

S23 Day Paddles - St Johns River

Mud Spring Paddle Information Sheet

Description: Sometimes, names deceive. At Mud Spring, mud isn't what you'll see in the gently rounded basin that cradles an underwater garden in its crystalline waters. This glassy natural pool is the payoff halfway into a 6 mile paddle that is one of the highlights of Welaka State Forest. No larger than a swimming pool, this breathtaking spring pumps out as much as 1.4 million gallons of water each day. It flows under the trail out to Mud Spring Run, which is only a half mile long, to reach the St. Johns River. A boardwalk leads out to the edge of the run. Along the grassy shore, the water seems perfectly clear. Peer into its depths to see strands of strapleaf sagittaria and curving streamers of coontail. Within its virtual forest, striped bass and sheepshead dart.

Skill Level: Intermediate

Distance/Approximate Time: 6.3 Miles/3 Hours

Launch Site: St Johns Welaka Ramp

Special Considerations: Mind the edges of the spring, as that's where you're most likely to spy a water moccasin. Be mindful of powerboats along the St Johns River.

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.