

## S10 Day Paddles - ICW

### Bird Keys Paddle Information Sheet

**Description:** Head southeast down Blind Pass Lagoon. The exit to Blind Pass Lagoon faces the Bird Islands. Proceed counterclockwise to paddle around the Bird Keys. The Intracoastal Waterway runs down the middle of Little Sarasota Bay. After crossing the bay, some trial-and-error exploration may be necessary to find the navigable channel on the east side of Little Sarasota Bay. Paddling on the east side of the mangroves that line Little Sarasota Bay provides a buffer from the motorboat traffic and makes for a quieter and more relaxing paddle than staying in the bay. Once back in Little Sarasota Bay, re-cross the Intracoastal Waterway and continue to paddle toward Bird Keys. Keep a look out for the entrance to Blind Pass Lagoon on your right to return to the launch site.

**Skill Level:** Novice/Intermediate due to heavy boat traffic

**Distance/Approximate Time:** 5.7 Miles/3 Hours

**Launch Site:** Turtle Beach Park Ramp

**Special Considerations:** This section of the Intracoastal Waterway tends to be very busy, so extreme caution is necessary in crossing the waterway. Also, it is worth noting that motorboats don't tend to slow down for kayakers in Little Sarasota Bay, so be prepared for large boat wakes. Avoid oyster bars in shallow areas. Best paddled on medium to high tide.

#### Skill Level Definitions

**Beginner:** New to paddling and may need tips and or instructions about paddling strokes, safety procedures, and entering/exiting kayaks. Comfortable on short trips of 1 to 3 miles on protected waters, when wind does not exceed 5 mph.

**Novice:** Paddlers acquainted with basic paddle strokes and can manage kayak handling independently in winds not exceeding 10 mph on protected waters. Comfortable on trips up to 6 miles.

**Intermediate:** Paddlers with experience in basic strokes and some experience on different venues, including some open water. Comfortable on trip distances of 6 to 10 miles, winds not exceeding 15 mph.

**Advanced:** Seasoned paddlers who possess skills and experience to paddle all venues and conditions. Experienced in self-rescues. Should be comfortable paddling more than 10 miles in a day.

**NOTE:** Great care has been taken to ensure this guides accuracy, but weather, tides, and water conditions can change rapidly and create hazardous conditions. These maps are for visual reference only, please consult NOAA Charts for navigation. Paddlers should have all proper safety equipment and check conditions before departure. All paddlers should always wear PFDs while on the water, and leave a float plan. There are inherent dangers in any paddle sport. There are special hazards along the Florida coast due to shifting tides, changing wind and weather, shallow waters, and treacherous bottoms with soft mud, rocks, and oyster bars. It is up to each paddler to be aware of these dangers, to accept and be prepared for the risks involved, and to be certain they have the skills to safely paddle in these conditions.