

Sea Kayak Day Paddles On Florida's Hidden Coast

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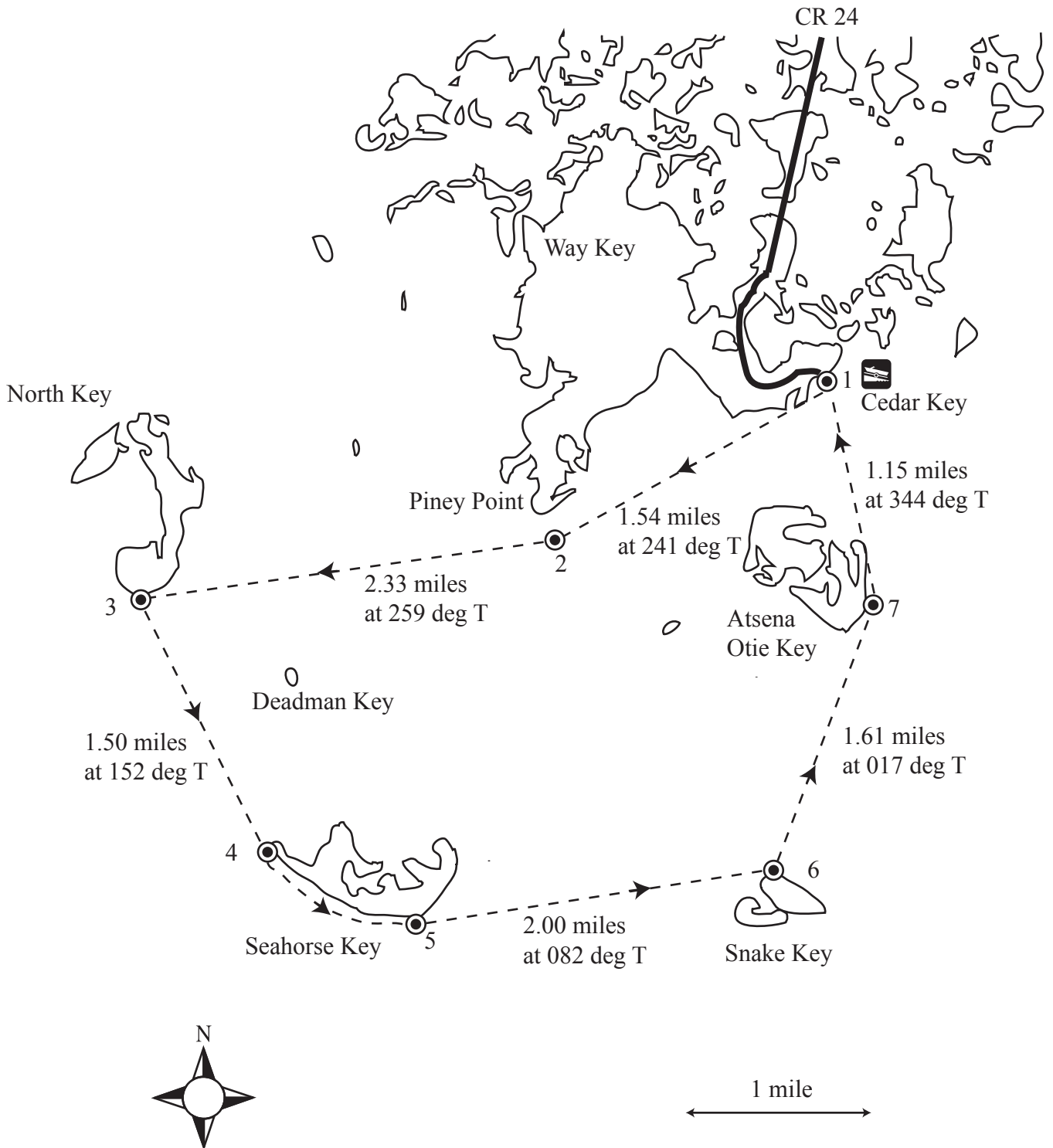
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Photographs and drawings by the authors unless otherwise indicated.

Front Cover: The Hidden Coast at Sponge Point. (Trip 15)

The Islands off Cedar Key



Gulf of Mexico

1. The Islands off Cedar Key

Distance: 11.0 miles

Launch site: Cedar Key beach. Delorme Atlas page 69 (C3). At the stoplight on Route 19 at the south end of Chiefland, (page 70, A2), take County Roads 345, 330, 347, and 24, south 34 miles to a stop sign in Cedar Key. Turn left onto 2nd street, and the launch beach is on the right after 0.2 miles at City Park. There is ample parking. Launch at the right end of the beach, just outside the marked swimming zone.

GPS Waypoints:

WP1, N29 deg 08.190, W83 deg 01.770 then 1.54 miles at 241 deg T to
WP2, N29 deg 07.558, W83 deg 03.053 then 2.33 miles at 259 deg T to
WP3, N29 deg 07.171, W83 deg 05.315 then 1.50 miles at 152 deg T to
WP4, N29 deg 06.019, W83 deg 04.610 then 0.84 miles round the coast (116 deg T) to
WP5, N29 deg 05.720, W83 deg 03.902 then 2.00 miles at 082 deg T to
WP6, N29 deg 05.925, W83 deg 01.944 then 1.61 miles at 017 deg T to
WP7, N29 deg 07.236, W83 deg 01.460 then 1.15 miles at 344 deg T to WP1.

Tidal data reference point: Cedar Key

Trip Description: Cedar Key is an unspoiled gem of a small city, with interesting wooden buildings and magnificent scenery. It gives a glimpse of “Old Florida”, and makes a great center for a vacation. This trip differs from most others in this book, in that:

1. The launch point is in the center of a popular vacation city.
2. The main destinations are visible from near the launch point.
3. Tidal currents are strong at spring tides in the main channels, and these can affect the choice of destination.
4. There are no convoluted tidal creeks to negotiate before reaching the Gulf.
5. There is adequate depth of water throughout.

These factors do not occur in any of the other fifteen trips in this book. You have been warned! This is a sensitive area for wildlife. The interior of each of the islands except Atsena Otie Key is closed to public entry. All public access to Seahorse Key beaches is prohibited from March 1st to June 30th each year. This includes a 300 foot buffer round the island. Atsena Otie Key has a jetty on its west side, from which there is a nature trail.

Although our sketch chart shows a circular tour of the main islands, tidal and wind considerations may make it more pleasant to visit the various islands by a series of “out and back” day trips. We left the boat ramp two hours before high water, took the flood to the beaches on North Key (WP3) and Seahorse Key (between WPs 4 and 5), where we took a break, and then used the new ebb to visit the great beaches on Snake Key (WP6) and Atsena Otie Key (WP7). Highlights were an osprey carrying a fish near Deadman Key, a pair of dolphins between Seahorse and Snake, and bald eagles in their nest on Atsena Otie. This is a truly wonderful playground for the sea kayaker and naturalist, and we enjoyed a most memorable day.