

# 240310 BRA Airboat Swamp Tour Port Everglades

Today we're going to travel to Port Everglades for the airport swamp tour. These are well-known and are iconic to Florida and the Everglades. Our first stop coming from the campsite at Flamingo in the Everglades national park was at Robert is Here market.



Now, I don't know for a fact that these are the southernmost nesting purple marlins, but it makes for a good advertisement, and there certainly were a lot of birds there. I tried to take a picture of close, but they're pretty skittish.



This market is well stocked with just about everything that you could want. It has lots of locally canned and produced items. Fresh fruit variety is astonishing and you can get a smoothie made out of just about anything. We had a Keylime and ice cream milkshake, which was a interesting and tasty combination. But you could pick any

three fruits and blend them together. You're will have combinations you're not gonna find at your local national chain.



Why not? Fresh omelette made from Emu eggs. These are beautiful green blue eggs which, in comparison look like they are five times the size of a chicken egg. They are similar to ostrich eggs with their difficulty to crack. For \$45 one can be yours.

PS there was no guarantee that you won't crack one and get a chick inside. Of course, that's just a joke.

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Again, the variety of fruits and vegetables is amazing. This market also has a petting zoo in the back with a aviary. Anyone with young children should stop here as it would be a great place to relax. This is located in Homestead Florida at 19200 SW 344th St, Homestead, FL 33034. The Proprietor is usually at the checkout counter. He doesn't call it 'The Disney World of Fruit Stands' for nothing. Well worth the stop.



Finally, we arrived at Port Everglades, Florida. It is the gateway to the area called the 10,000 islands. Actually, their tour guide for the airboats later told us at present day they have counted over 17,000 islands in this part of Florida. It's truly a labyrinth of endless waterways that you can get lost in, literally.



Of course the holding and petting of



crocodile hatchlings is a must. These are so tame because they've been handled since birth, so no drama. Plus, they have a stout rubber band on their mouth. They are cool to the touch as you would expect.



We decided first to do the mangrove airboat tour at Captain Jack's. There are different ecosystems for swamp boats, the second being the grassland systems.



If you drive west on State Road 41, the original alligator alley connecting Miami to Naples, you will see over a dozen airboat providers. Most of all of them until you get to port Everglades will be of the grassland ecosystem variety. Pick one and you're going to see about the same thing.



Captain Jack's is co-located with at least two and possibly three airboat providers. They all offer the same mangrove system

for their tours. To me it's amazing that the boats don't run into each other but the drivers have been doing this for years and know what they're doing.



Tours run \$45-\$50 per person. You can get a combo tour and do both the mangrove and the grassland tour for \$100 plus tax per person.



The New River runs through Port Everglades. It's an appropriate name because it's actually a channel that was dug to drain the Everglades. Of course, all of this is now being reinstated in a \$4 billion project. It is the largest ecosystem reestablishment project in US history.



The mangrove system that you will go through at Port Everglades is really marvelous. It is a labyrinth of tight areas that these boats go through. This is well worth the 30



minutes that you will spend out on these waters.



This is a photograph which doesn't show that we were traveling through this area at 35 to 40 mph; not kidding. I told the captain in our two-way headsets that we all had that the company must have great confidence in them.



In a way, it's refreshing that in the United States, you can still write an airboat like this in such a tight space as such a high-speed with no seatbelts, no helmets, no safety, glasses, and experience the thrill of a true risk. Of course, everyone has to sign a waiver and parents have to do so for their minors, but these tours are popular, well attended and well worth it.



Along the way, the driver will stop and point out wildlife. You expect, of course, the

gators and the different species of birds. What you don't expect are tilapia paddocks. Tilapia build round bowl like structures where they attract mates. You can see these through the water, and usually there is a male tilapia, standing guard over his paddock.



We did not see any returning boats without lots of smiles. This is a great tour and a real rush as you go through these tight areas at 35 and 40 mph.



This is a sunken boat that of course, was part of a joke. The captain will tell you that it was an unfortunate accident from the last Tour group. Everyone laughed; no one believed.



Wonderful experience with my daughter. We sat in the very front seat, held on tight and squinted our eyes as we blasted

through the mangroves. If you only can do one tour with an airboat, this is the one you should do.



Next we went on the grassland airboat tour. This is on a larger boat with seats 12 people. The advantage to the mangrove tour is that the boat seats six, is smaller and can go faster. Great for young boys and old men. As my wife would point out to me, great for girls, too!



You can see the marked difference in size of boats. Believe it or not this boat is made in Canada and used for ice fishing. I am not kidding. We are told that either one of these boats if placed on concrete would be able to push itself along at a good speed, while being consumed by friction, as it grinds down the road. That's how much power these boats have. In Ice, the boat would easily go over any type of surface and get you from one fishing site to another. I bet this boat never thought it would be basking in the sun in south Florida.

PS the boats are powered by 357 V8 Chevy small block gasoline engines. Yes both of



the drivers told jokes about Ford engines. Chevy guys have to do that.



Looking out over the grassland is like looking out over an ocean. It goes on in all directions. The grasslands is an interesting tour, but it's not as dramatic as the mangroves. There is something about being enclosed at such speed in a tight space that is exhilarating. But I suppose there are those that will like the open space as well.



This is what the grasslands look like. Unfortunately, what you see in the movies with the air boats going over virgin everglades grass is no longer allowed. Makes sense in that every Tour would want to go to a fresh area and pretty soon everything would be smashed down and wildlife would have nowhere to run.



So, in my opinion, if you have to pick between the two types of ecosystems, I would pick the mangrove every time. I think it's much more interesting, you will see wildlife, and the exhilaration of the ride is like nothing you've ever done. It's like a flat roller coaster.



But as with the mangrove tour, there were no frowns faces after the airboat ride. This is a fun thing to do and small kids will really enjoy this. Children must be at least four years old to ride the boats. Again there are no seatbelts so you have to hold on or hold onto someone.

PS we were told that, although the water expanse is vast if you were to fall out of the

boat, you are in at most 3 feet of water, and usually in less than 12 inches. The problem is the mud in which you can sink down into up to your waist. But if you can float, you're not gonna drown in this water.



For my daughter and me it was a great memory, one that we will not soon forget. We would go back and bring other family members. This was worth the money and although I was concerned at 30 minutes was not long enough it is perfect for the mangrove tour. Enjoy.

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**Be happy!**