

10 SECRETS TO SUCCESS IN THE 'GLADES

BY CHRIS DUERKSEN

Kayaks offer limited space for storing camping gear. Travel light and bring only the necessities.



Florida's vast subtropical Everglades can be heaven—or the other place—for kayak anglers. Here's how to fish it right.

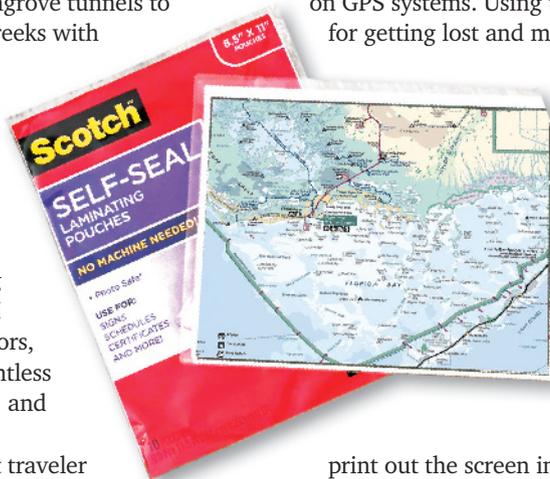
Everglades National Park and adjacent Ten Thousand Islands National Wildlife Refuge are justifiably ranked among the best kayak fishing destinations. But when anglers arrive, they often find challenging conditions markedly different from kayak fishing in the rest of the nation. From overgrown mangrove tunnels to twisting tidal creeks with heavy flows, to a confusing waterscape dotted with thousands of islands and a maze of waterways, the going ain't easy! Did I mention alligators, crocodiles, countless sharks, sawfish, and now pythons?!

As a frequent traveler in this watery wilderness, I will share my top 10 tips for Everglades kayak fishing, more than a few gleaned from the school of hard knocks over the past decade!

1) First and foremost, print your own maps. I learned early on that while commercially available maps for the Everglades and Ten Thousand Islands are helpful for a general overview of the territory, they are often inaccurate and don't contain enough topographic detail. The same is certainly true of maps on GPS systems. Using them is a recipe for getting lost and missing the best fishing spots.

The solution? Make your own. First, download a good map program like Google Earth. Identify the area that you are going to paddle and

print out the screen in color at a full 8 ½ x 11 size. Then, use a self-sealing laminating pouch from Scotch or a similar product to waterproof the printout and enable you to make notes using red permanent ink.



2) Don't leave home without an emergency satellite phone or similar device.

This is true whether you are kayaking in the Ten Thousand Islands or the Everglades National Park backcountry. Even close in, the cellphone coverage is spotty at best and non-existent as you paddle down tidal creeks like the Faka Union River or deep into the Everglades Wilderness Waterway. If you get injured or lost it could be days before anyone finds you in the maze. I use a small Garmin InReach satellite phone that allows me to text messages to my family and also send an SOS alert at the touch of a button.

3) Use a mushroom instead of a fluke anchor. First, make sure you take some sort of anchor. Between the surging tidal flows in creeks and around islands and often present winds, it can be challenging to stay on a fishing spot, especially without a pedal kayak. Fluke anchors are handy and work well in sandy areas like Florida's Indian River Lagoon, but I soon found out that here the flukes get hung up easily in downed snags, mangrove roots, or oyster beds. I continued to rely on a fluke anchor due to