

## S16 Day Paddles and Overnight Camping Trips – Biscayne Bay

### Chicken Key Paddle Information Sheet

**Description:** This is a fairly long paddle along the shoreline of the Matheson County Preserve. Except for the area around Gables by the Sea development, which juts out to the bay, most of the shoreline is in its natural mangrove lined state. Just before you reach Chicken Key, there is a small bay to explore with a couple short creeks if you feel adventurous. Between the small bay and Chicken Key, you'll cross the Cutler Channel. There is a small "beach area" on the east side of Chicken Key where you can get out and stretch your legs before heading back. The water is generally clear, with plenty of fish and sea-birds for viewing.

**Skill Level:** Advanced

**Distance/Approximate Time:** 10.7 Miles/4.5 Hours

**Launch Site:** Matheson Hammock County Park Ramp

**Special Considerations:** This is a great protected paddle when the winds are from the west, otherwise, it can get quite rough on windy days. Always check the local weather before departure.

#### 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.