



Gulf Coast Area Canoe Trips



Turner River and Halfway Creek

A paddle down the Turner River or Halfway Creek is an excellent introduction to the wild, primeval beauty of **Big Cypress National Preserve** and **Everglades National Park**. Paddlers may see alligators, wading birds, and epiphytic plants. Some may even catch a glimpse of a manatee.

Turner River Trip

The trip begins off of US 41 in Big Cypress National Preserve. The river winds its way through a variety of habitats, from the fresh water of the cypress swamp, through sawgrass prairies, to saltwater mangrove forests. Along the way paddlers will encounter a series of challenging mangrove tunnels, quiet, sheltered lakes, and the flow of a river influenced more by tides than gravity. The trip terminates in the salt water of Chokoloskee Bay.

The launch area is located along US 41, 6 miles (10 km) east of SR 29. Launch your canoe on the eastern side of the Turner River bridge. Use caution: pull vehicle as far off of the roadway as

possible and caution all members of your party to stay off the highway. A parking lot is located 1/2 mile (.8 km) east at the H.P. Williams Roadside Park.

Paddling Times:

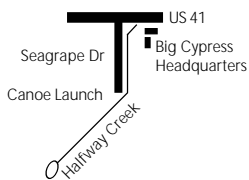
US 41 to Chokoloskee - 4 1/2 to 5 1/2 hours.

US 41 to Ranger Station

via Halfway Creek - 6 to 7 hours.

via causeway - 5 1/2 to 6 1/2 hours.

Halfway Creek and Turner River Loop



Put your canoe in at the ranger station. Follow the shoreline east (to the left), go under the causeway bridge and paddle up Halfway Creek. The creek will narrow and the mangrove trees will form a tunnel around the passage. About a mile upstream, the creek will fork. Stay to the right in the wider channel and follow the waterway beyond one small lake to Turner Lake. Bear to the right along the shoreline and go down Left Hand Turner River to Chokoloskee Bay. Take your canoe out on Chokoloskee Island or return to the ranger station via the channel along the causeway. Watch for powerboats along entire route.

Alternate Trip: Halfway Creek from US 41. The canoe launch is located at the southern end of Seagrape Drive, which is off US 41, two miles east of SR 29 and just to the west of Big Cypress National Preserve headquarters. Paddle south following trail markers to the junction with Left Hand Turner River. Take a right to head towards Everglades City and the ranger station. A left turn will take you to Turner Lake.

Paddling time for either trip: 4 hours.

Logistics and Safety

Rent a canoe or kayak or bring your own. Check at ranger station for tide and river level information. A falling tide flows toward the Gulf of Mexico; a rising tide flows inland or "upstream." For all trips add one hour if traveling against wind and tide.

Weather poses the greatest danger to paddlers. Check the forecast before departing. Prepare for a variety of conditions -- from chilling rains to blistering heat. If a storm threatens, find shelter. If no shelter is available, stay low in your canoe to avoid becoming a lightning target.

The national parks are home to a variety of wildlife, including some animals and plants with the potential to harm humans. Respect wildlife by remaining at least 15 feet (5 m) or more away, paddling quietly,

and remembering that we paddlers are merely guests in this wild house. All plants and animals are protected. Never feed a wild animal. To do so is illegal and endangers both animals and people. Do not collect, cut or mark vegetation in any way.

Suggested Equipment:

Flotation devices (required by law)	
Map and compass	Whistle
Rain gear, jacket for warmth	Shoes
Sun protection	First Aid Kit
Insect protection	Food
Drinking water (1 gallon or 4 liters per person)	

Insure that items in the canoe are secured and tied down, so they will not be lost if you tip over.

Canoe Trails

1 Canoe "put-in" on US 41: Paddle south through abundant cypress trees and other freshwater vegetation.

2 Entrance to 1st mangrove tunnel: This is your first look at the arching and sprawling mangrove trees. Watch for low branches and roots. This tunnel is short, about 2/10 of a mile.

3 Small Pond: At the exit of the 1st mangrove tunnel lies a small pond. While it may seem like a dead-end, look to the right for the opening to the next tunnel. This tunnel is slightly longer than the first.

4 Junction with Turner River Canal: The Turner River route swings south to the right. The old Turner River Canal is visible to the left. The canal was an attempt to "drain the swamp." It has since been plugged to restore natural water flow.

5 Four-Way Junction: Here the waterway widens, and scars from old airboat trails may be evident crossing the main canoe route. The trail continues straight ahead amid sawgrass prairies on both sides of the waterway.

6 Mangrove Tunnel: This tunnel is short, and opens into a transition zone of sawgrass on your left and mangrove trees on your right.

7 Important Turn! As you paddle along the sawgrass/mangrove zone you will enter a small pond. The trail looks like it might continue straight along the sawgrass/mangrove area. It does not. The canoe route is on the **right**, where careful observation will reveal the mangrove tunnel entrance. This tunnel is longer - 4/10 of a mile. In the tunnel you will pass a USNPS Boundary Marker, marking the border between Big Cypress National Preserve and Everglades National Park.

8 Tunnel Exit: The river widens and the trail passes through a series of lakes.

9 Small Creek: On the left you may notice a creek leading to a small lake. The route to Chokoloskee continues straight ahead. Watch for powerboats.

10 Hurdles Creek/ Left Hand Turner River: On the left you will see Hurdles Creek. Continue straight and watch for Left Hand Turner River on the right. Chokoloskee Island is 2.4 miles straight ahead. Take your canoe out on Chokoloskee Island or follow the causeway to the ranger station. For a longer trip, take Left Hand Turner River and go down Halfway Creek to the ranger station.

