



Trip Recap: Flori-Bama Expedition on the Perdido River



Our first attempt at paddling 60 miles downriver to Perdido Pass is in the history books. All of our sixty paddlers made it safely to the finish, after about a dozen people left early due to lousy weather conditions. We wish to thank our many partners who made it come together: The Nature Conservancy, the Northwest Florida Water Management District, the City of Pensacola, Escambia County, Blue Angel Campground, the Florida Park Service, the University of Florida IFAS Extension Office, and the Florabama. All of these groups played a significant role in the success of this event. The paddlers, speakers, caterers, and our team of volunteers made this event memorable, not to mention the incredible musical performance by Al Mouledous and Ray Smith on our final night at Big Lagoon State Park. Thanks to all of you!



Inspiring Meaningful Adventure.

Upcoming Trips

[Suwannee River Paddling Festival](#)

April 5-7, 2019
With camping atop the bluff overlooking two beautiful rivers, our season-capping festival takes place at Suwannee River State Park near Live Oak. The weekend will offer supported 8-12 mile paddling options on both the Suwannee and Withlacoochee Rivers, a concert featuring Paddle Florida's favorite musicians, and educational presentations from regional waterway experts. **Registration for this trip is closed.**

Our 2019/2020 season schedule will be published here in the May edition of The Happy Paddler. Stay tuned!

Florida's Ambitious Circumnavigational Trail

By Doug Alderson, Assistant Bureau Chief, Office of Greenways and Trails

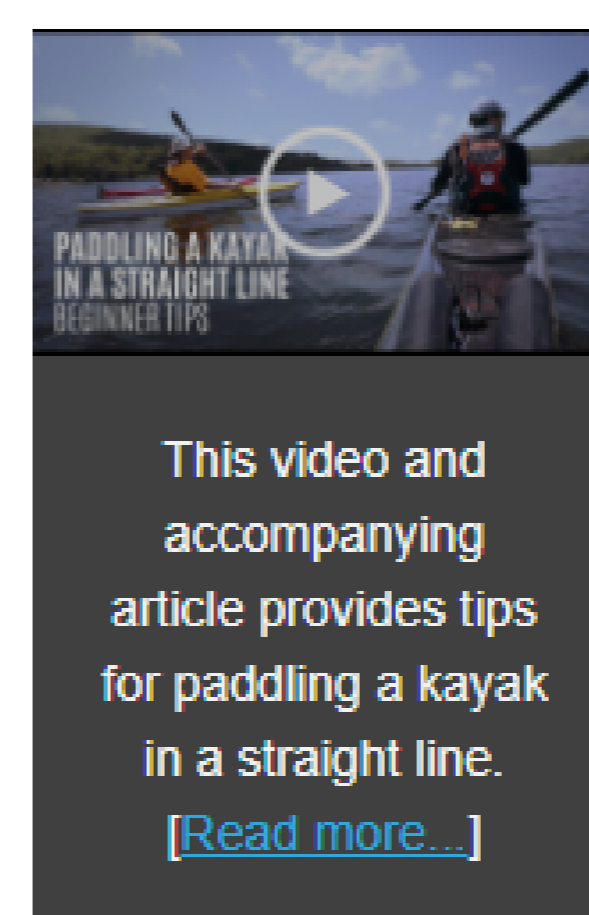


The first thing to know about paddling the 1,515-mile Florida Circumnavigational Saltwater Paddling Trail is that it's not easy. Bugs, storms, high winds and waves can all be encountered along the journey. Then there are the sore muscles, sunburn and salt and sand that seems to get into everything.

"This trip is an incredible challenge," said Mary Mangiapia, who took just over three months to complete the trail in 2014. "Along the way, I have encountered 10-foot seas and numerous storms. I even cracked a Kevlar bulkhead while crossing Tampa Bay in big waves, and I also have teeth marks in my kayak from a bull shark."

So, why do it? The reasons given by those who have completed the trail, a group known as "thru-paddlers," are many. [\[Read more...\]](#)

How To: Paddle a kayak in a straight line



This video and accompanying article provides tips for paddling a kayak in a straight line. [\[Read more...\]](#)

Update from Our Partners



In February, VISIT FLORIDA announced that Florida welcomed an all-time record number of visitors last year with 126.1 million out-of-state visitors coming to the Sunshine State in 2018. This announcement marks the eighth consecutive record year for visitation to Florida, exceeding the previous record of 118.8 million visitors in 2017 by an astounding 6.2 percent.

For more information related to visitor impact, [click here.](#)

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Reconnect with paddling friends and make new ones on Paddle Florida's [Facebook page](#). Our daily feeds provide updates on the news impacting Florida's waterways and wildlife as well as our upcoming trips. Send us your favorite photo depicting paddling in Florida and it might be selected as our "Picture of the Day!"

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As a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization, Paddle Florida is dedicated to promoting water conservation, wildlife preservation, springs restoration, and waterways protection across Florida. You can help us meet our water conservation missions by (1) joining us on one or more paddling adventures scheduled annually on Florida's wild and scenic rivers and coastlines, or (2) donating to Paddle Florida via our secure PayPal connection or through AmazonSmile.

If you're an Amazon shopper, you can sign up for AmazonSmile at [this link](#) and confirm your desire to support us. Amazon will then donate 0.5% of the price of eligible purchases to Paddle Florida.



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Do you provide a paddling oriented product or service? Consider placing an ad in our monthly newsletter. You can reach over 6,500 (and growing) monthly subscribers for \$75/month, or get two months free by promoting your product or business over 12 months for \$750! Contact Bill Richards at (352) 377-8342 or bill@paddleflorida.org for details.

FPTA: Connecting paddlers to Florida's water trails

By Jill Lingard, FPTA President



The Florida Paddling Trails Association (FPTA) is an all-volunteer non-profit organization dedicated to developing paddling trails, protecting the environment along those trails, and serving as a resource and voice for paddlers. FPTA got its start in 2007 as the group worked with the Office of Greenways and Trails to develop the 1,515-mile Circumnavigational Saltwater Paddling Trail (the "CT") around Florida's coastline. Since then, the focus has widened to include 15 regions across the state which encompass inland paddling trails as well.

The real strength of FPTA lies in its enthusiastic volunteers. Have a question about paddling a particular waterway or planning an extended trip? Check out the regional information on [FPTA's website](#) and ask questions through the site or through FPTA's [Facebook group](#). Dozens of regional waterway experts are ready to provide details and advice to aid your paddle trip planning. Paddlers tackling the CT will find a helpful network of "trail angels" who live along the coast and can provide support along their journey. FPTA also supports statewide paddling events, promotes paddling trails through its Blueway Communities project, and provides waterway stewardship training to paddling clubs and other groups of outdoor enthusiasts.

Three years ago, FPTA launched a new initiative aimed at getting more kids on the water—the Legacy Fund. With funds raised through grants and donations, over 150 scholarships have been provided to summer paddling camps which give many kids their first taste of the joys of this sport. We're so grateful that Paddle Florida has decided to make FPTA the beneficiary of this year's concert at their Suwannee River Paddling Festival on April 6. Those funds will be dedicated to sending more children to paddling camps. Individuals may also donate through FPTA's [Go Fund Me](#) or [Facebook](#) campaigns. Together we are building the next generation of Florida paddlers and waterway stewards.

I look forward to seeing everyone on the Suwannee this April!



The past and future glory of Silver Springs

By Dr. Robert Knight

Executive Director,
Howard T. Odum Florida Springs Institute

Last weekend's Florida Springsfest was a reminder of the former glory of Silver Springs. With an outpouring of public enthusiasm, Marion County's most unique natural feature may once again be elevated to its rightful importance.

An estimated 7,000 visitors traveled to Silver Springs for the 17th Annual Florida Springsfest. Hosted by the nonprofit Marion County Springs Festival, with the help of dozens of park staff and volunteers, this year's Springsfest was a celebration of the past and future glory of the world's largest, most famous and most visited artesian spring.

A kickoff gathering on Friday marked the start of activities, allowing volunteers, park staff and local notables a few hours of calm before the weekend flurry. The evening event was complete with rides on the famed glass-bottom boats over the lucid head spring waters, and a special announcement by Florida State Parks Director Eric Draper regarding the demolition of the dilapidated Wild Waters attraction and the anticipated rebirth of that site as a world-class springs environmental education center. [\[Read more...\]](#)



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