

Segment 19

Palm Beach/Loxahatchee

Emergency contact information:

911

Palm Beach County Sheriff's Department: 561-995-2800 (south), 561-688-3000 (north and central)

Martin County Sheriff's Department: 772-220-7000

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

Begin: Lake Worth

End: Jonathan Dickinson State Park

Distance: 29 miles

Special Considerations: Since the route follows the Intracoastal Waterway (ICW), special precautions should be taken in the narrow portions of the ICW regarding boat traffic; be wary of large boats and their wakes. 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.

Introduction

In 1867, Almeda Armour, new wife of Jupiter Inlet Lighthouse keeper Captain Armour, learned to her chagrin that the nearest doctor lived 120 miles away, and that occasional roving bands of Seminole Indians and visiting ship crews would be their main company. Still, Almeda Armour bore seven children during her family's 40 year stay. They saw many changes, and certainly many more changes occurred since their

departure, but the Jupiter Inlet Lighthouse still stands. It is one of many interesting points of interest in this segment for the paddler to investigate.

Besides historical sites, this segment features two premier state parks and several county parks and islands, offering a diverse experience for the paddler. The state parks are John D. MacArthur and Jonathan Dickinson. John D. MacArthur Beach State Park features up to 1,500 annual sea turtle nests on only 1.8 miles of beach, and Jonathan Dickinson State Park, at 11,500 acres, boasts 13 different plant communities and miles of hiking and paddling trails. To learn more, log onto www.floridastateparks.org. For more information on Palm Beach County Parks, log onto <http://www.co.palm-beach.fl.us/parks/locations>. For camping at Jonathan Dickinson State Park, be sure to reserve a site at the River Campground by contacting Reserve America at (800) 326-3521 or log onto www.reserveamerica.com.

Two Florida aquatic preserves are part of this segment. The Loxahatchee River-Lake Worth Creek and Jenson Beach to Jupiter Inlet Indian River. Both preserves contain seagrass beds, marshes, mangroves, oyster bars and tidal flats—vital nursery habitat for a variety of fish and marine creatures. To learn more, log onto <http://www.dep.state.fl.us/coastal/programs/aquatic.htm>.

1. Fairfield Inn or Sabal Palm House B&B to Peanut Island, 11 miles

As you paddle north through the Lake Worth Lagoon, you may notice that this urban estuary supports a variety of habitats such as mangroves, tidal flats, seagrasses and oyster bars. Hard to believe that this water body was once a freshwater lake until the Lake Worth Inlet was created in 1877. Later, in 1915, the Port of Palm Beach created a permanent inlet at the northern end of the lagoon, completing the transformation to a brackish estuary. Water clarity will often change with the tides. The majority of shoreline that you'll pass is bulkheaded, although restoration and enhancement projects are ongoing.

If you are a camping enthusiast and coming from the south through the lagoon, the 86-acre Peanut Island will be a welcome sight. This county park offers fee sites at a full-service campground on the island's east side and free primitive beach camping on the

west side. Reservations are required, so call toll-free 866-383-5730 up to three months in advance. Monday through Thursday, you'll need to check in by 3 p.m.; weekends by 6 p.m. One tent is allowed per site. The park also features a nature trail, an observation deck, and the Palm Beach Maritime Museum. A highlight of the museum is a tour of the John F. Kennedy Bunker, constructed as a temporary command post during the Cuban Missile Crisis of 1962. For museum information, call 561-540-5147. For bunker tour information, call 561-832-7428. Museum and tour times may be limited.

Peanut Island was originally created from dredged spoil material in 1918 and was enlarged with subsequent dredging. The island is not peanut shaped; its name came about from an early plan to store and ship peanut oil. In more recent years, managers have created tidal channels and lavishly landscaped the island with native vegetation, part of a \$13 million environmental enhancement project completed in 2005. The tall sides of a mound in the island's center are actually borders for a huge crater that is still used to store dredged material.

2. Peanut Island to Jonathan Dickinson State Park, 18 miles

In a little less than 3 miles, a good rest stop and point of interest is Munyon Island, part of John D. MacArthur Beach State Park. Accessible only by boat, the island was once the site of James Munyon's lavish five-story resort hotel, "The Hygeia," named for the Greek goddess of health. Paw-Paw elixir, a tonic Munyon concocted from sulphur water and papaya juice, was featured at the resort and billed as a cure-all. The hotel burned down in 1917. More recently, wetlands and native vegetation have been restored on the island, helping to reverse the detrimental effects of past dredging and filling.

The main body of the state park can best be accessed along the Lake Worth Cove. The park features a kayak launch, a long boardwalk and nature trails, as well as an unspoiled beach. From early May through late August, large numbers of leatherback, green and loggerhead sea turtles nest on the beach.

Soon after Munyon Island, the ICW bears left and narrows for a long stretch. Fortunately, three local parks—Juno, Bert Winters and Burt Reynolds--will provide welcome rest breaks before the ICW opens up into the Loxahatchee River. If you have

time, two points of interest along the Jupiter Inlet are worth visiting (see map for access points). On the inlet's south side is Dubois Park, site of the Dubois Pioneer home which sits atop a tall Indian midden. Open Tuesday and Wednesday afternoons, the spot is also the site of the Indian village of Jobe or Hobe (Hoe-Bay) where Jonathan Dickinson and his shipmates were held captive in 1697 after being shipwrecked along the coast.

On the north side of the inlet, you can tour the impressive Jupiter Lighthouse. Built in 1860, the lighthouse stands 105 feet tall and continues to warn approaching ships of treacherous reefs near the Gulf Stream. The beam also marks the point where northbound ships can catch the northern flowing current. On a clear night, the beam can be seen for about 18 miles.

You have two choices for overnight stays. You can proceed northward up the ICW about two miles and stay at the Jupiter Waterfront Inn on the west side of the ICW, just across from the Blowing Rocks Preserve. This will lessen your distance by 3 miles and lessen your mileage by 7 miles for the next day if proceeding north. Call 1-888-747-9085 for reservations and more information.

The other option is to camp at Jonathan Dickinson State Park. Be sure to make a reservation at the River Campground. You'll need to paddle about 5 miles up the Loxahatchee River to the park boat ramp where you can leave your kayak and walk about 200 yards to the campground. Normally campers must register for their campsite at the Ranger Station. However, since the Ranger Station is five miles from the River Campground, paddlers should have a prepaid reservation for a specific site, and then call the Ranger Station for check-in upon arrival. There is a payphone at the restroom in the campground if you don't have a cell phone.

The state park features several miles of hiking trails, and it is worth paddling upriver to the Trapper Nelson Interpretive Site. Known as the "Wildman of the Loxahatchee," Nelson came to the area in the 1930s, built a log cabin, and made his living trapping and selling furs. He eventually opened "Trapper's Jungle Gardens and Wildlife Zoo" to the public. The site is only accessible by boat.

The upper 9.5 miles of the Loxahatchee River—which includes the stretch through the state park--was the first of two federally designated wild and scenic rivers in Florida and is a favorite among paddlers. Kitching Creek, about a mile upriver, is also

worth exploring by kayak where you can marvel at giant leather ferns that can reach impressive heights of 12 feet.