

Day Paddles and Overnight Camping Trips - Panacea/ St Marks Area

East River Paddle Information Sheet

Description: This out and back paddle is on the East River, which parallels the west side of Lighthouse Rd. The paddle is through typical saltmarsh which consists of black needlerush with some smooth cordgrass along the water's edge. There are a few small red cedar/pine hammocks in the upper portions of the river. It is a fairly protected paddle until towards the end where the river widens. There are several large side creeks, mostly on the west side of the river, for the more adventurous to explore. Gators can often be seen as well as plenty of shorebirds, especially on lower tides. Migratory waterfowl may be seen in the winter months.

Skill Level: Novice/Intermediate

Distance/Approximate Time: 6 Miles/3 Hours

Launch Site: St Marks NWR - Gate 104 Paddle Launch

Special Considerations: Recommended paddling on high to medium tides only. Two hundred yard portage to the launch site from the gate/parking. Wheels recommended if you have them. St Marks NWR Entry fee.

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.