

S29 Day Paddles - Upper Ocklawaha River

Ray's Wayside Park to Gores Landing Paddle Information Sheet

Description: The Ocklawaha River starts at Lake Griffin and flows northward 74 miles to the St Johns. Ocklawaha is derived from the Creek word for "muddy". There are 2 water control structures along the entire river, the Moss Bluff Spillway and the Rodman Dam. In addition to alligators, turtles, and the occasional otter, the Ocklawaha provides a great birdwatching opportunity, with plenty of ducks, shorebirds, wading birds, and raptors. Flora consists of mostly cypress and bays along the shore, and pickerel weed, arrowhead, bulrush, maidencane, spatterdock and water lettuce along the waterway. If the SR 40 bridge seems excessively high, it's because it was built to accommodate the passage of ships and barges on the now defunct Cross Florida Barge Canal. The canal was started in the 1930s, construction continued on and off for years, and was finally stopped by President Nixon in 1971, mainly due to mounting environmental concerns.

Skill Level: Intermediate

Distance/Approximate Time: 10.5 Miles/5 Hours

Launch Site: Ray's Wayside Park Paddle Launch

Takeout Site: Gores Landing Paddle Launch

Special Considerations: Launch fee. This paddle requires shuttling. Gores Landing also allows camping on a first come first serve basis for \$10/night.

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.