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Unique and wild. That is one way to sum up the 10,000 Island Wilderness in Florida's Everglade National Park. The Ten Thousand Islands area is one of the greatest secrets of the paddling world. Located near the southwestern tip of the state one can enjoy a wide variety of local and exotic animals such as Alligators and tropical birds. This area also holds many rare tropical trees not found anywhere else in the US like Rainbow Eucalyptus and [Plumeria](#). After a little sight seeing its time to get out for some exciting Florida kayaking.

Most of the "islands" of the Ten Thousand Islands aren't real islands at all, just clumps of mosquito-infested red mangrove growing out of the shallow Gulf of Mexico. Yet, there are some great islands with beach shorelines, such as Tiger Key. So even though the name suggest thousands of islands, there are really only a few hundred or so, most being unusable.

If you don't have good navigational skills, make sure to bring someone along who does. Within this mangrove wilderness lies a web of bays, creeks, and channels in which it is all too easy to lose your way. You will need at least a waterproof marine chart based on NOAA charts. Don't consider carrying anything other than a waterproof chart. Of course, you will want a compass to make sure you can get back on the right path if something happens. Plus, I would highly recommend taking a (waterproof) GPS receiver. Naturally, you should know how to use all these navigational tools.

A great place to start your first [Florida kayaking](#) activity is at Chokoloskee Island. When you want to enjoy some relaxation time on the island you can kick back and sink your pole into the water to catch a wide variety of fish. The island is big on relaxation and fishing, since they are blessed with redfish, tarpon, sea trout, snook, and many other types of fish. There are a plethora of paddling trails and multi-day canoe and kayak trips that can be explored and enjoyed in this area.

You are heading into a sub-tropical environment that could have some risks. Don't go into this thinking you are going to play with Mickey Mouse at Disneyland. Protect yourself from the intense sun and the many mosquitoes by wearing longer pants and shirts, hats, and of course a good sunscreen. Since all the water in the area is saltwater, all you will have access to is what you bring with you. Everyone coming on your trip will need to bring a gallon of water per day spent in the area. Protect your water supplies from the raccoons. They will chew a hole through a plastic water container to get at the freshwater inside.

Sand flies and mosquitoes also inhabit this area, after all, this is the Everglades. Take lots of insect repellent. Be sure your mosquito netting bars the tiny sand flies as well as mosquitoes. If you go in the winter, this may not be as big of a concern.

If you're brave enough to get out in the wild and smart enough to bring everything needed for a safe trip, you will fall in love with this area of the Everglades. Be sure you're in good physical shape for what could be a challenging canoe/kayak trip (depending on winds and tides), and know your wilderness navigation. You will be roughing it in some of the more natural and remote areas of the state. This is a great place to visit just be sure to have all your ducks in a row and do your homework. The Ten Thousand Islands await you. Bon voyage!

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