

S32 Day Paddles - Lake Istokpoga

Lake Istokpoga Big Island Paddle Information Sheet

Description: Lake Istokpoga is a 26,762 acre freshwater lake in Highlands County, Florida. It is considered the fifth largest lake in the state. Despite its area, it is very shallow (especially along the shoreline), with an average depth of only 4 feet. It's fed by Arbuckle Creek on the north side, and Josephine Creek on the west side. Most of the shoreline is undeveloped and there are two islands, Big and Bumble Bee, in the lake's interior. The Islands are fairly low with little access to land anywhere. Both islands are split in two with a large portion consisting of reeds, pond lilies, spatterdock and bulrush. The main higher parts of the islands are mostly Cypress. Some residential properties and private boat docks and beaches dot areas on the shore. This is a popular fishing lake. Birdlife is abundant, sandhill cranes, osprey, eagles, anhingas, cormorants, and ibises are all likely to be seen on the lake.

Skill Level: Advanced, due to distance and open water paddling

Distance/Approximate Time: 11.7 Miles/5.5 Hours

Launch Site: Boggy Branch Public Ramp

Special Considerations/ Safety Issues: This is a very large lake and is extremely dangerous for paddlers during windstorms, as the waves get quite high. Not recommended on windy days. Limited parking at the ramp.

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.