

S15LK Day Paddles - Lower Keys

Content Keys Paddle Information Sheet

Description: The Content Keys are part of the Great White Heron NWR which encompasses about 200,000 acres of islands in the lower Keys backcountry. The Content Keys are a remote group of islands on the edge of the Gulf of Mexico. This is a long trip for experienced paddlers. There are several tidal creeks between the islands to explore as well as a nice beach on the northwest tip of the biggest island in the West Content Keys, which may be crowded with power boats on nice weekend days.

Skill Level: Advanced

Distance/Approximate Time: 15 Miles/6.5 Hours

Launch Site: Big Torch Key - Big Torch Key Rd Paddle Launch

Special Considerations: This trip involves almost 6 miles of open water crossing so it is wise to use the shorelines of Raccoon and Water Keys on your way to and from the Content Keys. Be aware of the weather predictions before your trip and turn back if the wind picks up or storms form. Avoid getting close to the two bird rookeries that are off-limits in this area. One is at Little Crane Key off the north tip of Raccoon Key and the other is Upper Harbor Key off the northeast tip of the East Content Keys. The rule is to stay 300 feet offshore of these sensitive islands.

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.