

240309 BRA CANOES in the Everglades National Park Florida

Set up to go with expectations of finding the Florida Everglades that we all know and love. We will try to explore some of the mangrove areas and do some fishing at the same time.



The park is set up at the base of the Buttonwood drainage canal. The canal connects to Whitewater and Coot Bay, which are the collection point for what called water Sloughs. These sloughs are conduits that bring water from northern Florida down through the Everglades, spilling into the bay of Biscayne and the Gulf of Mexico.



There are plenty of rental activities

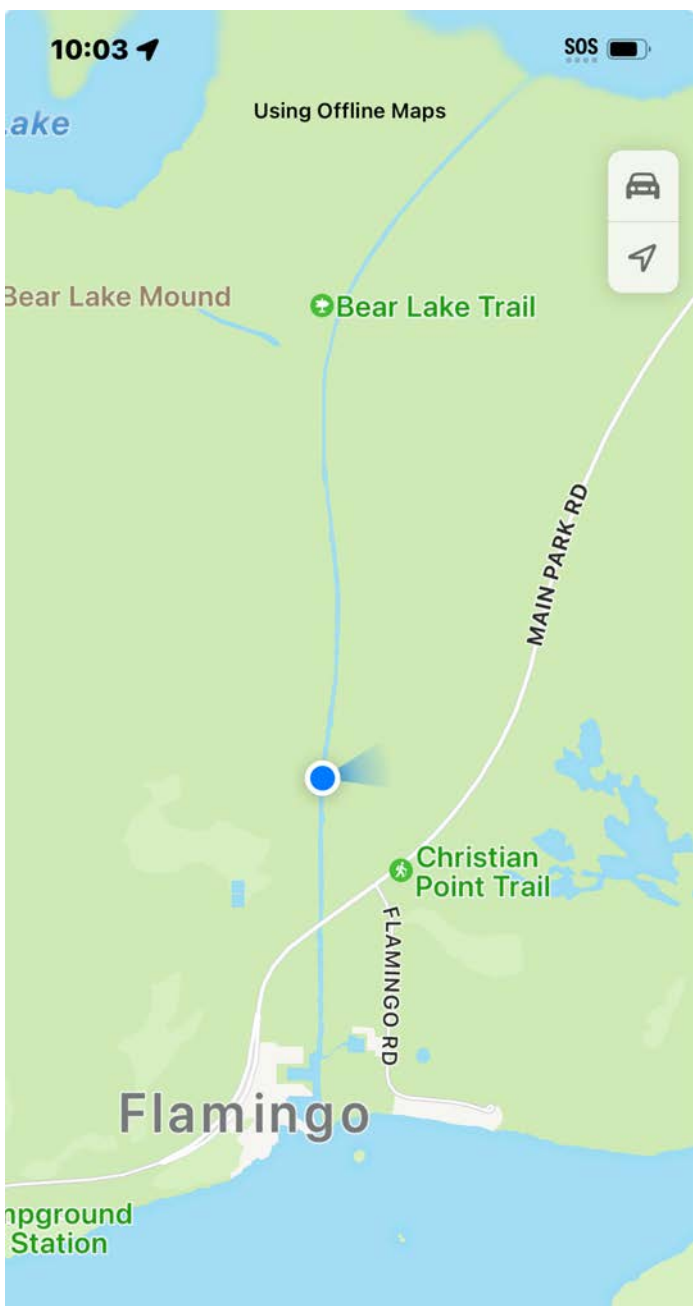
available for visitors at the marina. You can rent kayaks, canoes, skiffs (small boats) with outboard motors, houseboats, and even floating platforms. The houseboats can run \$350-\$450 per day. The skiff can run \$250-\$350 per day. We rented a canoe which cost around \$48 per day.



It was the first time my daughter and I had ever gone canoeing together. The canal runs due North and stretches for 3 miles, connecting Flamingo campground to Coot Bay. Traveling further north, you would get to Whitewater Bay. These are completely encapsulated freshwater inland waterways within the greater Everglades national park. They are only accessible through these canals.



GPS works even with no cell phone connection. Pretty cool. So you can be in this backcountry and pretty well determined where you are. We were about 1/3 of the way through the canal when I decided to check our progress.



When we started, the wind was not strong and was blowing against us. I always prefer on canoe trips to go out against the wind because you're more tired coming back. So we got off to the correct start. But the wind soon shifted and was blowing at our back and quite strong. This was of course great for us, but took us farther away from our originating point. I had to call it quits at about one hour and 30 minutes out because it was going to be a hard slog to get back. I'm glad I did and we were able to take brakes coming back against the strong wind. Something to consider if you're going to be canoeing in these areas.



Along the way, you can see classic mangrove forests on both sides of the canal. These are impenetrable and even if you wanted to get out of the canoe and try to walk through them, there's no way you could make any headway. You have no choice, but to go forward or backwards on this canal. You also do not have any extensive mangrove, tunnels or side canals that you could take off of the main channel. It's pretty boring and you literally have to make a hard run north and then come straight back south. Not much to see.



As you would expect, we saw some wildlife as we went. The guide at the rental told us if we don't play music real loud or talk that we should be able to see wildlife, and that was certainly the case. That was the only saving grace of this trip. Otherwise we would just have gone up a canal turn around and come back. It was too far at 3 miles to go on a canoe and safely. Make it back within a four hour rental.



We did see one small alligator or crocodile, sunning itself where I'm pointing. It was very small probably less than 2 feet in length, and really did not move as we approached.

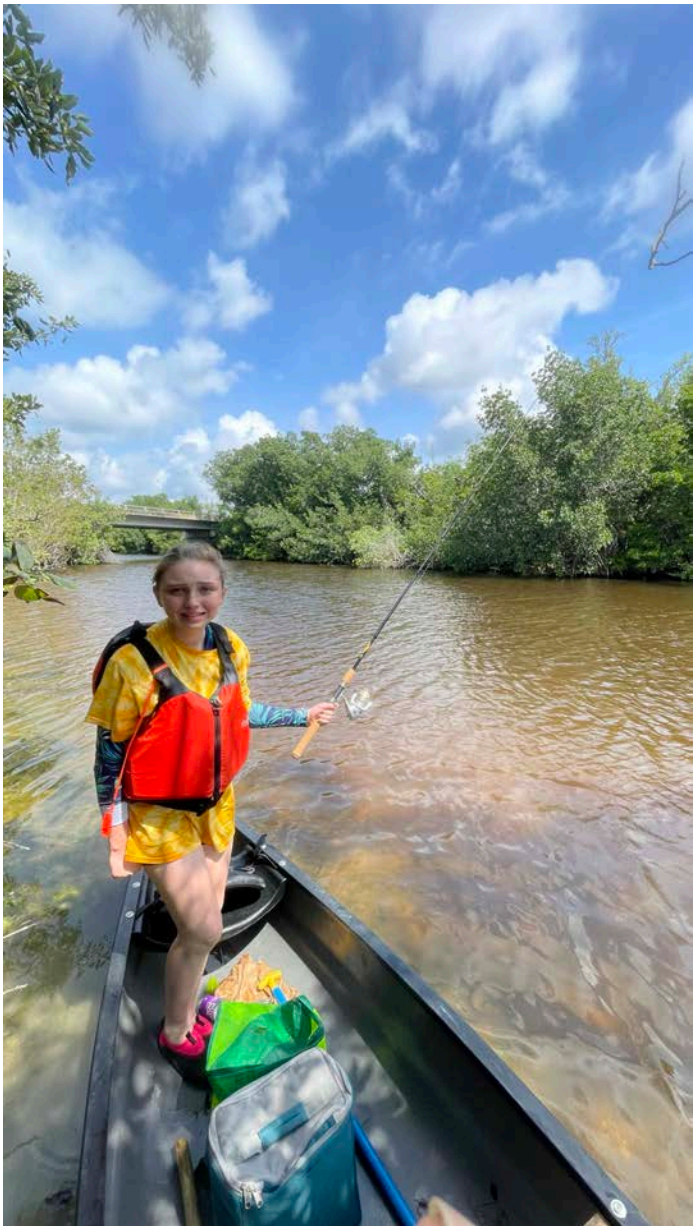


This is a hatchling and as shown would be sunning itself. There is no swimming or waiting in the water in this canal for obvious reasons. There are a lot of alligators and crocodiles in these waters. Of course, the Everglades has its fair share of snakes as well. Generally not a good place to take a swim.



You have to have a fishing license to fish in

Florida. You can get one online and there are one day, three day, one week and annual passes. There is a license for everything from freshwater to saltwater to big game fish. I bought a one day license for \$37 and my daughter did not need one because she was less than 16 years old. Times have changed and even a one day license is not cheap. Licenses can cost \$70-\$80 depending on the type. You have to have a license to fish and you have to have a license before you arrive.



Everyone that had fishing gear that came by me asked if I had caught anything. This usually tells me that nobody's catching much. Of course it's the heat of the day and the sun is overhead and fish under these

conditions typically go to ground. I joked with those that asked and told them the only thing I had caught was my bait. But it's fun, we just wasted some time, cast the pole and pretended that we were good fishermen.



How I did not remember to set everything up before I went out on the canoe is beyond me. I tried to do this from inside the boat, and it literally took me half an hour just to put one pole together. Whatever you do, get everything set up before you launch because once you're on that boat it's too cramped to get everything out and set up. I had to finally come ashore at a place where I could stand, tie the canoe off, set everything up and fish while standing up in

shallow water.



But we had a good day. I taught my daughter how to cast a pole. She actually got it, right off the bat and did a pretty good job. I showed her how to hook a fish or shrimp on a hook. She thanked me very much, but was too squeamish to do it herself. I cast the pole various times and even used a lure but got nothing. I guess you pay any price for the opportunity to spend a little bit of quality time with your daughter. Worth it.



Be happy!