

*Charlotte County
Parks & Recreation*

Blueway Trails



Charlotte County Blueway Facilities

How to Use This Guide

This guide provides information on the excellent paddling opportunities in and around the Charlotte Harbor estuary. Charlotte County's shoreline is divided into the following four distinct sections: Charlotte Harbor section, Coastal section, Myakka River section, and Peace River section. The trail routes in each section are shown in color on the aerial photomap. Trails are numbered to correspond with the information provided in the table. The information table shows the trail name, length, classification, accessibility, and the trail's scenic rating. A lettered facility guide is provided to show launch areas, type of access, and amenities such as water, food, and phone locations along the trails.

Explanation of Classifications

These guidelines are for educational purposes only. They are not intended to provide a basis for evidence of responsibility or negligence in any legal action. Use of the Blueway Trails is at the user's own risk. Each area and each situation may require different responses and judgments by the user based on his/her ability and current evaluation of the situation. Factors that can change the classification of a trail include weather, time of year, time of day, group and individual needs.

BEGINNER: Involves gentle paddling in lakes, deltas, creeks and embayments, in inhabited, non-challenging, protected waterways exposed to slight currents or tides. Such trips are usually undertaken for a secondary purpose such as birding, fishing, or photography. Trips will generally require less than two (2) hours of paddling.

NOVICE: Involves protected water in lightly populated areas with occasional exposure to moderate currents or tides. Sheltered coves or landing areas are available every mile or so with no crossing greater than two miles. Trips will generally require less than four (4) hours. On-board water and snacks are recommended.

INTERMEDIATE: Involves exposure to open water subject to moderate currents, tides and wind. Landing areas may be unavailable for up to five miles. Moderate hazards may exist such as bottom conditions and unrestricted motorboat traffic. Trips will generally require less than six (6) hours. Trail may be difficult to follow. On-board food and water is required.

EXPERT: Involves exposure to broad reaches of open water with potential for heavy currents, tides, wind and surf. Areas may be remote with assistance more than four hours away. Landing areas are not predictable. Uncharted hazards and conditions may exist. Trips may exceed eight (8) hours. Thorough knowledge of trail route and conditions is required. On-board food and water is required.

	Facility	Access	Rest Rooms	Water	Food	Phone
A	Middle Beach Manasota Key Dr., Englewood	Sand Ramp	Yes	Fountain	No	Coin
B	Indian Mound Park 210 Winson Ave., Englewood	Boat Ramp	Yes	No	No	No
C	Tom Adams Bridge S.R. 776, Englewood	Boat Ramp	No	No	No	No
D	Rocky Creek Marina 1990 Placida Rd., Placida	Dock	Yes	Bottled	No	Coin
E	Ainger Boat Ramp 2025 Placida Rd., Englewood	Boat Ramp	No	No	No	No
F	Beach Place 1863 Gulf Blvd., Englewood	Public Beach	No	No	No	No
G	Cedar Point Park 2300 Placida Rd., Englewood	Dock	Yes	Fountain	No	No
H	Stump Pass Park Manasota Key Rd., Englewood	Beach	Yes	No	No	No
I	Panama Blvd. West end of Panama Blvd., Rotonda	Roadside	No	No	No	No
J	Grande Tours 12575 Placida Rd., Placida	Sand Ramp	Yes	Bottled	No	Office
K	Gasparilla Marina 15001 Gasparilla Rd., Placida	Boat Ramp	Yes	Bottled	Snacks	Coin
L	Placida Ramp Boca Grande Causeway, Placida	Boat Ramp	No	No	No	No
M	Uncle Henry's Marina 5800 Gasparilla Rd., Placida	Boat Ramp	Yes	No	No	Coin
N	Port-O-Call Marina 4230 S.R. 776, El Jobean	None	Yes	Bottled	Snacks	Coin
O	El Jobean Ramp 4333 Kerrigan Cir., El Jobean	Boat Ramp	Yes	No	No	Coin
P	Spring Lake Ramp 20080 Edgewater Dr., Port Charlotte	Boat Ramp	No	No	No	No
Q	Port Charlotte Beach 4500 Harbor Blvd., Port Charlotte	Ramp & Beach	Yes	Fountain	Vending	Coin
R	Sea Horse Marina 4999 Tamiami Trl., Port Charlotte	Beach	No	No	No	No
S	Harbour Heights Park 27420 Voyageur Dr., Harbour Heights	Boat Ramp	Yes	No	No	Coin
T	Nav-A-Gator Grill 9700 S.W. Riverview Cr., Arcadia	Boat Ramp	Yes	Bottled	Bar & Grill	Coin
U	Farm Store U.S. 17 N End of Washington Loop Rd., Punta Gorda	None	Yes	Bottled	Snacks	Coin
V	Shell Creek Lodge 3269 Duncan Rd. Hwy. 17, Punta Gorda	Floating Dock	Yes	Hose	No	Office
W	Prairie Creek Access Off Washington Loop Rd., Punta Gorda	Roadside	No	No	No	No
X	Hathaway Park 35461 Washington Loop Rd., Punta Gorda	Boat Ramp	Yes	No	No	No
Y	Tower Garden Lagoon Riverside Dr. & U.S. 17, Punta Gorda	Boat Ramp	Yes	Hose	Bar & Grill	Coin
Z	Riverside Ramp Riverside Dr., Punta Gorda	Boat Ramp	No	No	No	No
AA	Darst Ramp 537 Darst Ave., Punta Gorda	Boat Ramp	No	No	No	No
BB	Lashley Park E. Marion Ave., Punta Gorda	Boat Ramp	Yes	No	No	Coin
CC	Fishermen's Village 1200 W. Retta Esplanade, Punta Gorda	Dock	Yes	No	No	Office
DD	Ponce de Leon Park 4000 W. Marion Ave., Punta Gorda	Boat Ramp	Yes	Fountain	No	Coin
EE	Wisteria Park End of Wisteria, off Rio Villa, Punta Gorda	Boat Ramp	No	No	No	No
FF	Taylor Rd. access Taylor Rd., Punta Gorda	Riverbank	No	No	No	No
GG	Burnt Store Marina 5000 Burnt Store Rd, Punta Gorda	Boat Ramp	Yes	Bottled	Sit Down	Coin
HH	Pirate Harbor Jolly Rodger Blvd., Punta Gorda	Roadside	No	No	No	No
II	Allapatchee Shores Park 3100 Hickory Ct., Punta Gorda	Launch w/ dock	No	No	No	No

Charlotte County Blueway Trails

Trail ID	Trail Name	Length	Difficulty	Interpretive		Access		Scenic		Overall Rating
				Topics	Points	Quality	Points	Quality	Points	
1	Rock Creek	2.1 miles	Beginner	B,H,M	5	Good	6	Wild/Dev	5	5
2	Stump Pass	2.2 miles	Novice	M,B,F,GB	9	Good	7	Wild/Dev	8	8
3	Oyster Creek	1.6 miles	Beginner	M,B,F	6	Poor	4	Wild/Dev	6	5
4	Intra Coastal	18.2 miles	Novice	M,B,F,GB	8	Fair	4	Open/Dev	6	6
5	Don Pedro Island	2.9 miles	Novice	B,M,F	8	Fair	7	Developed	8	8
6	Little Gasparilla	2.4 miles	Novice	B,F,GB	7	Good	7	Developed	6	7
7	W. Coral Creek	1.5 miles	Beginner	M,B,F,GB	8	Very Good	8	Developed	8	8
8	E. Coral Creek	1.8 miles	Beginner	M,B,F,GB	8	Very Good	8	Developed	8	8
9	Grande Tours	.8 miles	Beginner	M,B,F,GB	7	Very Good	9	Developed	6	7
10	Woolveton	1.7 miles	Novice	M,B	9	Good	8	Wild	9	9
11	M. Cantelas	4.3 miles	Novice	B,F	8	Good	7	Wild/Dev	7	7
12	Catfish Creek	2.5 miles	Beginner	M,G,F	8	Good	8	Wild	8	8
13	Bogges Hole	1.6 miles	Novice	B,M,F	9	Good	8	Wild	9	9
14	Boca Grande	4.9 miles	Novice	B,F,M	6	Good	7	Wild/Dev	8	7
15	Widden Creek	2.2 miles	Novice	M,B,F,GB	9	Good	8	Wild	9	9
16	Bird Key	0.8 miles	Novice	B	9	Good	7	Wild	9	8
17	Bull Bay Bypass	2.4 miles	Novice	B,F,M	9	Good	8	Wild	9	9
18	Bull Bay	4.9 miles	Novice	M,B,F,GB	9	Good	8	Wild	9	9
19	Shallow Water	2.9 miles	Novice	M,B,F	9	Good	8	Wild	9	9
20	Turtle Bay	4.4 miles	Novice	M,B,F,GB	9	Good	9	Wild	9	9
21	Sister Pond	2.7 miles	Novice	M,B,F	9	Good	8	Wild	9	9
22	West Wall	15.6 miles	Expert	B,M,GB,H	9	Good	6	Wild	8	8
23	Santa Fe	8.3 miles	Beginner	B,M,MR	6	Poor	5	Wild/Dev	6	6
24	Trout Creek	1.6 miles	Intermediate	B,M,F	9	Good	8	Wild	8	8
25	Interceptor	2.7 miles	Beginner	B,M,MR	6	Poor	5	Wild/Dev	6	6
26	Myakka River	5.2 miles	Intermediate	B,H	7	Poor	5	Developed	7	6
27	Tippecanoe	2.5 miles	Novice	B,M,F,MR	9	Fair	5	Wild	9	8
28	Ghost Point	2.8 miles	Novice	B,M,F	8	Good	6	Developed	9	7
29	Sasha's	1.0 miles	Novice	B,M	8	Good	6	Wild	8	8
30	Arapahoe	5.0 miles	Beginner	M,F	6	Poor	4	Developed	9	5
31	Three Lakes	1.2 miles	Novice	B,M,F	8	Good	8	Wild	5	8
32	Myakka Cutoff	4.6 miles	Intermediate	B,M,F	8	Good	8	Wild	8	8
33	Muddy Cove Cut	1.1 miles	Novice	B,M,F	6	Good	7	Wild	7	7
34	Lewis Creek	1.9 miles	Novice	B,M,F	6	Good	7	Developed	6	6
35	W. Spring Lake	2.3 miles	Beginner	B,M	7	Very Good	9	Wild/Dev	8	8
36	E. Spring Lake	1.5 miles	Beginner	B,M	7	Very Good	9	Wild/Dev	8	8
37	Parks & Recreation	4.7 miles	Novice	M,B,F,GB	6	Very Good	8	Developed	7	7
38	Harbour Heights	5.6 miles	Novice	B,M,F,MR	7	Good	7	Wild/Dev	7	7
39	Peace River	4.2 miles	Novice	B,F,A,C,MR	9	Good	8	Wild	9	9
40	Deep Creek	5.0 miles	Novice	B,A,C	9	Good	8	Wild	9	9
41	Outer Shell Creek	3.9 miles	Novice	B,A,MR	8	Good	8	Wild	8	8
42	Prairie Creek	6.1 miles	Novice	B,A,C	9	Good	7	Wild	9	8
43	Shell Creek	6.7 miles	Intermediate	B,A,C	8	Good	8	Wild	8	8
44	Upper Shell Creek	2.2 miles	Intermediate	B,A,C	8	Good	8	Wild	9	8
45	Tranquility Island	6.3 miles	Novice	B,F,MR,M	7	Good	7	Wild/Dev	7	7
46	Explorer Trail	3.5 miles	Intermediate	B,F,GB,M	7	Poor	6	Wild/Dev	7	7
47	Alligator Creek	3.2 miles	Novice	B,F,M	8	Fair	6	Wild/Dev	9	7
48	East Wall	8.3 miles	Expert	B,M,F	9	Poor	4	Wild	9	7
49	Gaspar	0.7 miles	Intermediate	B,M,F	9	Poor	4	Wild	9	7
50	Mosquito	1.3 miles	Intermediate	B,M,F	9	Poor	4	Wild	9	7
51	Spider	3.5 miles	Intermediate	B,M,F	9	Poor	4	Wild	9	7
52	Pirate Harbor	4.9 miles	Intermediate	B,M,F	9	Poor	4	Wild	9	7
53	Allapatchee Shores	1.6 miles	Novice	B,F,M	7	Fair	6	Wild/Dev	7	7

Rating System: 1 - Poor 9 - Excellent

F – Fishing, B – Birds, A – Alligators, Ms – Marsh, GB – Grass Beds, M – Mangrove, C – Cypress, H – History, O – Oak Hammock

Habitats You Can Expect to See

SEAGRASS BEDS

Seagrasses are underwater flowering plants that inhabit the nearshore areas of our coastal waters. They are predominantly found in protected bays and lagoons where the water is fairly clear and wave action is moderate. The four most common types of seagrasses that occur in southwest Florida and the Charlotte Harbor area are **shoal grass** (*Halodule wrightii*), **turtle grass** (*Thalassia testudinum*), **manatee grass** (*Syringodium filiforme*), and **widgeon grass** (*Ruppia maritima*). They can form thick, expansive areas known as **seagrass beds** or **meadows**.



Seagrass beds are of vital importance to the health of our estuarine waterways. Seagrasses form the base of a large underwater community. Dense seagrass beds serve as a lifelong shelter for many species of small fish and invertebrates. Many recreational marine fish species are dependent upon seagrass beds at some stage of their life. Seagrasses can also help to improve water quality by stabilizing bottom sediments.

Seagrass beds are fragile and extremely vulnerable to human impacts. Boat propellers and anchors can cut through seagrass blades and roots. Damage from “prop dredging” can take up to ten years to recover. Utilization of best management practices during construction activities, control of contaminants such as fertilizers from entering area waterways, and safe boating practices are necessary in order to preserve and protect our seagrass beds.

SALT MARSHES

Salt marshes are **tidal wetlands** that occur along low-energy coastlines and river shorelines. They are characterized as expanses of grasses, rushes, and sedges, and are usually found in the zone between low and high tide. Typical plant species found in our area salt marshes include **smooth cordgrass** (*Spartina alterniflora*), **black rush** (*Juncus roemerianus*), **salt meadow cordgrass** (*Spartina patens*), **salt grass** (*Distichlis spicata*), and **salt wort** (*Batis maritima*).



Salt marshes are one of our most biologically productive ecosystems. Movement of the tides distributes decomposing plant material through

the salt marsh, providing food for many species of animals and forming the base of the marsh food web. The salt marsh serves as a nursery for several species of fish, crabs, and shellfish. Many species of birds forage and nest in salt marshes. Salt marshes also buffer upland areas from storm surge, helping to protect homes and other developments.

Despite their ecological importance, nearly half of all of Florida’s marshes, both saltwater and freshwater, have been lost to development, dredging, and mosquito control impoundments during this century.

MANGROVE FORESTS



Mangrove forests, or **mangrove swamps**, are also tidal wetlands that inhabit low energy shorelines in the coastal areas of southwest Florida. Mangrove trees are specially adapted to salt- and brackish-water environments. Although there are more than 50 species of mangroves that

grow in tropical climates worldwide, there are four species found in our area: **red mangrove** (*Rhizophora mangle*), **black mangrove** (*Avicennia germinans*), **white mangrove** (*Laguncularia racemosa*), and **buttonwood** (*Conocarpus erecta*).

Red mangroves grow at the water’s edge, and are nicknamed “the walking tree” for their long, dark-red, aerial prop-roots. In the summer months, they produce pencil-shaped seedlings, or **propagules**. One red mangrove seedling can be the start of a new island. Black mangroves have a dark trunk, and may grow to be 60 feet tall. Their extensive root system has finger-like projections called **pneumatophores** that stick out of the sand by up to six inches. White mangroves are usually found growing landward of red and black mangroves and can be distinguished by their rounded, bright-green leaves. Buttonwood trees inhabit areas landward of the other mangroves, well above high tide and often in uplands. A variety of this tree, silver buttonwood, is a common specimen tree or hedge and has silvery, soft leaves.

Mangrove forests are very high in ecological value, and contribute much to the health of our waterways and local economy. Their root systems stabilize shoreline areas, buffer storm surge, and help to prevent erosion. They provide nesting sites for shorebirds, and habitat and nursery grounds for many species of fish and invertebrates.

As with our other significant coastal habitats, the importance and beauty of mangroves have not always been recognized. Although now protected by State law, vast areas of mangrove forests have been lost over the last 50 years due to development, and trimmed or severely altered for creation of waterway views.

History of the Area

The historical and archeological record of the area dates back some 3,000 years. The Native people, either the Calusa or Timucua aborigines first inhabited the area. These natives built numerous shell mounds and established camps along the harbor. The first Europeans to visit the area were Spaniards including Ponce de Leon and Hernando de Soto. In 1566-67 the Spaniard Menendez explored the area and named the harbor San Carlos Bay. In 1774 the English explorer Bernard Romans surveyed the area and renamed it Charlotte Harbor in tribute to Queen Charlotte Sophia, wife of King George III. America took possession of Florida in 1819.

In 1862 during the Civil War, Joel and Thomas Knight constructed a cattle dock on the northern shore of Charlotte Harbor. The dock was used by the Confederacy to load the schooners running the union blockade at Boca Grande. Cattle and cotton were shipped to Cuba in support of the Confederate market. Homes were built in the area surrounding the dock. This first settlement was known as Charlotte Harbor Town and is located in the triangle area formed by Charlotte Harbor, US 41 and Edgewater Road.

For more information on environmental parks and upcoming programs in Charlotte County contact:

Charlotte County Parks & Recreation Department Administrative Offices

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