

Oyster Creek Paddle



By David Allen

Water LIFE Kayaking

The day couldn't have started off much worse. The evening weather forecast said "Rain, Rain, Rain" for the early morning hours and sure enough it did. We had scheduled a club paddle starting at 8:30 a.m. and at 7:45 it was still raining hard in Port Charlotte and Punta Gorda where most of our members live. Then it stopped, at least in Port Charlotte. Since it's about 20 miles from Punta Gorda and Port Charlotte to Oyster Creek, we didn't expect many to make the trip and sure enough, only a few paddlers decided to take a chance that the weather would clear up. Some members did make the trip, and those that did were rewarded with a great paddle as the weather changed from rainy to sunny.

So exactly where is Oyster Creek? It's not easy to find even with detailed directions. The Oyster Creek launch site is in Englewood, but don't confuse it with the 420 acre Oyster Creek Regional Park with an entrance on San Casa Drive. The entrance to the launch site is off Placida Rd. immediately south of the Lemon Bay High School. It is also almost directly across Placida Rd. from the Cedar Point Environmental Center. There has been a lot of construction at the school site making the entrance even more difficult to find.

Once you enter the park, the launch area has been improved with gravel roads and a gravel path down to the water. The sandy beach is ideal for launching a kayak without scraping-up the bottom. The parking is somewhat limited, but there is enough room for about 10-12 cars. There are no restroom facilities at this site.

No sooner had we put our kayaks into the Creek and the sky started to clear up and blue sky appeared. Great! Now a short paddle, about 0.75 miles, and we were in

Lemon Bay. The rain had kept many of the powerboats off the water, so we could paddle toward Stump Pass with few wakes to rock our boats.

Stump Pass is one of our favorite places to paddle because the beaches are pristine. There is usually lots of wildlife in the area and it gives us a spot to beach the kayaks, have a snack and take a swim in the warm Gulf waters. How can you beat that for a pleasant outing? We were all surprised by the amount of shoaling in the inlet which had narrowed the main channel down to about 150 feet. And the incoming tide was really causing some strong currents and tidal waves in the pass. We did see one paddler enter the pass and make his way east into the quiet waters of Lemon Bay, but his kayak had an outrigger for added support in the rough water. More power to him...it was a tough paddle.

We took our time on the beach, had an energy bar and did some shelling. By this time the sun had come out in full force and we were ready for a cooling swim. Very refreshing!

On the return trip, we took the route due north along the east shore of Manasota Key, just west of Whidden Key. This route took us past Stump Pass Park on the south end of Manasota Key and then past the beach homes that dot the shoreline. This is a little longer way home, ending just west of the Cedar Point Environmental Park, but there are several bald eagle nests at the Park and we hoped to see one of those beautiful birds.

The paddle to Stump Pass is only one of several good



The launch site is between Lemon Bay high school and Placida Road

paddles that can easily be reached from Oyster Creek. Palm Island and Thorton Key are the nearest, just south of Stump Pass. But a little further south is Don Pedro Island with its beautiful un-crowded beaches. All in all, it turned out to be a beautiful day and a good paddle with friends.

The Port Charlotte Kayakers meet each Wednesday evening at 5:30 PM at Port Charlotte Beach Park at the end of Harbor Blvd. All are welcome to attend. For additional information contact Dave Allen at 941-235-2588 or ddaa@comcast.net

We now have standup paddleboards for rent or sale

Free Demo!
Call for location & time

RENTALS!

941
966-5477

Kayaks for the whole family

Over 250 discounted kayaks on display in our warehouse

Old Time OCEAN KAYAKS eXtrasport LEADAL

A Silent Sports Outfitter

Convenient to I-75 **2301 Tamiami Trail North • Nokomis FL 34275** Since 1993
www.silentsportsoutfitters.com

TRUE BLUE POOL STORE

Specializing in Heaters and Pool Pumps

Charlotte County's Complete Swimming Pool Supplies
Pool Repair and Maintenance Store

575-2525

Located in the Punta Gorda Crossing Shopping Center
Next to Publix Mon-Fri 9AM-5:30PM Sat 9AM-3PM

"Green Pool" Clean Up & Maintenance