

# Everglades

The map shows the many things to see and do in the Everglades. And its diverse ecosystems are represented in separate colors to illustrate the park's natural complexity, for this is not just a big swamp, but a dynamic fabric of terrestrial and aquatic plant and animal communities. With the

## Points of Interest

**Dwarf Cypress Forests** can be found along the main park road near Rock Reef Pass, a 1-meter-(3-foot)-high limestone ridge that rises out of the otherwise flat landscape. These open areas of scattered, stunted bald cypresses develop where marl or lime muds build up in solution holes. Despite their small size, the cypresses may be more than 100 years old. During the winter months the bald cypress look dead, but they are not; they have just lost their leaves for the season.

The many ponds in the park, from **Mrazek Pond** to **Coot Bay Pond** to **Eco Pond**, offer good chances to view birds, particularly in the dry winter months. Sometimes flocks of hundreds of egrets, herons, wood storks, and other water birds fly in to feed.

The shallow waters of **Florida Bay** are best explored by boat. About a third of the park is composed of the bay and its tiny islands, or keys. Most are protected refuges for nesting birds. White and brown pelicans, roseate spoonbills, ospreys, bald eagles, and many shore birds share the warm waters with fish, porpoises, sea turtles, sharks, and manatees.

## Walking Trails

The main park road begins at the main visitor center and ends 61 kilometers (38 miles) later at Flamingo. Many trails take off from this road, and several more begin at Flamingo. **Trails marked by an asterisk (\*) are accessible for the handicapped.**

**The Anhinga Trail\*** (less than 800 meters/0.5 mile) offers one of the best opportunities to see wildlife close-up. Alligators, turtles, fish, marsh rabbits, and many birds, including anhingas, herons, egrets, and purple gallinules, frequently inhabit the area. Taylor Slough, a slow-moving, freshwater, marshy river, acts as a reservoir, supplying needed water for plants and animals through the winter dry season.

**The Gumbo Limbo Trail\*** (less than 800 meters/0.5 mile) winds through a hardwood hammock, a jungle-like grove of tropical trees and smaller plants. Staturesque royal palms, gumbo limbo trees, wild coffee, and lush aerial gardens of ferns and orchids grow in this dense, moist forest. Hardwood hammocks usually sit about a meter (3 feet) higher than the surrounding terrain. Floods, fires, and the invasion of saline waters can threaten the survival of a hammock.

At **Long Pine Key**, a network of interconnecting trails (11 kilometers/7 miles) runs through the pinelands, an unusually diverse pine forest. About 200 types of plants, including 30 found nowhere else on Earth, grow under the slash pine canopy. Without periodic fires to destroy competing vegetation and expose mineral soils for seedlings, the pines would not survive. White-tailed deer, opossums, raccoons, and the endangered Florida panther live in the pinelands.

**The Pineland Trail\*** (less than 800 meters/0.5 mile) also circles through the pinelands. The shallow bed of limestone that underlies the pinelands, and in fact all of south Florida, can be clearly seen along the trail. Solution holes, formed when rainwater and acidic plant matter mix and dissolve the rock away, dimple the ground.

**The Pa-hay-okee Overlook Trail** (less than 400 meters/0.25 mile) leads to an observation tower offering a view of part of the vast "river of grass"—the true glades that gave the park its name. Muhly grass, Everglades beardgrass, arrowhead, and many other grasses that grow in the glades are found here. Sawgrass, which is

not a true grass, but a sedge, grows here, too. Patient observers may see red-shouldered hawks, red-winged blackbirds, common yellowthroats, vultures, pygmy rattlesnakes, indigo and king snakes, and an occasional alligator along the trail.

**The Mahogany Hammock Trail\*** (less than 800 meters/0.5 mile) enters the cooler, damp environment of a dark, jungle-like hardwood hammock. Rare paurotis palms and massive mahogany trees (including the largest living specimen in the United States) thrive. Colorful Ligus tree snails, tiny and jewel-like, and delicate webs of golden orb weaver spiders are suspended overhead from tree branches. At night, barred owls awaken to hunt.

**The West Lake Trail\*** (less than 800 meters/0.5 mile) winds through mangrove trees along the edge of the large, brackish lake. Four types of mangroves—red, black, white mangrove and buttonwood—grow in this region where the southward-creeping glades meet saltwater. The mangroves' unusual above-ground root systems enable the trees to tolerate poorly oxygenated soils and help anchor Florida's hurricane-ravaged

coastline. The mangrove region also is a nursery for fish and crustaceans: mullet, snapper, stone crabs, shrimp, and spiny lobsters.

Several longer trails near Flamingo lead into southwestern parts of the Everglades. These trails include the **Christian Point Trail** (6 kilometers/4 miles), **Snake Bight Trail** (6 kilometers/4 miles), **Rowdy Bend Trail** (8 kilometers/5 miles), and the **Coastal Prairie Trail** (21 kilometers/13 miles). Many of these trails pass through coastal prairie. Salt-tolerant plants usually associated with deserts—cactus, agave, yucca—grow here. Hardwood hammocks have developed in some prairies.

**Shark Valley\*** lies off U.S. 41, the Tamiami Trail. Here, along the 24-kilometer (15-mile) loop road you may see a variety of wildlife that inhabits the wide shallow waterway that is the headwaters for Shark River. Alligators, otters, snakes, turtles, and birds, including rare wood storks and snail kites, are native to this watery expanse. Hardwood hammocks and other tree islands dot the landscape. The loop road is used for tram rides, bicycles, and walking. An observation tower along the road provides a

spectacular bird's-eye view. Tram tours, which are run by a concessioner, often include the services of ranger-naturalists.

## Canoe Trails

The **Wilderness Waterway** twists 160 kilometers (99 miles) through the expansive marine and estuarine areas of the park. These areas harbor almost every type of marine organism found in the Caribbean and serve as spawning grounds and nurseries for many of them. Larger creatures such as water birds, sea turtles, many types of fish sought by fishermen, and the endangered manatee are attracted to these waters because of their abundant food supplies. Other shorter trails offer opportunities to explore the park's backcountry. These trails include the **Noble Hammock Trail** (5 kilometers/3 miles), the **Hells Bay Trail** (6 kilometers/4 miles), the **Nine Mile Pond Trail** (8 kilometers/5 miles), the **West Lake Trail** (13 kilometers/8 miles), and the **Bear Lake Trail** (19 kilometers/12 miles), which all begin near Flamingo. Rivers near Everglades City are also popular canoeing spots. A **BACKCOUNTRY CAMPING PERMIT IS REQUIRED FOR ALL OVERNIGHT TRIPS.**



Marine and Estuarine (all blue tones) Mangrove Cypress Coastal Prairie Fresh Water Slough Pinelands Fresh Water Marl Prairie Hardwood Hammocks



## Road Distances

From Main Visitor Center to Areas in the Park	Miles	Kilometers
Royal Palm Visitor Center	4 mi	6 km
Long Pine Key	6 mi	9 km
Pinelands	7 mi	11 km
Pa-hay-okee Overlook	13 mi	20 km
Mahogany Hammock	20 mi	31 km
Paurotis Pond	24 mi	39 km
Little Blackwater Sound	25 mi	41 km
Nine Mile Pond	27 mi	43 km
West Lake	31 mi	49 km
Flamingo Visitor Center	38 mi	61 km
Key Largo Ranger Station	38 mi	61 km
Shark Valley	50 mi	80 km
Gulf Coast Ranger Station	92 mi	147 km

From Main Visitor Center to Areas Outside the Park	Miles	Kilometers
Homestead	11 mi	17 km
Miami International Airport	45 mi	72 km
Key West	135 mi	216 km

## On the Water

### Message to Boaters

For safe boating, National Ocean Survey charts are indispensable. Charts 11430, 11432, and 11433 are for sale at the main visitor center, Flamingo, and in the Everglades City area. All keys and beaches in and along Florida Bay are closed to landings unless otherwise designated. Where backcountry camping is allowed, a camping permit is required.

### Wilderness Waterway

A well marked inland water route runs from Flamingo to Everglades City. Sequentially numbered markers guide you over its 99 miles (160 kilometers). Boats over 18 feet (6 meters) or with high cabins and windshields should not attempt the route because of narrow channels and overhanging foliage in some areas. The route requires a minimum of six hours with outboard motor or seven days by canoe. One-day round trips are not recommended. Campsites are available along the route. Backcountry camping permits are required.

**Legend**

- Hiking trail
- Buoy
- Canal
- Canal gates
- Wilderness waterway and canoe trails
- Ranger station
- Picnic area
- Interpretive trail
- Campground
- Primitive campsite
- Primitive campsite—handicap access
- Marina
- Public boat ramp
- Lodging and meals
- Gasoline
- Restrooms and drinking water
- Crocodile sanctuary (closed to public)

**Water Depths**

- 0-3 feet (0-1 meter)
- 3-6 feet (1-2 meters)
- Over 6 feet (over 2 meters)

