

## S15UK Day Paddles - Upper Keys

### Garden Cove Paddle Information Sheet

**Description:** This paddle is mostly within the boundaries of Pennekamp State Park. Local outfitter Monica Woll refers to it as the “back door” to the park since there is no entrance fee and you will encounter less paddlers than in the mangrove creeks near the park concession. The mangrove trails in this area are narrow, some very twisty and full of life. You will likely see nurse sharks, stingrays, a multitude of fish in the red mangrove roots and a variety of birdlife. The best way to enjoy the mangroves is to tie up and take a swim, snorkel or drop in a fishing line. There is only one place to get out of your boats and onto dry land in this area. Once you round the tip of Rattlesnake Key, there is a small sandy cove (not easily detectable at high tide) where you can get out and stretch your legs and have a snack.

**Skill Level:** Intermediate

**Distance/Approximate Time:** 8 Miles/4 Hours

**Launch Site:** Key Largo - Garden Cove Paddle Launch

**Special Considerations:** Heavy powerboat traffic, Stay out of the channel unless crossing. Be careful to look both ways when crossing. During extremely low tides, the grass flats directly across from the launch site and also in “The Meadows” between Rattlesnake and El Radabob Keys will be out of the water.

#### 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.