

S15 Day Paddles - Upper Keys

Cotton Key Paddle Information Sheet

Description: Leave from a sandy beach in a park on the Florida Bay side of Plantation Key and head southwest following the shore to Windley Key. From there head northwest across open water to Cotton Key. There are lots of little shallow water on hard packed sand bottom beaches to get out of your boat on the east and west sides of the Key. Circle Cotton Key and return. Best to do it on a weekday, since there will be a lot of boat traffic in the main boat channels on the weekend. Look for sharks and rays in the open shallows. Water clarity is excellent. Most of the trip is along dense mangrove shoreline with no houses.

Skill Level: Advanced

Distance/Approximate Time: 10.9 Miles/5 Hours

Launch Site: Founders Park Beach Launch

Special Considerations: Spray skirt recommended. Park fee. Be watchful of power boaters in the channels and passes.

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.