

Day Paddles and Overnight Camping Trips - St Marks/Wakulla Rivers

Horns Creek/Big Cove Paddle Information Sheet

Description: This paddle takes you along the Gulf shore and past the scenic St Marks lighthouse then through a salt marsh creek and bay of the St Marks National Wildlife Refuge. The shoreline consists mostly of black needlerush with a few small oak hammocks at the end of the creek. The water is usually clear in the creek which has some deep holes and is navigable, even on low tides up to a point, however, the pass to Big Cove and any side creeks are not accessible on low tides. Common wildlife you may see include pelicans, loons, grebes, out front; and great blue herons, little blue herons great white egrets, ibises, skimmers and eagles in the creek and Big Cove.

Skill Level: Intermediate

Distance/Approximate Time: 9.4 Miles/4 hours

Launch Site: St Marks NWR Ramp

Special Considerations: Open water paddling along the coast. NWR entry fee. Tidal influence. Recommended to paddle on medium to high tide only. Some oyster bars in Big Cove.

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.