

S15LK Day Paddles - Lower Keys

Mud Keys Paddle Information Sheet

Description: This 12-14 mile paddle includes mostly open water paddling although island hopping helps to break up the trip. Fish Hawk Key is the best place to take a break and get into the shade of the narrow creeks on the southwest side. The Mud Keys have many east-west channels to explore but the 2 southernmost ones are closed to all boats due to the bird rookeries (these islands are part of the Great White Heron National Wildlife Refuge). The northernmost creek is hard to find from the opening on the northwest so approach it from the east side of the island. The best beach is on the little key off of the northwest corner of this group of islands. You can tell by the presence of power boats and also by evidence of campfire rings.

Skill Level: Advanced

Distance/Time: 14.1 Miles/7 Hours

Launch Site: Big Coppitt Key Ramp

Special Considerations: This trip is for experienced paddlers that have the stamina for a full day paddle. It is advisable to paddle sea kayaks and carry emergency gear and extra supplies. Access to weather reports is also prudent.. Open water paddling.

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.