

Leading a Paddle

- **Choose a destination:** (see addendum for choices)
 - For your first time, make it easy. A stream for out and back or something with simple navigation. Something nearby.
 - **Discuss** your choice with Rolf Simonson or Cathy Engimann or Don Taylor. As you get into the details, feel free to contact them if you have questions.
 - To give you confidence, you may want to paddle it yourself ahead of time to get familiar.
- **Evaluate:** Google maps, Google earth, paper charts/maps
- **Choose a date:** We often paddle on Tuesdays, but use whatever day works best for you. 10:00 a.m. is a good launch time. Gives people time to get there, park and etc. and we would finish at lunchtime. For summertime paddles, you may want to launch at 9 or 9:30 AM to “beat the heat”.
- Plan on **paddling about an hour and forty five minutes**. For an out and back route take into account currents. Time upstream will be longer than downstream.. Generally plan on about 2 mph including water break and site seeing. If the group is slower or faster, adjust!
- **Navigation** is important. If you paddle the tunnels or an area with numerous mangrove islands or channels, you may want to paddle it beforehand to get familiar and make a route cheat sheet or GPS map to take with you. This may be what scares people from leading a paddle, but if you prepare, it’s not that hard.
- Beginning four or five days start to **watch weather forecasts**. <https://forecast.weather.gov/> or whatever you like and has detail. Generally winds over 12 mph are challenging in open water but not as much in protected areas.
- **Consider the tides** if near the gulf or harbor. There are many tide apps like “Tide Prediction” by Mucho Viento. A very low tide may impact launching and for sure may prevent kayaking through mangrove tunnels.
- As the leader, you will **keep the pace** and slow down if you get too far ahead. This is not a race and the pace needs to be enjoyable for most of the paddlers. Appoint one person to be the **sweeper** to follow the group to stick with slow paddlers.
- **Parking at launch site** You should prepare for up to 10 vehicles ? And is it a short distance between parking and the water? **Latrines** If there are not latrines, please make this known when you send out announcements.
- **Kayak rental** available ? If so give name and phone number, but we are not responsible for setting anything up.
- **Restaurant** An important part of the experience is where we eat ! Choose something within a few miles of the launch site. Call ahead and ask if they can seat us together. Count on arrival about 12:30 p.m.
- **Prepare announcement** for emailing a few weeks ahead with date, place, time, short description of the paddle. Name of park or launch location and general driving directions, approximate drive time, but no need for turn by turn directions. Send announcement to Don Taylor donald.k.taylor@gmail.com for blasting to membership.
- The **weather** forecast can change quickly in Florida. If you are thinking of cancelling, have Don send a blast that conditions are questionable and to watch for a final decision about 7 AM on the day of the paddle.
- A **naturalist** is an option to both lead a paddle and to inform about flora and fauna. Steve Burroughs does this at “Kayak Eco Tours” <kayakecotours.com>. He will guide and lead a tour at the Peace River on Tuesday mornings.