

## S15MK Day Paddles - Middle Keys

## Marathon Circumnavigation Information Sheet

**Description:** There is a lot to do and see on this paddle around Vaca Key where the city of Marathon is located. Going clockwise, the first good rest stop is just past Sombrero Beach. After you enter Sister Creek, you will see a small beach where you can come ashore (this is the launch for doing a shorter Whisky Creek paddle). There are bathrooms at Sombrero Beach and it's a nice place to picnic. As you paddle up Sisters Creek, Whisky Creek enters on your left. This will take you into the interior of Boot Key where there are numerous winding side creeks, some of which are canopied mangrove tunnels. After passing all the sailboats in Boot Key Harbor, Burdines Restaurant has floating docks where you can take out and get a bite to eat overlooking the water. On the gulfside of Marathon there are many little islands to explore along the shoreline as well as Crane Point.

**Skill Level:** Advanced

**Distance/Approximate Time:** 17.3 Miles/8 Hours

**Launch Site:** Marathon - Oceanfront Park Paddle Launch

**Special Considerations:** Plan your trip according to the tides so you have an incoming tide when heading toward the Gulf of Mexico and an outgoing tide when coming back to the oceanside. Vaca Cut on the east side is one of the strongest currents in the Keys. The two bridges at the western end of the island (at the Seven Mile Bridge) is also strong and it is recommended not to go under the first pilings where the current is strongest. Paddle out a bit and then go under.

### 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.