

## **What is “Bird Island”?**

Mullet Head Island, aka “Bird Island”, is a spoil island that has been designated a protected rookery and is closed to people. It is located in North Brevard County, Florida, in Merritt Island National Wildlife Refuge. The island is approximately half a mile West of Haulover Canal in the Indian River Lagoon.

## **What is the Bird Island Photography Kayak Tour?**

This tour offers a unique opportunity during the cooler months for wildlife and bird photographers to capture images of birds in and around Mullet Head Island. **This is the ONLY stop on this tour and we spend the entire time at this location.** Common bird sightings include American flamingo, roseate spoonbill, white pelican, brown pelican, cormorant, snowy egret, reddish egret, great egret, great blue heron, green heron, osprey, American bald eagle, frigate bird, red-winged black birds, fish crows, and more!

## **What does this tour cost?**

The cost for this tour is \$75 for a single (one-person kayak) or \$140 for a tandem (two-person kayak), plus sales tax and a small fee that goes directly to the booking software. The booking process is completed through the website and online calendar.

## **What are the tour start times?**

Tours meet at 9am, 12pm, and 3pm. However, not all time slots are available on the days that tours are open. The available times will depend on the wind forecast and guide availability.

## **Why don't I see any Bird Island Photography Kayak Tours on the schedule?**

These tours are only made available for booking when the weather forecast shows high confidence of VERY calm winds. The Indian River Lagoon is very shallow (avg 1' to 4' deep) and a moderate breeze (10-15kts) can create choppy waves and white caps. This will result in frustrating

photography conditions that could be risky to guest's equipment, and these conditions also make it more challenging to maneuver the kayaks to respect the island boundaries. Weather forecasts are notoriously unreliable more than 5 days out, and sometimes less. If we see a steady trend forecasting calm conditions, we'll open up these tours up to a week in advance.

### **I'm visiting in a couple of weeks/months. Can I reserve a spot ahead of time and adjust if the weather is bad?**

Since we open photography tour availability based on weather conditions, we do not accept bookings for Bird Island Photography Kayak Tours before we know the weather forecast. If you want to be notified when tour availability opens, you can complete a Google Form with your information. Click [HERE](#) for the Google Form

Copy/Paste: <https://forms.gle/qpepSBcPghetRYGm9>

### **How long is the Bird Island Photography Kayak Tour?**

Plan for 2 hours. This includes check-in, outfitting gear, a safety brief, and a paddle lesson. Once we launch from Haulover Canal, it takes about 10-15 minutes to get to the boundary of the island. Depending how long it takes to gear up and launch, guests will have between 75-90 minutes of actual photography time at the island.

### **How many people are on these tours?**

These tours are capped at six (6) guests total. This is to make sure that guides can provide assistance as needed while ensuring the group and tour remains compliant to Federal laws and refuge regulations regarding the island boundaries.

### **Where do we meet for the tour?**

The meet location for this tour is the NW Haulover Canal Kayak Launch. There is no exact address because it's inside Merritt Island National Wildlife Refuge. However, you can enter the site name (NW Haulover Canal Kayak Launch) into Google Maps and get accurate driving directions.

### **How close do we get to the island?**

Mullet Head Island, aka “Bird Island”, is a federally protected rookery and the public must stay 500’ away from the shoreline. There are signs around the island indicating a boundary and we often give more space than is required.

### **Can we get out of the kayaks?**

This depends on several factors, mainly the location of the sun and subjects we want to observe (generally flamingos). There are shallow (approximately knee deep) sand bars surrounding the island where we can easily exit the kayaks and wade and still maintain an appropriate distance from the island shoreline. This is completely optional and many guests choose to stay in their kayak the entire time and let their guide set up an anchor for them.

### **What is included in this tour?**

This tour includes kayak, paddle, and USCG approved PFD (life jacket) with whistle. Additionally, this tour includes complimentary dry bags and folding metal anchors for each kayak. Should you choose to use the anchor, your dedicated guide will set it up for you.

### **What do I need to bring on this tour?**

Bring your own photography equipment. Additionally, bring drinking water, insect repellent, sun protection (hat, sunglasses, long sleeve SPF shirt, sunscreen), and light snacks. We do have complimentary dry bags, but many guests will have their own.

### **How do I transport my gear? Is there room on the kayak for my camera case?**

Unfortunately, there’s not much room on the kayaks for the big gear cases (like Pelican cases). Guests typically assemble their gear on shore and then place their camera in a dry bag for the paddle out. Thick, PVC dry bags are recommended. If you need to borrow a dry bag, we have a few

complimentary 40L dry bags that comfortably fit cameras with telephoto lenses. If you need to use one of our dry-bags, bring a towel to wrap your camera in.

### **Is this tour appropriate for beginner or first-time kayakers?**

Yes! Since we only launch these tours on calm-days and the island is a short distance from the launch beach, this tour is very do-able for beginner and first-time kayakers.

### **Do I have to paddle myself or will someone paddle for me?**

We have both tandem (2-person) and single-person kayaks. Even number parties (2 guests, 4 guests, etc) will be in tandem kayaks together. We have a few single kayaks to accommodate odd-numbered parties or solo guests. If you are not confident in your paddle ability, we highly recommend booking two guests. Lots of guests on this tour come with their own “private driver” (a supportive spouse, family member, friend, etc). Please note that we do not have enough single kayaks to give every guest their own kayak.

### **Can I bring my own kayak?**

Yes! Enter the promo code BYOB at checkout and get \$15 off. If you’re bringing your own kayak, make sure you remember to bring your own paddle and life jacket (with whistle).

### **Are the kayaks stable?**

Yes, our kayaks are very stable. We primarily use ocean kayaks (sit-on-tops) because they are easier to get in and out of. Kayaks are much more stable than canoes.

### **Is there a weight limit for kayaks?**

Yes. The kayak weight limits are 250 lbs to 275 lbs per seat, depending on the kayak. Please note that the tandem (2-person) kayaks are designed to have the weight distributed with the heavier paddler in the back, and the lighter paddler in the front.

## **What is the best time of day for this tour?**

Birds are most active in the morning, however the lighting will depend on which side of the island the subject wildlife is on. Most guests are interested in photographing the flamboyance of flamingos that have been hanging out on the island, and they move around to different parts of the island. Additionally, the flamingo activity level will vary from day to day with no obvious pattern (at least not that we're aware of). Some days they sleep ALL day, and other days they are active feeding and flying. Timing doesn't play as much of a factor as pure luck.

## **Are private tours available?**

Yes! Private tours offer a little more flexibility with booking in advance. If you have a date in mind, send an email to [info@springstosea.com](mailto:info@springstosea.com) with your request and we will send you a booking link to complete the process. The rate for a private tour is \$200 flat rate plus \$40 for each guest who needs a kayak.

## **Do you offer perks for repeat guests or referrals?**

We don't have anything official yet, but we definitely are working on putting something together for you. Probably a discount code and/or BOGO perk. Keep an eye on our Facebook page or check back to this FAQ page for updates.

## **I love birds but I want to see more! What tours include "Bird Island" as well as explore other areas?**

Yes, depending on the winds and the guest paddling ability. Our **Coastal Wildlife Kayak Tour** (morning/afternoon) has open availability all year and will include a paddle to "Bird Island" to spot wildlife like flamingos and spoonbills. We will spend about 10-15 minutes here before moving onto another spot to look for manatees, dolphins, rays, crabs, comb jellies, etc. Additionally, the **Florida Bucket List Kayak Tour** is a longer tour (3 hours) in the late afternoon and early evening that includes wildlife viewing, a trip to the island, sunset, and playtime in bioluminescence just after dark. Both of these tours currently have booking availability on our website.