



Saltwater Paddling in Florida State Parks

<https://www.floridastateparks.org>

The following saltwater paddling destinations will provide you with some excellent options to explore all regions of Florida's coast. As side activities, wildlife viewing, fishing and snorkeling are often fun to pursue from a kayak, canoe or paddleboard, so bring the proper equipment. And don't forget to wear a life jacket, bring a whistle, and follow these [saltwater paddling tips](#). Experienced open water paddlers who seek longer coastal excursions should check out the [Florida Circumnavigational Saltwater Paddling Trail \(CT\)](#).

Northwest Florida

[Big Lagoon State Park](#)

Big Lagoon is separated from the Gulf of Mexico by Perdido Key. The park is situated on the northern shoreline of the lagoon. The calm, shallow waters of Big Lagoon and the three ponds within the park make it an ideal place for paddling. The park features boardwalks, a boat ramp and boat launch, an amphitheater, an observation tower, picnic pavilions, and much more. Kayak, canoe and stand-up paddleboard rentals are available. The park is also the northwestern terminus of the CT.

[Grayton Beach State Park](#)

Grayton Beach consistently ranks among the most beautiful and pristine beaches in the United States. Within the park is the scenic, placid Western Lake, which offers visitors a close look at salt marsh ecosystems. The numerous inlets and meandering shoreline of the lake make for a lively paddling adventure. The park borders upon the Gulf of Mexico's shore and is easily accessible from County Highway 30A. If you're looking for an





experience that combines the best waves and beaches of the Gulf and the smooth waters of a salt marsh, this is the place for you. Canoe rentals are available.

[St. Andrew's State Park](#)

Located on the eastern side of Panama City Beach, this former military reservation is an untouched portion of natural Florida. The park features one-and-a-half miles of the sugar white sands and emerald green waters for which Florida is known. Paddling opportunities are bountiful. You may choose to paddle around the Grand Lagoon or across the boat channel to Shell Island. Kayak rentals are available during the summer season.



[T.H. Stone Memorial St. Joseph Peninsula State Park](#)

St. Joseph State Park was rated the top beach in the nation in 2002 and the best State Park in 2012, so it is definitely a destination worth your time. One side of the park borders the St. Joseph Bay while the other side borders the Gulf of Mexico, allowing visitors two unique experiences. There are multiple boat launches along both sides of the park as well as concessions and canoe and kayak rentals. Visitors can experience the natural beauty of the Wilderness Preserve, explore the tranquil grass flats of St. Joseph Bay or venture into the aqua-blue waters of the Gulf.

[Dr. Julian G. Bruce St. George Island State Park](#)

Miles of undeveloped beaches on this barrier island provide the perfect setting for an extraordinary experience on Florida's Forgotten Coast. One side of the park is on the Apalachicola Bay while the other side is on the Gulf of Mexico, offering visitors easy access to two distinct types of ecosystems. The nine miles of untouched coastline are the perfect place to experience Florida's natural landscapes and wildlife. Canoe and kayak rentals are available.

Northeast Florida

[Amelia Island State Park](#)

Beautiful beaches, salt marshes and coastal maritime forests provide visitors a glimpse of the original Florida Atlantic coast. This park, along with six others, comprise the Talbot Island State Parks, allowing visitors a peek into several unique ecosystems and terrains. Kayak Amelia offers visitors all the paddling equipment and accessories you would need to fully enjoy this scenic area: rentals, guides, maps, safety information and paddling recommendations. Here you will also find an easily accessible hand launch ramp for a \$1.00 per person fee.

[Little Talbot Island State Park](#)

As one of the few remaining undeveloped barrier islands in Northeast Florida, Little Talbot Island has miles of untouched beaches, dunes, forests and marshes. The western side of the island offers paddlers a multitude of calm surf and tidal streams that meander through the salt marsh ecosystems. The eastern side of the island allows paddlers to experience the choppy Atlantic waves and beaches. Long Island Outfitters provides rentals, local information, maps, concessions, paddling recommendations, and a hand launch ramp for a \$1 fee.



[Anastasia State Park](#)

Running along the western side of the park is an estuarine tidal marsh teeming with plant and animal life. Salt Run is the ideal place to paddle because of the abundant wildlife and placid bay waters. Sea turtles and shore birds frequently nest here, while young fish and sea creatures rear their young in the protected waters. The eastern side of the park is bordered by the Atlantic Ocean, which offers a more dynamic paddling experienced with waves and swells. Kayak, canoe and paddleboard rentals are available.

[Tomoka State Park](#)





The waters of the Halifax and Tomoka River were once used to sustain the Native American communities that lived here. Now, the tributaries of the Tomoka Marsh are popular for paddling and wildlife viewing. The park is home to a variety of endangered species, among which is the West Indian Manatee. The many rivers and creeks offer paddlers close experiences with the ecosystems and wildlife that reside there. Canoe and kayak rentals are available.

Central



[Indian River Lagoon Preserve State Park](#)

Indian River Lagoon is the most biologically diverse estuary in North America and designated an Outstanding Florida Waterway and an Estuary of National Significance. The mangroves and salt marshes protect the shore from erosion and maintain the water quality by acting as natural filters for runoff and sediments. The variety of fishing venues and massive catches have made the Indian River Lagoon an international attraction for anglers. The protected creeks and harbors near the park have proven to be popular for manatee sightings as well as many other diverse wildlife. Though the park has limited facilities, it is

easy to access launches at nearby fish camps or to launch from shore and explore the islands and inlets throughout the lagoon.

[Sebastian Inlet State Park](#)

Islands, mangrove-lined shores, rivers, inlets, lagoons and ocean shores can all be found at Sebastian Inlet State Park. There are waterfront pavilions, picnic areas, and a launch at both the Inlet Marina and in the south side of the park. Wildlife is abundant here, a favorite for anglers, birdwatchers and nature enthusiasts. During the summer months, leatherback, loggerhead and green sea turtles frequently nest on the beaches here. Visitors can choose between many different outstanding paddling opportunities at this beautiful park. Kayak rentals are available.



[Waccasassa Bay Preserve State Park](#)

Waccasassa Bay is only accessible by boat, where nature enthusiasts can explore the many meanderings and tidal creeks to enjoy wildlife viewing of both saltwater and freshwater ecosystems. The preserve is home to endangered species such as West Indian Manatees, bald eagles, American alligators and the Florida black bear. Extensive salt marshes and tidal creeks create habitats for saltwater fish, crabs and shellfish. The numerous creeks and shallow waters of Waccasassa Bay are perfect for paddling. While there are no launches within the preserve, the park can be easily accessed from Cedar Key or from a public launch on the Waccasassa River. There are several primitive campsites within the preserve available on a first-come, first-served basis.

[Honeymoon Island State Park](#)

Across the St. Joseph Sound from Palm Harbor, this barrier island park is one of the few remaining native slash pine forests in South Florida and home to several endangered species. Pelican Cove lies between the sand spit and the nature trail, a perfect place for paddling to encounter native wildlife on calm waters. On the eastern side of the island, visitors can embark on a paddling adventure out to Grassy Key, a small island easily accessible by paddling through the shallow, placid waters of Little Bayou. The western side of the island is bordered by the Gulf of Mexico, which offers a more dynamic paddling experience with waves and swells. The southern tip of the island is separated from Caladesi Island by Hurricane Pass. So, if you're feeling adventurous you could easily paddle across the pass to explore two parks in one day. Kayak rentals are available.

[Caladesi Island State Park](#)

Caladesi Island was rated America's Best beach in 2008 and undeniably deserved the recognition. You can paddle to the park from the neighboring Honeymoon Island State Park across Hurricane Pass, paddle over on your own paddle board from the Dunedin Causeway, or rent a kayak in the park and begin your journey there. The park offers a three-mile paddling trail through the mangroves and bay, ideal for a peaceful paddling trip through stunning scenery.

Southwest

[Charlotte Harbor Preserve State Park](#)

The third largest Florida State Park offers visitors many natural communities to observe wildlife, including mangrove forests, marshes, scrub habitats and pine flatwoods. The best way to access the park is by paddling. Most of the park is shallow water fringed by mangroves, providing amazing opportunities to view wading birds, manatees, dolphins and other wildlife. To access the two paddling trails that wind through the park, you can launch your kayak or paddleboard at a dedicated launch site along Old Burnt Store Road in Cape Coral or use the county boat ramps available throughout the park.



[Cayo Costa State Park](#)

The barrier island of Cayo Costa lies at the opening of Charlotte harbor, bordered on the east by the Pine Island Sound and on the west by the Gulf of Mexico. Between the months of April and October, turtles come onto the shores of Cayo Coast to nest, so be sure to stay on the lookout for a glimpse of these magnificent animals and other wildlife within the park. The island is only accessible by ferry or private boat. You can bring your own kayak or paddleboard to the island via the ferry, or rent a kayak from the state park. Experienced open water paddlers can paddle to the park, utilizing directions and maps outlined in [Segment 12 of the CT](#).

[Lovers Key State Park](#)

Four barrier islands make this state park a haven for wildlife, such as bottlenose dolphins, West Indian manatees, marsh rabbits, roseate spoonbills, alligators and bald eagles. The two-mile-long beachfront is accessible by boardwalk or tram, while the rest of the park can be accessed from Estero Boulevard. Boat launches can be accessed throughout the park. Within the park, paddling vessels can be rented and paddling tours are available. The 2.5 miles of mangrove protected estuary and meandering inlets of Black Island are perfect for an



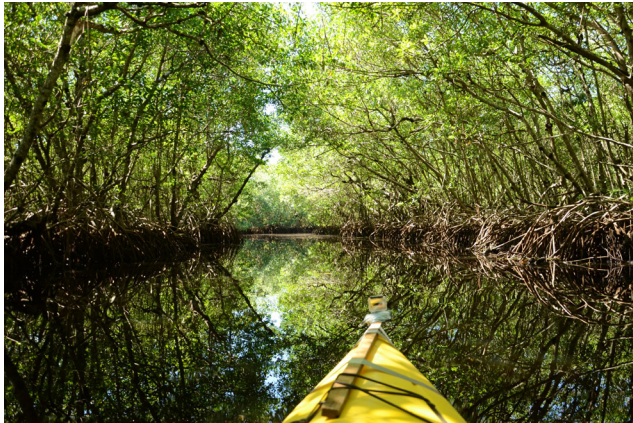


exploratory paddling excursion.

[Delnor-Wiggins Pass State Park](#)

Delnor-Wiggins Park has been a popular destination for experiencing a pristine tropical beach paradise since 1976. The park boasts a variety of paddling experiences, including Water Turkey Bay, the Gulf of Mexico, the Vanderbilt Channel and Wiggins Pass. Launch areas are available at the boat launch into Turkey Bay and at area #5. If you don't have your own paddling vessel, Naples Beach Adventures offers rentals of kayaks, canoes and stand up paddleboards. Launching from the Vanderbilt Channel on the east side of the park will lead you to the Wiggins Pass and Turkey Bay, providing calmer waters for paddling through the delicate natural estuaries of the Cocohatchee River and leading out to the Gulf of Mexico.

[Collier-Seminole State Park](#)



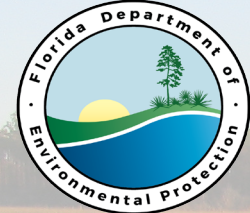
The Blackwater River flows down through the park, meandering through beautiful mangrove forests, opening up into the Blackwater Bay and into the ten Thousand Islands National Wildlife Refuge. The river is tidal but very gentle and is a great place for less experienced paddlers. Big Cypress National Preserve and the Everglades National Park are just to the west of this park. The wildlife here is typical of the Florida Everglades and home to several endangered species. The park encompasses the Great mangrove swamp of southern Florida, one of the largest

mangrove swamps in the world, as well as one of the three original strands of royal palm trees in Florida. If you don't have your own paddling vessel, Collier-Seminole Nature Tours offers kayak, canoe and stand up paddleboard rentals. Guided canoe trips through the park are offered from December through March.

Southeast

[St. Lucie Inlet Preserve State Park](#)

St. Lucie Inlet Preserve is only accessible by boat, but well worth it. There are miles of tidal



creeks, lakes, bays and mangrove forests waiting to be explored. The nearest launch point is at the end of Cove Road where it meets the Intracoastal Highway, or you can easily launch your paddling vessels by hand into the calm waters of the Great Pocket. Hole in the Wall is also a great place to begin your paddling journey since the calm protected waters allow you to easily begin your journey and take in the scenery. From there you can paddle out of the cove into the St. Lucie Inlet where the waters can be a bit choppy and you can access the white sandy beaches of South Point.

[Dr. Von D. Mizell-Eula Johnson State Park](#)

Formerly known as John U. Lloyd Beach State Park, this park provides an abundance of recreational activities. The mangrove-lined waterways are a beautifully scenic area to enjoy an easy paddling trip and observe wildlife. The park has two boat ramps with easy access to the ocean through the Port Everglades Inlet. Whiskey Creek meanders through the middle of the park, while the Stranahan River is on the west and the Atlantic Ocean is to the east, offering visitors many diverse paddling opportunities. Canoe and kayak rentals are available.

[John Pennekamp Coral Reef State Park](#)

As the first underwater park in the United States, John Pennekamp Coral Reef State Park is a popular destination for unique wildlife viewing, the main attraction being the reef that lies off the eastern shore of the park. The best way to view the reef is on the park's glass-bottom tour and snorkeling boats. For paddlers, the park has 2.5 miles of marked mangrove wilderness paddling trails to explore. The mangroves, and clear waters that surround them, provides habitats for a wide variety of birds and marine life. Canoe, kayak and paddleboard rentals are available. The park concession does not allow rental boats to leave the marked trails.

[Indian Key Historic State Park](#)

Indian Key was once the county seat for Dade County. Now, it is a historic island covered in ruins surrounded by beautiful aqua clear waters. The island features an excellent self-guided tour. The park can only be accessed by private boat, but the paddle from the Overseas Highway out to the island is easy and scenic. If you don't have your own paddling vessel, there are plenty available for rent at [Robbie's](#), which is just west of the park on the northern tip of



Lower Matecumbe Kay. Surrounding the park are shallow grass flats which act as protected habitats for a variety of tropical oceanic species, paddling vessels can easily float across most flats. Paddling is the best way to experience the beautiful aqua blue waters and spectacular wildlife, such as dolphins, manatees, sharks and rays.

[Long Key State Park](#)

Paddle through a series of lagoons and mangrove forests for a chance to glimpse the unique animals that live here in the five natural communities. The shallow waters provide an excellent opportunity for paddling and exploration along the park's natural shoreline. Paddling vessels can be rented at the ranger station and launched by hand at any waterfront. Typically, the water is shallow with gentle currents and waves.



[Bahia Honda State Park](#)

The entire island of Bahia Honda is included in the state park, offering visitors a wide variety of paddling options. There are two modern boat ramps in the park, one on the ocean side and the other on the gulf side. Kayaks are available for rent at the park, or you can bring your own to enjoy the famous turquoise blue waters that surround the island. One attraction of this park is to paddle to Little Bahia Honda Key, located offshore of the Atlantic side beach, for excellent views of the historic Flagler trestle bridge. Bring your snorkeling gear!