

## SOUTH FLORIDA DAY TRIPS

By Jessica Poitevien

» I wade into the cool water at Oleta River State Park, south of Fort Lauderdale, and jump into the small kayak that I've rented nearby. As I leave the launch area behind and head into a narrowing channel, I'm soon surrounded by a lush canopy of mangroves that form a tunnel for me to paddle through. I watch for wildlife—such as manatees (found here in winter) and herons—and I make my way out to the main attraction of this route: a sandbar with a beach where I can rest and sunbathe, with occasional refreshing swims.

It's hard to believe that the natural beauty of this state park exists so close to the urban centers of Fort Lauderdale and Miami. A visit here is my personal favorite day trip from Fort Lauderdale, yet it is one of many options for South Florida excursions launched from the city.

Another quintessential Florida experience is a visit to Everglades National Park. There are several entrances where you can start your exploration of this 1.5 million-acre expanse of parkland, but the Shark Valley Visitor Center—at a bit more than 60 miles southwest of Fort Lauderdale—is the closest. From the center, you can hop on the Shark Valley Tram Tour for a guided visit, or go at your own pace along one of the walking or cycling trails. At the midpoint of the 15-mile Tram Road—which is open to trams, bikers and walkers—you can climb a 45-foot-tall observation tower for territorial Everglades views.

If a need for speed is more important to you, check out an airboat tour—within the national park or at Everglades Holiday Park, about 30 miles southwest of Fort Lauderdale. Located outside of national park grounds, this privately operated park and preserve provides trips deep into the wetland environment. It also offers other attractions, such as fishing-boat rentals and educational alligator shows



### » THE FEED OUT & ABOUT FORT LAUDERDALE



» Trip options near Fort Lauderdale include Oleta River State Park, above; Everglades National Park's Shark Valley area, left; airboating from Everglades Holiday Park, below left; and Miami's chic Wynwood Arts District.



The city of Miami is also a less-than-30-mile drive south from Fort Lauderdale. One of the Miami areas I particularly enjoy is the Wynwood Arts District. This trendy neighborhood is

known for its art galleries, outdoor markets, food trucks, bars and restaurants, Wynwood is

IMAGE: COURTESY EVERGLADES HOLIDAY PARK; OTHER IMAGES: SHUTTERSTOCK.COM (3)

AIRBOAT

run by the team made famous in the Animal Planet hit 2012–2014 TV show *Gator Boys*. where locals such as myself go to grab a drink or stroll among an impressive set of public a chic urban complement to explorations of South Florida’s natural wonders. ✈