

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

Oyster Bay Paddle Information Sheet

Description: Head west out of Shell Point Beach toward Smith Island. This is the biggest island of three that you will be paddling around, and the only one with trees, which are along the southern shore. The east end of the island has a small beach you can land at and take a break. The west end is a bird rookery for gray pelicans, herons, and egrets. The other two islands, Gull and Palmetto, are made up of black needlerush and some low scruffy, shrubs. The west end of this paddle is in Oyster Bay, known for it's commercial oyster farming.

Skill Level: Intermediate, due to open water

Distance/Approximate Time: 5.6 Miles/2.5 Hours

Launch Site: Shell Point Beach Paddle Launch

Special Considerations: Open water paddling. Not recommended on windy days. Recommend paddling on medium to high tides due to numerous oyster bars in the area. Launch fee. Avoid disturbing the bird rookery on Smith Island.

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.