

# Florida Everglades

## Information Booklet

2/11/2012

Horizons Adventures

Rick Wise



## *Welcome to the Everglades.*

Thank you for registering with HORIZONS - Adventures for Life. This is one of my favorite trips and we are looking forward to a great event. As always, this is a **smoke-free** program.

Included in this booklet are all the essential forms, lists and information for your experience. Please also check the WHAT TO BRING LIST and suggested packing techniques. Let me know if there is anything that you cannot bring or don't understand.

Horizons will be providing kayaks and paddling equipment, life jackets, (if you have your own, please bring it), group camping equipment and other miscellaneous gear. This, however, should not be considered as a replacement for any other item on the "what to bring" list. We will arrange a pre-trip meeting by phone with you to finalize the details of the trip and go over the route and other information. Because we will not all be together before the trip or program begins, this contact is important. Please be sure to mail in or fax your medical information form and waiver before the program starts so we can have it with us when we are finishing the packing details. **Keep a copy** of this as well in case it does not reach us. **Food allergy** information is particularly important to get ahead of time. Although we will be carrying a complete first aid kit, it will not be a substitute for any medication that you may be presently taking or require in an emergency. Take the time to pack these as required and bring an extra in a separate container as a backup. The Everglades **demand** respect at all times and should never be taken for granted. Please read over the included material carefully and follow the WHAT TO BRING list carefully. Please call me if you have any questions. Horizons is committed to **Minimum Impact** camping techniques that protect both campers and the environment. Considerations must also be given to animal life. Although a thrill to observe in the wild, animals are always a concern, and so extra attention will be given to food storage and waste management. We will get a chance to discuss these issues as the program allows. I look forward to talking with you and meeting you in the Everglades.

Yours truly,

Rick Wise

## *The Florida Everglades*

"Everglades National Park is one of the United States' largest parks and a treasure of biological diversity. The park was established in 1947 by President Harry S. Truman to protect the unique and fragile ecosystem. Located less than an hour from the Miami metropolitan area, this subtropical wilderness is a combination of one and a half million acres of saw grass prairie, shimmering waters, and mangrove forests sheltering a tremendous spectrum of wildlife. Animal life is varied and includes the endangered American crocodile, alligators, bobcats, deer, dolphins, and a wide variety of fish. In addition, more than 300 species of birds winter in the park. "Find out more at <http://www.everglades.national-park.com/>

### *Weather*

The Everglades National Park and Flamingo have only two seasons: Winter, which is dry, and summer, which is wet. Winter (November - April) is the dry season when temperatures are cooler and range from 40's (4-8 degrees Celsius) at night to the 80's (25-30 Celsius) during the day. It can be humid. Be prepared for temperature variability.

### *Accommodations and meals*

Our accommodations on the first and last night will be in a comfortable hotel close to the Park. Exact location will depend on arrival details of all the participants and will be forwarded before you depart. We will be camping in tents for all other days of the trip. Meals (excellent) will be supplied by Horizons except for the first and last night's meals, which will be at a local restaurant. Please be prepared with suitable methods of payment for this portion of the trip. Be sure that we have your medical forms and personal information well ahead of time so that meal planning can accommodate any particular preferences you have. Although we caution our guests about bringing alcohol, there is limited room for dinner wine. Please note that in addition to camping equipment, kitchen and eating equipment, we will be carrying our own water and this will seriously limit the amount of space available for any other unnecessary items.

Any other information regarding accommodations or logistical details will be forwarded to you as required.

## General Information

All programs follow the guidelines set out by industry standards, Canadian Sea Kayak Outfitters, and Horizons.

### BE PREPARED!!!

Be prepared to spend your week on the water and in the sun, rain, wind and everything in between. The emphasis will be on relaxation and enjoying the natural world while bringing up your skill level to a point where you can get out and enjoy the activity on your own.

Fill out all medical forms (included on the website). Be sure to include all medical information. Of particular importance are food and medication allergies and medical conditions (no matter how remote the possibility that they will affect your trip). This information is confidential but vital to your leaders planning.

Sign the waiver (this must be received by Horizons before the event)

### TOPICS

Safety  
Navigation  
Boat Handling, Paddling Strokes and Rescue  
Campsite etiquette  
Hygiene  
Cooking and Nutrition

### WILDLIFE

May include....

Dolphins  
Manatees (rare)  
Alligators (Freshwater and likely to see them)  
Crocodile (Salt and unlikely to see them)  
Turtles (all sorts)  
Sharks  
Thousands of birds including Ibis, Cranes, Herons and all manner of wading birds, Pelicans, Eagles, Osprey etc.



### FLORA

We will be paddling in a combination of Mangrove swamp, sand keys, beaches and backwater everglades. The relief is low.

## Getting there

You must provide your own transportation to and from the meeting place unless otherwise arranged. Flights can be purchased through a travel agent or directly from the airline. We recommend a travel agent as they will likely have the best grasp on the market possibilities.

Horizons will pick you up from Fort Myers airport on Feb 11th provided you give your flight details to us in advance. Participants should arrange to arrive no later than 6:00 p.m. at the airport and preferably before 4:00. If driving down, please check into the Hotel no later than 4:00 p.m. **Please consider having much of your gear taken down for you by Horizons.** Space will be limited so pack well and follow the advice in this booklet. Contact us to arrange pick up of your gear as early as possible. If you plan to drive to Florida you can follow these directions as provided by the park website.

### DRIVING DIRECTIONS

Gulf Coast: 5 miles south of Highway 41 (Tamiami Trail) on State Road 29, in Everglades City. From Interstate 75 (Alligator Alley), take exit 80 (State Road 29) south and proceed 20 miles to Everglades City. Once in Everglades City, follow the signs to the park. Visitor Center is on the right.



## Environmental Concerns

### *Water*

This is different from ‘sweet water’ camping as well. We will be carrying all our drinking and cooking water with us; four liters per person per day so filters won’t likely be necessary. We will carry one to be on the safe side. This does make a BIG impact on available space for packing in the first few days.

### *Sun and Heat*

At this time of year our bodies are used to cold weather so acclimatizing will take a few days. Keep covered from the sun and wear lots of sun block.

### *Human waste disposal*

Near the ocean things change a little bit. Faecal matter can be easily processed by a marine environment so distance away from shore is no longer an issue. Best areas for this are below high tide, or in the trees with consideration for the bugs and snakes and cactus, using toilet paper and burning it in a can. The Chickees or sleeping platforms will have a chemical toilet that is quite good for this type of toilet. We may stay at a ground site” that also has a toilet. Ground sites are mounds of soil that are a few feet above the ocean level, and not that different from a typical campsite found in Ontario. Chickees are wooden platforms located in sheltered locations but only a few feet above the ocean level. Chickees have water under and around them. Our plans are to spend the first five nights on beautiful expansive sandy beaches. There are no toilet facilities on these beaches. Most people will choose to dig a cat hole in the coastal plain adjoining the sandy beach. The plain is forested with cactus, the odd palm and a variety of tropical shrubs. Horizons has an excellent waste disposal system that will work well near the sandy beaches. Using a can to burn toilet paper in conjunction with a cathole is excellent. Attempting to use the ocean for human waste disposal is ok in some areas but on what seem’s like endless beaches, there is no visual privacy.

For those that are very environmentally conscious it is possible to use natural toilet paper. I have not seen poison ivy along this route or seen poison wood. Both could be described as the toilet paper from hell. They are not difficult to recognize and avoid.

## NASTY THINGS THAT BITE HUMANS

### *Snakes*

Florida snakes are not a problem. February is the time of year that we think is wonderfully warm in the Everglades but snakes would disagree. They are aestivating or hiding and inactive until the hot weather of the spring and summer returns. There are 4 species of snake that are poisonous in the Everglades. Two species are rattlesnakes, the cotton mouth and the coral snake. All are potentially lethal. We should adapt a few road rules for back country travel so that we minimize any risks.

- use your headlamp at night so that you do not step on a snake at night
- watch where you step during the daytime
- wear high rubber boots when you are about to travel through vegetation
- check your kayak in the morning for aliens before you get in
- Choose a path through vegetation that does not have thick vegetation brushing against you. Keep three to four feet between you and the vegetation including tree branches
- Most snakes find the nights too cold to be active in February and we have rarely seen snakes on these tours.

### *Crocodiles and Alligators*

There are only a few hundred Crocodiles left in the far south of the Everglades. They are not extinct but they are not far from it. We will be very lucky if we see one. Alligators are plentiful but do not normally travel on the outer beaches where we will spend most of our time. Because our first days route will bring us into alligator waters, we may enjoy viewing these shy creatures from the safety of our kayak. These animals will likely not be longer than 5 feet and will be very wary of a 17 foot plus kayaks.

Sharks are not often seen but must be considered to be everywhere. They and the crocodilians are intelligent enough to know where the food is easy to get so it is not wise to swim in those areas. Please observe the following rules and join the thousands of happy campers that have visited the “wilderness” area we will travel through.

Don't Swim...

- near a fish cleaning station for fishermen; tame animals may have lost their natural fear of us
- Don't swim at dawn or dusk or in the dark because these big predators like to eat then.
- Don't thrash around and act like you are wounded. Swim gracefully and un-appetizingly!
- Always have a person on shore watching when you swim; don't swim in the inland waters; it is against park policy and dangerous.
- Treat tame crocodiles with the utmost of respect. They are the most dangerous because they have less fear of us and they associate us with food.

### **INJURIES**

**feet** - never go bare foot; glass and sea urchins etc will get you sooner or later and that means evacuation. Put on foot wear before you get out of the kayak if you must paddle barefoot.

**Backs** - lift empty single kayaks with 2 people and a minimum of 4 if loaded, four per tandem and at least 6 or 8 if loaded. Stretch before kayaking and lifting boats!

### **DEHYDRATION**

The key to avoiding de-hydration in warm climates and cold is to drink lots of water. Watch the colour of your urine. If it becomes dark, drink until it is clear again. You must act quickly. Use fruit crystals if necessary. Monitor your water bottles. Others can monitor your behaviour - irritable, not enthusiastic, tired, you get a headache. Drink and the headache goes away within 20 minutes.

**WATER, FOOD AND RACCOONS** - water containers must be placed carefully on the ground. If they are punctured by sharp wood, cactus spines or shells or teeth, we will have to shorten our trip. Before dark or before you leave the water for more than a few minutes place it in the front or back hatch of a kayak and put the neoprene and plastic hatch covers on securely.

### **BOAT AND EQUIPMENT CARE -**

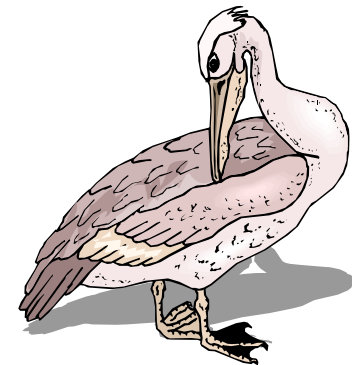
While paddling, don't scrape the plastic as you come to shore - get out and stand up before you reach shore. Lift your rudder before you are in shallow water - it is fragile.

At night - The boats will be tied together and tied to a tree. We need to select a spot and place all of the boats there right after unpacking so people can place their water in the boats and seal them up when they choose to. Paddles should be placed higher up and where no one will step on them at night. Food, toothpaste etc should not be taken into the tents but should be left in the kayak hatches. Maps, pumps etc can remain bungied on the deck of the boats if they are left right side up at night. Other gear can be left in the hockey bag and stuffed in the cockpit to discourage snakes and spiders etc., from finding a great hideaway at night. Finding them later when you are paddling could be really exciting.

## **Packing your bags and Kayak for Florida**

### **Contents of below in a small Toiletries bag**

- toothbrush
- toothpaste and floss
- personal medications
- Shave kit?
- Glasses/contacts and solution
- tampons or pads (waterproofed with extra ziplock plastic bags for carrying out)
- head lamp
- extra batteries
- pens and pencils-
- sandals
- -big straw hat for maximum sun protection
- -sunglasses with a strap behind your head



## ***What to Bring***

You can prepare much of this prior to leaving and arrange for Horizons to transport most of your gear down to Florida for you. This will avoid airport frustration and the possibility of lost luggage by the airlines. Because we carry our water, space will be more limited than on our “sweet water” trips.

What follows are some packing ideas. There may be a few extra things mentioned so take note. Please don't disregard your own experience and working systems. This is a guideline but it works well. Keep things as compact as possible.

### FOR ON THE WATER (in all weather)

- light pile or wool layer;
- Paddling jackets
- sun screen and bug dope, Lip balm (Lots of both)
- UV blocking sun glasses with retainer band
- Wide brimmed sun hat(s)
- Bathing suit and towel
- 2 t-shirts and
- 2 pair shorts
- “Quick dry” long sleeves and pants for sun & wind protection
- Rain wear
- Water bottle
- Sturdy, snug fitting shoes for in water use (sandals are acceptable if they have a heel fastener), full toe protection is preferred.
- Whistle with string
- Small fanny or other bag in which to store your misc. gear while on the water.



### OUT OF THE WATER

- ONE complete set of dry clothing that protects you from sun and insects. This includes underwear, socks, long sleeves, pants, warm sweater or pile, wind breaker. Wool Hat.
- dry shoes for the campsite
- High rubber boots for ‘bite’ protection
- sleeping bag and sleeping pad
- toiletries - (toothpaste, brushes, toilet paper, hair care, etc. - see washing)
- bug hat or bug shirt highly recommended
- Dry bags and/or stuff bags with garbage bag liners
- flashlight with fresh batteries/extra batteries, bulb

*Other Gear*-camera, fishing gear, binoculars, books or reading material

Label your clothes, gear and packs and garbage bags clearly. Remember there may be up to 11 other people on your trip.

## ***Intended Itinerary***

**Generally**, we will be up early to avoid the mid-day sun. Sun rise is about 6:00 am and sets 12 hours later at about 6:30 p.m. so early to bed and early to rise.

### ***Day 1***

Horizons will pick you up at the airport and take you to our first nights hotel. Here we review the trip details and go over equipment and packing. Participants should arrange to arrive no later than 6:00 p.m. at the airport and preferably before 4:00. If driving down, please check into the Hotel no later than 4:00 p.m. (see getting there). We will have dinner together that evening. **Participants will be responsible for the cost of the first and last night's dinner.**

Breakfast at 6:00 and finish our packing and preparations for a 10:00 am or earlier departure on the water.

## ***Our Route***

Below is a map of the area we will be paddling with various camping spots available. Use the attached pages to follow our intended route.

As with any trip, our intended itinerary must always be subject to revision pending changes in the weather. Other factors that may affect our route would be health and fitness issues. Dehydration is not uncommon and can affect anyone. Note the Turner /Halfway Creek routes near the top of the map. That may be the depart point of our first day's travel.

### **Travel and Health Insurance**

We highly recommend you purchase additional health insurance that is as comprehensive as possible and covers expenses up front and not after receipts are provided. Travel cancellation insurance can be purchased through a travel agent or your local CAA. Some credit cards also provide travel and health insurance benefits that can include lost luggage



Horizons Adventures proudly supports and adheres to the Standards set out by Paddle Canada. Our guides, boats, equipment and operations follow these standards as well as the standards set by Horizons, which in turn meet or exceed all applicable codes and standards as set out by law. All Horizons Guides receive training by Sirius Wilderness Medicine. In addition all staff now receive Paddle Canada Instructor training.

Date	WeekDay	Name of Campsite	Location	Klms	Paddle Time
12th start	Sunday	Halfway Creek/HP Williams Roadside Park	Off the Highway	5-8	2-4 hrs
12th	Sunday	Chokoloskee to Picnic Key	Chokoloskee Island/main launch	8.1 or 10.26	3 hrs
13th	Monday	Picnic Key to Rabbit Key	Beach	10	2-3 hrs
14	Tuesday	Rabbit Key to Turkey Key	Beach	14	4- hrs
15	Wednesday	Turkey Key to Watson Place	Ground site	10	3 hrs
16	Thursday	Watson Place to Sunday Bay	Double Chickee for 12	10	2-3 hrs
17	Friday	Lopez River	Ground	6	3 hrs
18	Saturday	Out and unpack Day trip to see Manatees/ or extend the trip		8 kms	1.5 hrs
19	Sunday	Fly to Canada			

*REFUND POLICY: If we are unable to accept your application a full refund will be issued. Cancellations four weeks or more before the program start date may incur a 25% administration fee. No refunds will be issued after that date without medical certification. Refunds are not issued if participant withdraws from an ongoing program early. HORIZONS reserve the right to cancel registration without notice. In such a case, a full refund will be issued.*

Horizons proudly supports and adheres to the Standards set out by Paddle Canada and other industry standards. Our guides, boats, equipment and operations follow these standards as well as the standards set by Horizons, which in turn meet or exceed all applicable codes and standards as set out by law. All Horizons Guides receive training by Sirius Wilderness Medicine. In addition all staff now receive Paddle Canada Instructor training and are required to maintain a National Life Guard Certifications from Royal Life. Staff undergo several weeks of preparation every spring in preparation for the summer, no matter how many years they have been working for us. In fact, many other companies and organizations choose Horizons to help them train their staff also. We are proud of our staff and our commitment to training. For more about our staff and volunteers themselves try the staff page on our web site. For more on The Guides Course, Sirius Wilderness Medicine, and PADDLE CANADA courses refer to our Certifications page.

