

its convenience and neat folding design—until I found myself stuck once more in a remote creek with surging tidal currents. As I tried to work the stubborn anchor loose, my yak spun around broadside into the current, and I came perilously close to flipping! I had to cut the anchor line. The next day I made a beeline to the local fishing shop and got a mushroom anchor. Treat tides here as you would river fishing.

**4) Grab a collapsible, single-blade paddle.**

Whether you own a pedal or paddle kayak, a single-blade collapsible paddle is de rigueur for the Everglades and Ten Thousand Islands. If you have ever tried navigating in a narrow tidal creek or an overgrown mangrove tunnel with the traditional double-bladed paddle, you know what I mean. Even if you are a pedal-kayak aficionado like me, there are many instances where the shorter paddle can assist in turns or other tight maneuvers. If you are going to be covering a lot of distance in a day, a double-bladed paddle may be your choice, but I carry both.

**5) Four outfits cover all bases.** With many different types of rods and reels on the market along with literally thousands of different lures, it's easy to get lathered up and overload your brain and kayak with tackle. My advice: Keep it simple. A 6 ½- or 7-foot light-medium action spinning rods will handle 75 percent of all conditions the Everglades paddling angler needs to be ready for. But, I've identified three specific scenarios that I refer to as "specialty situations," each of which warrants additional outfits. The first is in narrow mangrove tunnels with nice holes, where snook and redfish like to hang out. Every inch of rod length counts when angling in tight quarters featuring overhanging branches and air roots that make casting an adventure—shorter is definitely better. I always carry a 6-foot spinning rod for these conditions. The shorter stick makes it easier to make accurate casts, particularly the backhand cast that is often called for in the tunnels. The second special situation is when there is the possibility of catching a shark or big tarpon in places like the Faka Union River and inshore among the Ten Thousand Islands. For this, I carry a medium-heavy 7 ½-foot rod with a 4000 series reel. The final condition is when you find clear shallow



Above: In surging tidal waters, writer prefers the mushroom anchor on right to the fluke style. At right: Add a collapsible single-blade paddle for tight creeks and backup. Below: In certain areas of Everglades National Park, largemouth bass are just as prone to striking saltwater lures as seatrout and redfish. Bottom: Author's preferred lures include surface plugs, flashy spoons, diving stickbaits, and weedless worm hooks and jigheads rigged with soft plastics.

