Everglades

Everglades National Park
Florida

National Park Service
U.S. Department of the Interior

There are no other Everglades in the world.

Marjory Stoneman Douglas

This landscape is unlike any other—beautiful, mysterious, and wild. Tropical and temperate species flourish side-by-side in this environment, a mix found nowhere else in the United States.

The essence of the Everglades is found in the sharp, ragged edges of sawgrass blades; an alligator's deep bellow; the high-stepping dance of wading birds; the waterway labyrinth of the Ten Thousand Islands; and the sparkling, aquamarine waters of Florida Bay.

Water is the lifeblood of the Everglades. In summer thunder clouds carry the sweet smell of rain, signaling a time of renewal. This slow-moving "River of Grass" is dependent on the seasonal rise and fall of fresh water.

It is also dependent on people. For over 100 years people dredged, dammed, and drained the landscape. In controlling the ebb and flow of this life-giving force, we endangered the Everglades and the life dependent on it.

Today, there is hope. To revitalize altered habitats, critical restoration projects attempt to emulate the natural flow of clean water. Everglades is one of few US national parks established to protect unparalleled biological diversity. It is the largest subtropical wilderness in the United States, an International Biosphere Reserve, a World Heritage Site, and a Wetland of International Importance.

The future of the Everglades is in our hands.

Sunrise on the Pa-hay-okee Trail
© GLENN GARDNER

Past Mistakes, Present Challenges, Future Hopes

For hundreds of years the Everglades was considered a mysterious place. To most outsiders it was an unknown, uncharted wilderness from the Kissimmee River to Lake Okeechobee, extending over low-lying land to Biscayne Bay, the Ten Thousand Islands, and Florida Bay.

An abundance of birds, mammals, fish, and reptiles make this place their home. This mosaic of marshes, sawgrass prairies, and forests was a prolific ecosystem that replenished the aquifer—the source of clean water for south Florida.

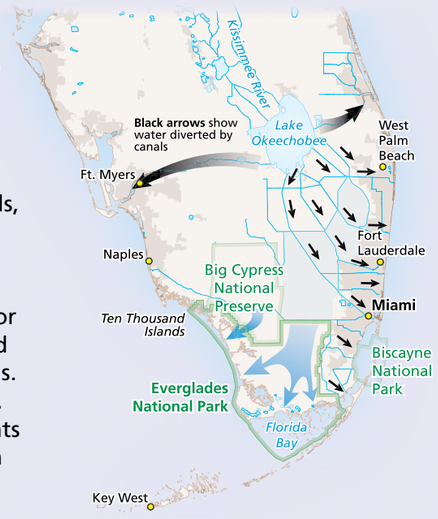
Historic Water Flow



The early Calusa and Tequesta, and later the Seminole and Miccosukee, perhaps best understood the Everglades. Many non-Native Americans who moved here in the 1800s and early 1900s considered this sensitive wetland a worthless swamp.

People built dams, floodgates, canals, levees, and roads to divert precious water from natural wetlands. This reduced the freshwater flow to productive estuaries, created land for agriculture, grew communities—and set the stage for ecological problems. Soon, the Everglades was drying up. To complicate matters, invasive plants and animals began to compete with native species. Outside the borders of Everglades National Park, created in 1947, people waged war on this wetland.

Current Water Flow



Projected global changes in temperature and precipitation may continue to alter the Everglades. Sea-level rise erodes cultural sites, changes habitats, and increases salinity in estuaries and urban water supplies. Today's Comprehensive Everglades Restoration Plan works to mimic the historic natural flow of water. Early results are encouraging: Birds are returning to nest, and nonnative plants have been removed in the wetlands restoration west of Royal Palm.

These efforts help the park address regional challenges and global climate change issues. How can you help?



Wood stork
© BOB PETERSON



Black skimmer
© PHILIP SIDRAN

Major Influences

Everglades National Park's collage of habitats (*below*) is dynamic. Water, elevation, fire, and hurricanes are major influences on the health of the Everglades.

Water Water flow is essential to all habitats in the Everglades. The two main seasons here are wet and dry. The wet season (May–November) is a time of abundance and renewal when wildlife disperses, following the flood of rainwater across the landscape. In the dry season wildlife congregates in and around ever-shrinking water sources like ponds and gator holes.

Elevation Although measured in inches instead of feet, elevation defines each habitat, from the lowest freshwater marsh to higher tropical hardwood hammocks.

Fire Natural and prescribed fires help create the mosaic of habitats found in the Everglades and maintain the open, sunlit environments typical of freshwater marshes and pine rocklands.

Hurricanes Powerful winds and storm surges can destroy vegetation and reshape shorelines. These storms also contribute to the park's biodiversity by opening coastal landscapes that favor certain plants and animals.



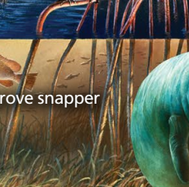
Roseate spoonbill
© PHILIP SIDRAN

Marine and Estuarine



Marine and estuarine waters extend from the Ten Thousand Islands to Florida Bay. Seagrass beds beneath the water provide critical food and shelter for marine life. This environment's health depends on management of freshwater flows and is key to sustaining productive fisheries outside the park.

Mangroves



Mangroves are in coastal channels and winding rivers where fresh and salt water intermingle. These forests stabilize coastal land, sustain nurseries for marine life, and provide nesting habitat for wading birds. These forests are the first line of defense against storm winds and surges.

Freshwater Marsh



The freshwater marsh is a wide, shallow, slow-moving "river of grass"—the iconic ecosystem of the park. Two major drainages—the broad Shark River Slough ("sloo") and the narrow Taylor Slough—are the main avenues for freshwater flow.

Cypress



Cypress trees thrive in flooded conditions. Cypress forests often grow in the shape of a dome, with taller trees in the center of the dome or in a linear strand where tree growth follows the water's flow. A long-lived, deciduous wetland species, cypress can live as long as 600 years.

Pine Rockland



Pine rockland, the Everglades' rarest and most diverse habitat, is on the highest elevations along a limestone ridge on south Florida's east coast. It includes a slash pine forest, an understory of saw palmetto, and over 200 varieties of tropical plants.

Tropical Hardwood Hammocks



These dense island forests grow on slightly elevated land and rarely flood. Tropical mahogany, gumbo-limbo, mastic, and others outnumber temperate trees like live oak. Ferns and air plants thrive here. Natural moats around hammocks help protect them from fire.

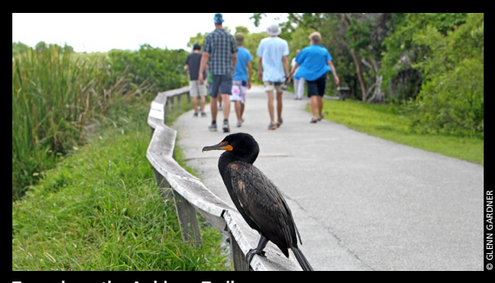
Explore the Everglades



Camp at a primitive site on the Gulf Coast.



View the Everglades from the Observation Tower.



Tour along the Anhinga Trail.



Paddle through the mangroves.



Enjoy a beautiful sunset.

Gulf Coast

Gulf Coast Visitor Center, staffed daily, is 4.75 miles south of US 41 (Tamiami Trail) on FL 29 in Everglades City. It has information, exhibits, wilderness permits, sales items, ranger-led activities in winter, picnicking, and restrooms.

Marinas and boat launch facilities are nearby. Experience dolphins, birds, manatees, and other wildlife during motorboat and paddling trips. Phone: 239-695-3311.

Boat tours, offered daily, provide a glimpse into the mangrove estuary and the Ten Thousand Islands. Information and tickets are available in the visitor center. Call 855-793-5542 or visit *evergladesflorida adventures.com*.

Canoeing and kayaking provide a special way to experience wildlife in the Ten Thousand Islands. Canoe and kayak rentals are in the lower level of the visitor center. Check with rangers for weather conditions and safety information.

Sandfly Island Trail (0.9-mile walk after a 2.4-mile paddle to the trailhead) features mangrove and tropical hardwood hammock habitats and cultural sites.


Great blue heron
© PHILIP SIDRAN

Shark Valley

Shark Valley Visitor Center, staffed daily, is on US 41 (Tamiami Trail), 30 miles west of the Florida Turnpike exit for SW 8th Street. It has information, exhibits, sales items, ranger-led activities in winter, and restrooms. Phone: 305-221-8776.

Bobcat Boardwalk is a 0.5-mile walk from the visitor center through sawgrass marsh.

Otter Cave Hammock Trail is a 0.3-mile walk from the visitor center through a tropical hardwood hammock. Closed summer and fall.

Tram Trail (15 miles; paved) Bike or walk to experience birds, turtles, alligators, fish, and the Everglades wilderness.

Bicycling Rent a bicycle or bring your own. Permits are required for groups of 20 or more. Helmets are required for ages 16 and under.

Airboat tours are offered daily by concessioners: Coopertown, 305-226-6048; Gator Park, 305-559-2255; Everglades Safari Park, 305-226-6923.

The Tram Tour (two-hour, guided) runs daily. Learn about local wildlife and this freshwater ecosystem. Reserve at 305-221-8455.

Motorized Access No private motorized access, cars, or driving access are allowed past the parking lot. Motorized access (parking) is allowed only 8:30 am to 6 pm. No parking outside of that time is allowed.

Ernest F. Coe, Scenic Drive

Ernest F. Coe Visitor Center, staffed daily, is at 40001 State Road 9336, 11 miles from Homestead. It has information, a film, exhibits, sales items, and restrooms.

The **main park road** is a scenic, 38-mile drive from the visitor center to Flamingo. Try these stops:

Royal Palm (4 miles past the visitor center), staffed daily, has information, sales items, ranger-led activities in winter, and restrooms.

Trails and More
Anhinga Trail (0.8 mile) is a must-do with great opportunities to view birds, alligators, turtles, and fish, especially in winter.

Gumbo Limbo Trail (0.4 mile) lets you explore a dense tropical hardwood hammock.

Pinelands Trail (0.4 mile) is through a subtropical pine forest, the most diverse habitat in south Florida.

Pa-hay-okee Overlook (0.2 mile) has views of the vast Everglades wilderness.

Mahogany Hammock Trail (0.4 mile) is through a jungle-like island forest.

Paurotis Pond is a nesting site for anhinga, wood stork, great egret, white ibis, roseate spoonbill, and other species.

West Lake Trail (0.4 mile) goes through a mangrove forest whose trees grow in salt water.

Flamingo

Guy Bradley Visitor Center, open year-round, is 38 miles past the Ernest F. Coe Visitor Center on the main park road. It has information, exhibits, sales items, ranger-led activities, wilderness permits, and restrooms. Phone: 239-695-2945.

Concession services include a marina, store, gasoline, narrated boat tours, and boat and bike rentals. Lodging and dining options include the Flamingo Lodge and Restaurant, Flamingo Campground, and houseboat rentals. Call 855-708-2207 or visit *flamingoeverglades.com*.

Wildlife Viewing
American crocodiles and manatees may be around the Flamingo Marina. At certain times bird viewing can be excellent at nearby Mrazek and Eco ponds. At low tide birds congregate on the mudflats in front of the visitor center.

Canoeing and Kayaking
Information and trail maps are available at the visitor center. Ask park rangers for safety information and current conditions. Suggested paddling routes include Nine Mile Pond and trips on Florida Bay. Guided paddling trips are available in winter. Call 239-695-2945.

National Park Foundation
Join the park community.
www.nationalparks.org

☆GPO:2024—427-086/84097 Last updated 2024

More Information

Safety Bring sunscreen, water, and insect repellent. Always supervise small children. This is a wilderness area; wildlife moves about freely. Do not feed or approach wildlife. Be alert for poisonous plants, alligators, and snakes.

Emergencies call 844-677-0911

Explore More The park offers wilderness camping, greater solitude on longer trails, outstanding night skies, and more. Ask a ranger, visit the website, or use the official NPS App to guide your visit.

Drive-in **camping** is available at Long Pine Key and Flamingo. Call 855-708-2207 or check *flamingoeverglades.com*.

Accessibility We strive to make facilities, services, and programs accessible to all. For information go to a visitor center, ask a ranger, call, or check the website.

Pets are allowed on public roads, campgrounds, picnic areas, maintained grounds, and boats. Control pets on a 6-foot leash. Temperatures are extreme; do not leave pets in a parked car.

Fishing Ask at a visitor center or check the park website for regulations.

Prohibited in the Park
Unpiloted aircraft, Jet Skis, water-skiing, and off-road vehicles.

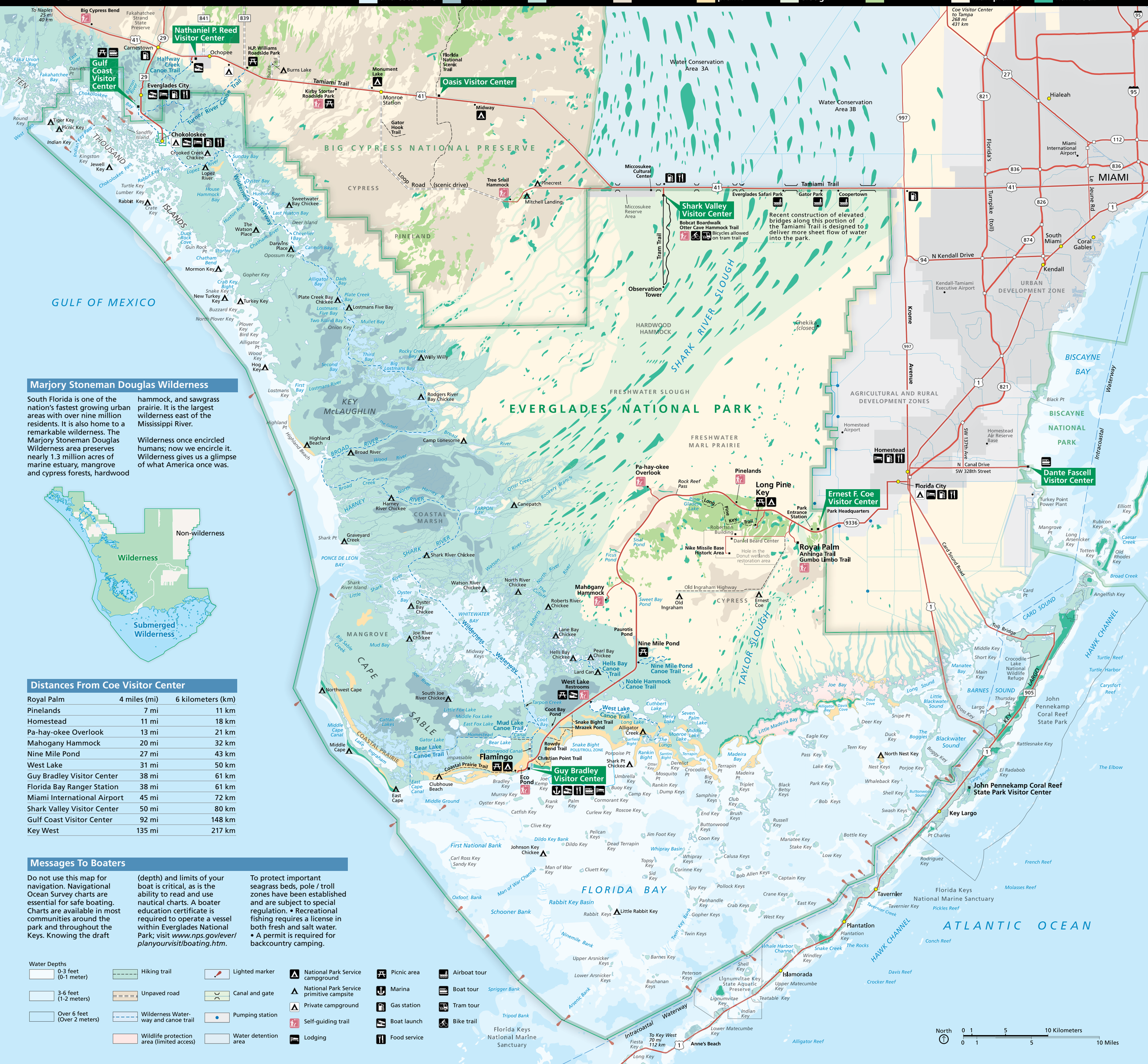
Firearms Florida state law applies to firearms in the park. Hunting is prohibited.

More Information
Everglades National Park
40001 State Rd. 9336
Homestead, FL 33034-6733
305-242-7700
www.nps.gov/ever

Everglades National Park is one of over 425 parks in the National Park System. Visit *www.nps.gov*.

Everglades Ecosystems

Marine and estuarine · Coastal marsh · Mangrove · Cypress · Coastal prairie · Freshwater slough · Pineland · Freshwater marl prairie · Hardwood hammock



Marjory Stoneman Douglas Wilderness

South Florida is one of the nation's fastest growing urban areas with over nine million residents. It is also home to a remarkable wilderness. The Marjory Stoneman Douglas Wilderness area preserves nearly 1.3 million acres of marine estuary, mangrove and cypress forests, hardwood hammock, and sawgrass prairie. It is the largest wilderness east of the Mississippi River.

Wilderness once encircled humans; now we encircle it. Wilderness gives us a glimpse of what America once was.

Distances From Coe Visitor Center

Royal Palm	4 miles (mi)	6 kilometers (km)
Pinelands	7 mi	11 km
Homestead	11 mi	18 km
Pa-hay-okee Overlook	13 mi	21 km
Mahogany Hammock	20 mi	32 km
Nine Mile Pond	27 mi	43 km
West Lake	31 mi	50 km
Guy Bradley Visitor Center	38 mi	61 km
Florida Bay Ranger Station	38 mi	61 km
Miami International Airport	45 mi	72 km
Shark Valley Visitor Center	50 mi	80 km
Gulf Coast Visitor Center	92 mi	148 km
Key West	135 mi	217 km

Messages To Boaters

Do not use this map for navigation. Navigational Ocean Survey charts are essential for safe boating. Charts are available in most communities around the park and throughout the Keys. Knowing the draft (depth) and limits of your boat is critical, as is the ability to read and use nautical charts. A boater education certificate is required to operate a vessel within Everglades National Park; visit *www.nps.gov/ever/planyourvisit/boating.htm*.

To protect important seagrass beds, pole / troll zones have been established and are subject to special regulation. • Recreational fishing requires a license in both fresh and salt water. • A permit is required for backcountry camping.