

Segment 18

Pompano/Lake Worth

Emergency contact information:

911

Broward County Sheriff's Department: 954-831-8900, 954-765-4321

Palm Beach County Sheriff's Department: 561-995-2800

Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission 24-hour wildlife emergency/boating under the influence hotline: 1-888-404-3922

Begin: Hugh Taylor Birch State Park

End: Lake Worth

Distance: 34 miles

Special Considerations: For most of this segment, paddlers have the option of either paddling the Intracoastal Waterway (ICW) or the Atlantic shore, depending on wind and weather. In calm weather, the Atlantic side might be safer until the ICW becomes wider north of the Boynton Inlet. Where the ICW is narrow and lined with seawalls, paddlers must be wary of large boats and their wakes, and there are limited spots to land. Boat wakes often rebound off sea walls. Boat traffic is higher on weekends and holidays. Do not tie kayaks to docks along the ICW as boat wakes may cause swamping or damage; always lift them out of the water. Note: this stretch of the Atlantic coast and ICW has the highest number of boat accidents in the state.

On the Atlantic side, there are numerous public parks and beaches, and these offer restrooms, water and cold showers. However, kayakers must land outside of the “guarded” section of public beach, meaning that you must land before the first lifeguard tower or after the last lifeguard tower and walk to the public facilities.

There is no camping available in this segment, so advance motel reservations are recommended for motels outlined in this guide. Paddlers on the Atlantic shore will need to access the ICW at Boynton Inlet in order to reach the motel for day two. As with all narrow inlets, be wary of boat traffic and strong currents.

Introduction

Even though this is a short and urbanized segment, paddlers will enjoy several small scenic local parks and one state park, Hugh Taylor Birch. For more information on Hugh Taylor Birch State Park, log onto <http://www.floridastateparks.org/hughtaylorbirch/default.cfm>. For more information on local parks, log onto www.broward.org/parks or <http://www.co.palm-beach.fl.us/parks/locations>.

1. Hugh Taylor Birch State Park to Stratford Motel, 7 miles

The campground at Hugh Taylor Birch State Park is not accessible by kayak, so a motel stay in the area is necessary. The Doubletree Gallery One Motel is along the ICW near the park. The dock can be 3-4 feet high at low tide, so landing at high tide is preferable. Call 954-565-3800 for reservations or more information. Other motels are along the Atlantic Shore in Lauderdale by the Sea 1 to 2 miles north of the park.

The Stratford Motel is along the east side of the ICW; it has another challenging dock for the kayaker. As stated before, kayaks should be taken out of the water due to high boat wakes. Call the motel at 954-943-2781 for more information and reservations.

2. Stratford Motel to Highland Beach Holiday Inn, 13.5 miles

Highlights along the ICW in this stretch are the Gumbo Limbo Nature Center and the Spanish River Park. Before landing at the nature center beach, you must first obtain permission by calling 561-338-1473. The center features aquariums, interpretive displays, nature trails through a tropical hardwood hammock, a viewing tower and a butterfly

garden. Spanish River Park features nature trails and plenty of welcome shade. Camping is allowed for organized youth groups only.

The Holiday Inn is accessible on both the Atlantic side and along the ICW. GPS points are given for both access points. Along the ICW, land on a small beach just before the paved parking lot and secure your kayak to a nearby tree. The motel is directly across the highway. For reservations, call 561-278-6241.

3. Highland Beach Holiday Inn to Fairfield Motel or Sabal Palm House B&B, 13.5 miles

There are several parks along the ICW and along the Atlantic shore, so there are ample opportunities for rest breaks. If you are paddling along the Atlantic shore, be sure to move into the ICW at the Boynton Inlet. It is at this point where the ICW widens into the Lake Worth Lagoon. Once a freshwater lake, the creation of two permanent inlets to the ocean has transformed the lagoon into an urban estuary that contains important habitats for a variety of sea life.

The Fairfield Motel is accessible along the ICW by way of a small sandy rise in the corner of the seawall near the Highway 802 Bridge. You can secure your kayak either on a nearby tree or on the outside of the pool fence after obtaining permission from the front desk. For reservations, call 1-800-347-5434.

The kayak friendly Sabal Palm House Bed and Breakfast is accessible on the other side of the Highway 802 Bridge. Land at the Bryant Park Launch just south of the bridge. The Sabal Palm House is two short blocks north. For reservations, call 1-888-722-2572.