



# Flagler Coastal Wildlife Experience

November 2-5, 2017



**Home Base:** River to Sea Preserve, Palm Coast

**Paddling Distance:** 30.5 miles over three days

**Registration Deadline:** October 19, 2017

or when trip capacity of 50 paddlers is reached

**Trip Fee:** \$325 per paddler. Includes camping, meals, educational tours, and evening entertainment.

**Partnering Outfitter:** Paddlers needing to rent a boat should contact [Ripple Effect EcoTours](#) in St. Augustine at 904-347-1565.

## Trip Itinerary:

DAY	Lunch Stop	Lunch Miles	Paddling Destination	Camp Site	Daily Miles
1	N/A	N/A		River to Sea Preserve	0
2	Princess Place Preserve	3	Princess Place Preserve	River to Sea Preserve	6.5
3	Summer Haven	6	Matanzas Inlet	River to Sea Preserve	12
4	Bings Landing	9	Long Creek	N/A	12
<b>TOTAL MILES:</b>					30.5

Palm Coast and Flagler Beaches is a unique seaside community on Florida's Atlantic Coast and a kayaker's paradise, offering over 125 miles of canopied, connected trails in one of the most productive ecosystems on the planet. Cinnamon-colored beaches and 45 parks showcase Mother Nature at her finest. Nature beckons as you cross paths with deer, sea turtles, dolphins, and egrets. You will make memories grounded in nature, with an authentic eco-friendly Old Florida charm in an area that is vastly undisturbed.

From our base camp at [River To Sea Preserve](#), we will be paddling the Palm Coast Blueways: pristine waterways, and tranquil tidal creeks and estuaries, the Matanzas River, Intracoastal Waterway, and southern boundary of the [Guana Tolomato Matanzas National Estuary Research Reserve](#). Paddlers will immerse themselves in the local culture, Florida history, and outdoor wildlife experiences with visits to Princess Place Preserve, Marineland Dolphin Conservation Center, the Sea Turtle Hospital at University of Florida's Whitney Laboratory, and Fort Matanzas National Monument.

- Day 1/Thursday, November 2: River to Sea Preserve; Paddling Miles: 0**

Paddlers will check in at River To Sea Preserve in Palm Coast on Thursday afternoon, arriving in time to drop boats at the kayak launch and set up tents before dinner, a trip briefing, and musical entertainment beginning at 6PM.



*Photo credit: Visit Flagler*

River To Sea Preserve is owned jointly by Flagler County and the Town of Marineland. The Preserve extends from the beach of the Atlantic Ocean west to the Matanzas River (Atlantic Intracoastal Waterway) and protects a rapidly disappearing maritime scrub environment. Ninety acres offer walking trails, nature vistas, ecological education opportunities, as well as public access to the beach. Visit the beachside boardwalk for a majestic view of the sandy shoreline and ocean (and maybe a sighting of the North Atlantic Right Whale). The canoe and kayak launch provides access to the Intracoastal Waterway and the Matanzas River.

We'll end the evening around the campfire in anticipation of our adventure to come. Be sure to bring cameras to capture and preserve some great moments! Throughout the weekend, dinner will be served at 6:00 each night, followed by an evening program or musical entertainment at 7:00. Each morning, breakfast will be served at 7:30 and we'll launch boats between 8:30-9:00.

- **Day 2/Friday, November 3: River to Sea Preserve to Princess Place Preserve; Paddling Miles: 6.5**

Paddlers will enjoy breakfast at the River to Sea Preserve pavilion and then launch their kayaks for a short paddle on the Matanzas River and Pellicer Creek to Princess Place Preserve. A Flagler County Park, Princess Place Preserve is a historic site located on Pellicer Creek at its confluence with the Matanzas River, just south of the St. Johns/Flagler county line. The Preserve was added to the U.S. National Register of Historic Places in 1997.

Princess Place preserves 1,500 acres of pristine land midway between St. Augustine and Flagler Beach. It offers miles of hiking trails under ancient 80' tall live oaks, a wildlife-rich saltwater marsh, and primitive camping. As the oldest homestead in Flagler County, Princess Place was founded by a wealthy 24-year-old from New England, Henry Cutting. In 1888, he built a grand hunting lodge in Adirondack Camp Style using local materials. Princess Place has the first in-ground pool fed by an artesian spring. Paddlers will be able to learn more about the Princess and the Russian Prince Boris Scherbatoff during the tour of the lodge during our lunch stop.



*Photo credit: Marineland Dolphin Conservation Center*

Friday afternoon, paddlers will meet back at the River To Sea Preserve pavilion for a short walk to the [Marineland Dolphin Conservation Center](#) for a Dolphin Adventure tour. The Marineland Dolphin Conservation Center was founded to foster the preservation and protection of marine life. Its mission is to utilize interactive education, enhanced by on-site research, to inspire visitors to value and respect marine mammals and their environment.

Following our Marineland visit, we'll tour the Sea Turtle Hospital at the University of Florida's [Whitney Laboratory for Marine Bioscience](#). Situated between the Atlantic Ocean and a pristine estuary, the Sea Turtle

Hospital is in a unique location to help sick and injured sea turtles. It is the only sea turtle facility located in northeast Florida. All seven species of sea turtles in the world are threatened or endangered. Sea turtles are keystone species within their habitats; their loss can upset the balance of saltwater ecosystems.

The Sea Turtle Hospital at Whitney Lab is helping sea turtles using a multifaceted approach of rehabilitation, research, and education that is critical to these animals and their ocean home.



*Photo Credit: UF's Whitney Lab for Marine Bioscience*

Our full day will be capped off with a dinner back at River to the Sea pavilion, followed by an evening program and campfire.

- **Day 3/Saturday, November 4: River to Sea Preserve to Matanzas Inlet; Paddling Miles: 12**



After breakfast at the River To Sea pavilion, paddlers will point their kayaks north along the Matanzas River. Keep an eye out for dolphins—they're plentiful in this stretch. We'll also get to see historic [Fort Matanzas National Monument](#) from the water today. Our lunch stop will occur on the return trip at Summer Haven, south of Matanzas Inlet along a beautiful beach. Upon returning to camp, paddlers can relax until dinner and the evening program at the pavilion.

Matanzas Inlet is a channel 14 miles south of St. Augustine between two barrier islands and the mainland, connecting the Atlantic Ocean and the south end of the Matanzas River. The inlet is not stabilized by jetties, and thus is subject to shifting. Historic maps made by Spanish military engineers in the 18<sup>th</sup> century show that the inlet today has moved many hundreds of yards south of its location during the time of the Spanish Empire. In 1740, a British invasion force from Fort Frederica, Georgia blockaded this inlet, the southernmost access for boat travel between St. Augustine and Havana, Cuba. Two years later, a coquina stone tower 50 feet square by 30 feet high, now called Fort Matanzas, was built by the Spanish authorities in Florida to safeguard this strategic inlet.



*Photo credit: National Park Service*

- **Day 4/Sunday, November 5: River to Sea Preserve to Long Creek; Paddling Miles: 12**

After breakfast, paddlers launch for the paddle south along the Matanzas River to Bings Landing County Park and the Long Creek Nature Preserve Paddling Trail. Bings Landing is a seven-acre park that was once part of General Joseph Hernandez's Mala Compra Plantation, where he cultivated sea island cotton and sweet oranges. It's also home to our lunch stop at Captains BBQ, a casual waterfront roadside pit-stop producing meats and sides slow-cooked in a wood-burning smoker.



*Photo credit: City of Palm Coast*

Following lunch, we'll paddle on to [Long Creek Nature Preserve](#). The preserve is about nine acres in size, connecting to the 225-acre Long Creek Basin. Paddlers will enjoy a long winding river, crooked creeks, and a beautiful landscape with ospreys, eagles, egrets, and other coastal birds.

Upon returning to camp at River to Sea Preserve, paddlers will take down tents and load kayaks. We hope you'll also be taking wonderful memories of sea turtles, dolphins, and Northeast Florida's rich cultural history on your journey home!