Jacksonville, commemorates the first French attempt to establish a settlement in the present United States. The fort model overlooks the original site of the French Juguenot colony of 1564-65. The French and Spanish began two centuries of colonial rivalry in North America here. (It was designated a national monument in 1950.)

Timucuan Ecological and Historic Preserve is a partnership between the National Park Service and local government agencies to protect the wetlands, river systems, and historic sites within Duval County near Jacksonville, Florida. Kingsley Plantation, the oldest remaining plantation in Florida, is part of the preserve. (It was designated a national preserve in 1988.)

Cape Canaveral National Seashore protects a portion of coastline near the Kennedy Space Center. The seashore is the home of 14 threatened or endangered species. (It was designated a national seashore in 1975.)

De Soto National Memorial, west of Bradenton, commemorates the landing of Spanish explorer, Hernando de Soto in 1539. De Soto’s expedition was the first extensive exploration by Europeans of what is now the southern United States. (It was designated a national memorial in 1948.)

Gulf Islands National Seashore includes several islands along the northwest Florida and Mississippi Gulf of Mexico Coast. This diverse park includes bayous, old military forts and ruins, and beautiful live oaks. Two of the offshore islands are set aside as wilderness areas. (It was designated a national seashore in 1971.)

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## **Suggested Procedure**

1. Introduce students to the location of Everglades National Park, Big Cypress National Preserve, Biscayne National Park and Dry Tortugas National Park, using the transparencies of the two maps and an overhead projector.
  2. Point out the location of each of the national parks in relation to the continental United States and Florida.
  3. Discuss major urban communities and water bodies surrounding each of the parks.
  4. Discuss the location of each of the national parks in relation to the Caribbean Basin.
  5. Describe to the students how South Florida has been exposed and submerged with the changes in sea level.
  6. Distribute a copy of each map to every student. Students will label their home city, the national park site closest to their home, Everglades National Park, Miami, Naples, Key West, and other major urban communities, islands, other countries, and major bodies of water.
  7. Have students keep their maps for later reference.
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## Evaluation

Discuss with students the effect geographic location has on the South Florida environment. Have them hypothesize as to why certain types of plants and animals live in the Everglades, Big Cypress, Biscayne, or Dry Tortugas.

## Extension

On a road map have students trace the route and determine the distance from your school to the closest entrance to Everglades National Park. Use a compass to determine the direction one would take. Have them do the same for the national park area that is closest to your school.

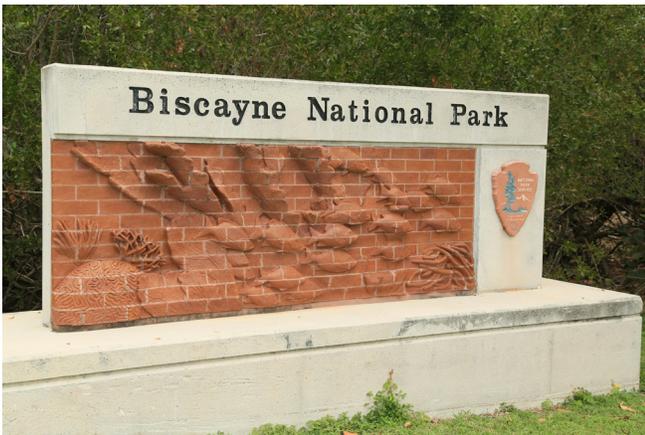
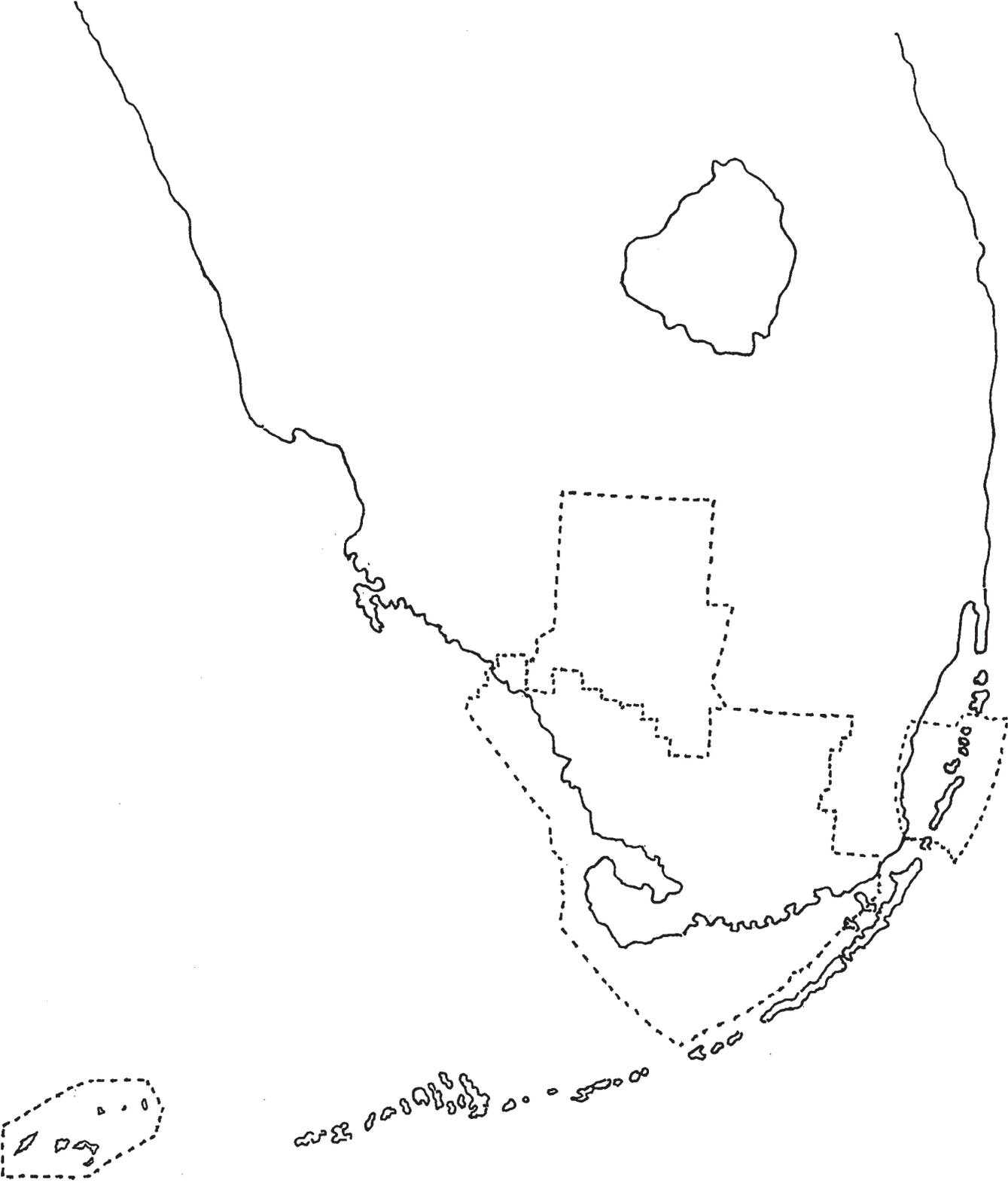


PHOTO CREDITS: MAP-NPS; BISCAYNE SIGN-BRUCE TUTEN; BIG CYPRESS SIGN-JIMMY EMERSON; DRY TORTUGAS SIGN-NPS/LINDA FRIAR; EVERGLADES SIGN-NPS

# Where Are We? - South Florida



# Where Are We? - Caribbean Basin

