

Day Paddles and Overnight Camping Trips - Horseshoe Beach Area

Butler Island Primitive Camp Trip Information Sheet

Description: Experience camping overnight on the Big Bend Saltwater Paddling Trail by paddling from Horseshoe Beach County Park to Butler Island, winding about 2 1/2 miles between oyster bars along the shallow coastline. Butler Island has a picnic table and fire ring with plenty of room for tents. Prepare for bugs if the wind drops and keep an eye out for poison ivy. All participants must be gear/food/water independent. Please note this is **primitive** camping. Vehicles can be left overnight at the Horseshoe Beach County Park. **Campsite reservations are required** (free) at My FWC—Big Bend Saltwater Paddling Trail. Please practice “Leave No Trace” camping.

Skill Level: Intermediate

Distance/Time: 2.2 Miles/ 1 Hour each way

Launch Site: Horseshoe Beach County Park

Special Considerations: Oyster bars on low tides. On extreme low winter tides, it may be necessary to paddle outside Bird and Cotton Islands

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.