

S2 Day Paddles - Shoal River

Lower Shoal River Paddle Information Sheet

Description: A nature photographer's dream, the shallow, gold-tinted Shoal River threads through a northwest Florida wilderness of high sandy hills, broad sandbars perfect for rest stops, and floodplain forest. The surrounding forest is a mixture of maple, birch, oak, gum and cypress. The land along the Shoal is mostly undeveloped with the first signs of civilization appear near the Hwy 85 takeout just south of Crestview. The Shoal River meanders through pristine habitat that is home to Florida black bear, white-tailed deer, wild turkey, and many other species that a quiet, observant paddler may glimpse. Just before reaching the takeout at Gin Hole, you'll see the confluence of the Yellow River on your right.

Skill Level: Intermediate

Distance/Approximate Time: 9.4 Miles/4.5 Hours

Launch Site: Bill Duggan Jr Park Ramp

Takeout Site: Eglin AFB - Gin Hole Landing Ramp

Special Considerations: Permits are required from Eglin AFB <https://eglin.isportsman.net/outdoorrecpermits.aspx>. Always make sure the day of the paddle that this area is not closed due to military exercises. Check with the Public Access Map <https://eglin.isportsman.net/files/Public%20Access%20Map%20%28PAM%29%2FRecmap.pdf>. This paddle requires shuttling vehicles.

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.