



Bicycling at Shark Valley



Biking is a great way to experience the quiet beauty of the Everglades. Use these tips and regulations to protect your group and park wildlife.

The Scenic Loop



There are restrooms and a water fountain at the observation tower at the farthest point of the loop road.

The scenic loop is 15 miles (24 km) round-trip. There are no short cuts. If you become unable to complete the entire 15-mile trip, turn around and return on the same road.

Bicycling the road takes an average of 2 to 3 hours. **The parking lot closes at 6 PM**, so be sure to allow yourself enough time.

Ride your bike opposite the flow of tram traffic. Start behind the Visitor Center and follow the straight West Road.

For your safety



Stop completely and pull off to the right when a tram approaches. Wait until the tram has completely passed you before you continue riding.

Keep a safe distance from alligators - 15 feet (5 m)

Feeding or harassing any wildlife is illegal. It is dangerous for you and harmful for the animals.

Be prepared for all weather conditions. In the summer months, thunderstorms bring hazardous lightning and temperatures can reach the high 90's. **Take plenty of water!**

Travel at a safe speed. Cycling at high speeds endanger wildlife and other visitors. **The speed limit on the road is 25 mph (40 kph)**

Wear a helmet. State law requires that children under 16 must wear helmets. The tram office sells helmets if you did not bring one.

Riding in Groups

Bicyclists who ride in large groups increase the chance of accidents. Stopping or turning suddenly can cause a collision.

Any group of more than 20 cyclists must obtain a Special Use Permit from a park ranger before they ride. Groups who wish to bicycle after normal hours are also required to have a permit. After-hours cycling groups are limited to 25 persons. To get an applications for a Special Use Permit, call (305) 225-3004 or (305) 221-8776

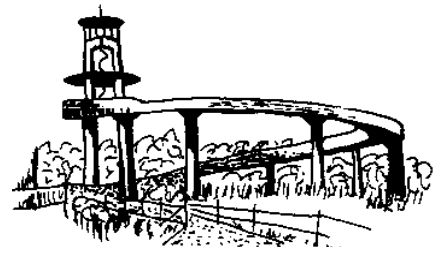


Roller skates, roller blades, skateboards, and other similar devices, as well as private motorized vehicles, are not allowed on the Shark Valley tram road.

Along the Way ...

The Everglades are called "a river of grass," because here you see a vast, shallow sheet of water that slowly flows from Lake Okeechobee southward to the Gulf of Mexico and Florida Bay. During the rainy summer months, the grassy prairie both filters the

fresh water in that broad 'river' as well as providing a home for a great variety of plants and animals. The water cleaned by the Everglades provides drinking water for all South Floridians and nourishes the productive coastal estuaries.



Along the road are four "borrow pits" where stone to build the scenic road was dug out. During the dry winter months, these

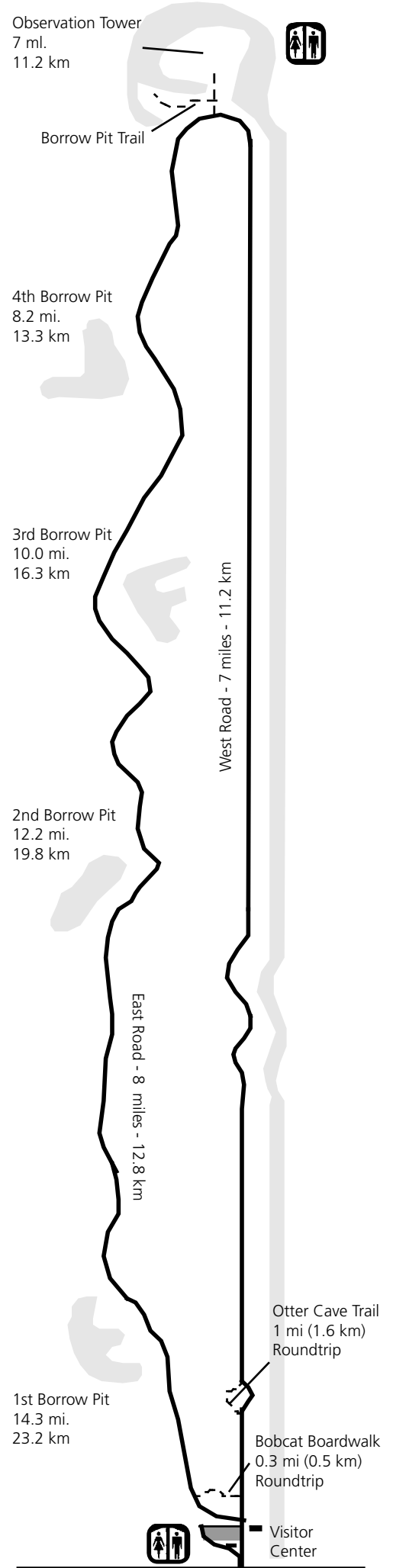
artificial ponds attract wildlife. Look for alligators, anhingas, wading birds, and turtles around these man-made "gator holes."



Scattered throughout the Everglades you will see tree islands called "tropical hardwood hammocks" and smaller shrubby islands known as "bayheads" dotting the open prairie. Hammocks grow on low limestone ridges that rise a few feet above the seasonally wet sawgrass prairie. These flood-free "hills" allow tropical and temperate trees to thrive. Deer, bobcat, and other mammals find shelter on tree islands during the

rainy season. Bayheads also grow on "high" ground, but only a few inches higher than the sawgrass. Only plants that can tolerate seasonal flooding grow in bayheads. You can take a closer look at both bayhead and hammock ecosystems along the Bobcat Boardwalk and the Otter Cave Hammock trail near the Shark Valley Visitor Center.

Please park your bicycle while you walk these unpaved trails.



For emergency assistance or to report violations dial #NPS from your cell phone