

S3 Day Paddles - Choctawhatchee River Trail

Leg 5 Information Sheet

Description: The Choctawhatchee River is a journey into the heart of wild Florida where wildlife far outnumbers humans. Expect to encounter few people or boats except near a few popular springs. This designated portion of this river is roughly a 85mile stretch between SR 2 near the Alabama border to Point Washington at the east end of Choctawhatchee Bay. The Choctawhatchee flood plain provides habitat for an array of native wildlife, with several endangered plant and animal species, including the federally threatened Gulf Sturgeon. The Choctawhatchee winds through a broad flood plain dotted with old growth hardwood forests and a few sparkling springs whose clear waters mingle with the tea-colored flow of the majestic river. Exit the river through South Mouth.

Skill Level: Advanced

Distance/Approximate Time: 22.4 Miles/7 Hours

Launch Site: Cowford Landing Campsite

Takeout Site: Point Washington Ramp

Special Considerations: This trip will require shuttling. Good maps, compass and GPS are highly recommended, as the river becomes increasingly difficult to navigate as you get to the mouth. This section of the trail is probably the most difficult to navigate due to the many oxbows, side creeks and rivers. There is a short passage across the east end of Choctawhatchee Bay, which is open and can get quite rough on windy days. This section is tidally influenced and best paddled on an outgoing tide.

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.