

## S8 Day Paddles - ICW

## Tarpon Key/Whale Island Paddle Information Sheet

**Description:** This is a trip only for experience paddlers. Head northwest from the launch area to Tarpon Key where you can enter the Key on the east side and explore the center of the island. Leave thru the same inlet and continue counterclockwise around the Key to Whale Island and the small Key off the West end. From that point you will have a straight shot back to the launch site. These Keys are part of the Pinellas National Wildlife Refuge.

**Skill Level:** Intermediate/Advanced

**Distance/Approximate Time:** 4.3 miles/3 Hours

**Launch Site:** Skyway Bridge Causeway North Rest Area Paddle Launch

**Special Considerations:** Open water paddling. Not recommended on windy days. Strong currents in the channel. Heavy powerboat traffic in the channel, especially on weekends.

### 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.