

## Day Paddles and Overnight Camping Trips - St Lucie River - North Fork

**Lower North Fork Paddle Information Sheet**

**Description:** This is an endurance paddle with lots of open water over the southern portion of the paddle. Half way into the paddle is Veterans Park a full facility free park with 3 launch ramps. Current will flow south after heavy rains. The water is brackish to salt water as you approach Shepard Park Ramp. Leaving the River Park Marina (St Lucie River Park Ramp) and heading south, the North Fork of the Saint Lucie river widens the further south you go till past Veterans Park at the midway point, where the river really widens and becomes a big saltwater bay. Shepard Park Ramp is located just off Highway U.S. 1, and is a full facility Park.

**Skill Level:** Intermediate/Advanced

**Distance/Time:** 14 Miles/Approximately 6 hours

**Launch Site:** Port St Lucie River Park Ramp 500 East Prima Vista Blvd, Port St Lucie, FL

**Takeout Site:** Shepard Park Ramp 600 SW Ocean Blvd, Stuart, FL

**Special Considerations:** Expect heavy boat traffic from Veterans Park south. Some open water paddling. This paddle requires shuttling.

**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.