

S15LK Day Paddles - Lower Keys

Harper Keys Paddle Information Sheet

Description: Following the shoreline of Boca Chica Key is normally in the lee of the prevailing east winds. Halfway to Long Point are some canals that were dredged, most likely in preparation for development, that are used by locals for water skiing on windy days. While all of Boca Chica is Navy property, it is okay to explore. From Long Point, head for Big Harper Key and island hop to Grassy Key. On a windy day, shorten the paddle by heading over to Channel Key. Most power boaters use the channel north of Channel Key to access the back country so the creek that bisects the island should be free of boat traffic. There are other creeks on the north end of the island to explore.

Skill Level: Intermediate/Advanced

Distance/Approximate Time: 8.5 Miles/4 Hours

Launch Site: Boca Chica Channel Bridge - East End Paddle Launch

Special Considerations: This is a shallow area so it is best to launch 3 hours before 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.