

S15LK Day Paddles - Lower Keys

Riviera Canal Paddle Information Sheet

Description: This is a great paddle with a lot of variety—open water, narrow mangrove tunnels residential canals and salt ponds, not to mention several bridges to pass under. On the south side of the Riviera Canal you will find a landing for Little Hamaca Park Landing where you can stretch your legs and walk some of the trails. Farther east on the south side there are several twisting mangrove tunnels that direct water flow in and out of the salt ponds behind the airport.. This is a must to explore the mangrove tunnels, which favor the shorter boats, and the islands and pockets of the salt ponds. The salt ponds are usually full of birds and *Cassiopea* (*upside-down jellyfish*).

Skill Level: Intermediate

Distance/Approximate Time: 7.3 Miles/3.5 Hours

Launch Site: Key West - 11th St City Ramp

Special Considerations: The Flagler Avenue Bridge is hard to get under on high tide, even unpassable on extreme high tides, so plan your trip accordingly. The creeks entering the salt ponds are easier to find going in, but very difficult to locate going out, so try to keep in mind where you are or better yet, bring a GPS. The current can be strong at all the bridge locations. The open water paddle around Dredgers Key can get rough on windy days, in which case you can stay in the canal and Salt Creek Run.

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.