

S16 Day Paddles and Overnight Camping Trips – Biscayne Bay

Virginia Key Circumnavigation Information Sheet

Description: Except for the southwest shore of Virginia Key, which includes the Rickenbacker Causeway, the remainder is minimally developed. There are plenty of beaches to stop and stretch your legs, except on the northwest side of the island where mangrove shorelines are predominant. While on the north and northwest sides of the island, you can see the freighters loading and unloading at the shipping port along Dodge Island. Water is generally clear, except after periods of high wind, when the water gets churned up. Virginia Key Outdoor Center has kayak rentals, guided tours and paddling lessons. Virginia Key is home to the Miami Seaquarium and the Historic Virginia Key Beach Park on Bear Cut.

Skill Level: Intermediate

Distance/Approximate Time: 7.8 Miles/3.5 Hours

Launch Site: Virginia Key Outdoor Center Paddle Launch

Special Considerations: Be mindful of powerboat traffic around the key. The Atlantic side 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.