



There are no other Everglades in the world.

Marjory Stoneman Douglas

This landscape is unlike any other—beautiful, mysterious, and wild. Here, tropical and temperate species flourish side-by-side in an environment, part Caribbean, part North American. The essence of the Everglades is found in the sharp, ragged edges of sawgrass blades, an alligator's deep bellow, the high-stepping dance of wading birds, the waterway labyrinth of the Ten Thousand Islands, and the sparkling, aquamarine waters of Florida Bay.

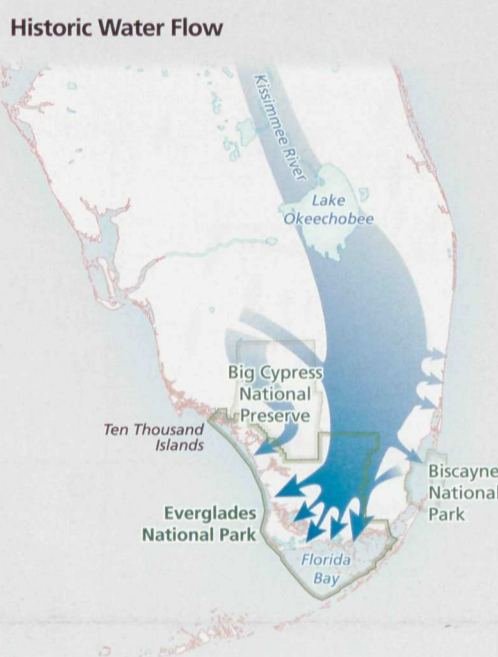
Water is the lifeblood of the Everglades. In summer thunder clouds carry the sweet smell of rain, signaling a time of renewal. This slow-moving river is dependent on the seasonal rise and fall of fresh water. It is also dependent on people. For over 100 years we dredged, dammed, and drained the landscape, controlling the ebb and flow of this life-giving force. In doing so, we endangered the Everglades and the life dependent on it.

Today there is hope. Critical restoration projects are attempting to emulate the natural flow of clean water to revitalize altered habitats. Everglades is one of a few national parks in the United States established to protect unparalleled biological diversity. It is also the largest subtropical wilderness in the United States, an International Biosphere Reserve, a World Heritage Site, and a Wetland of International Importance. The future of the Everglades is in our hands.

Sunrise on the Pa-hay-okee Trail
© GLENN GARDNER

Past Mistakes, Present Challenges, Future Hopes

For hundreds of years the Everglades was viewed as a mysterious place, an unknown, uncharted wilderness to most outsiders that extended from the Kissimmee River to Lake Okechobee, over low-lying land to Biscayne Bay, the Ten Thousand Islands, and Florida Bay (diagram at right). This mosaic of marshes, sawgrass prairies, and forests—home to an abundance of birds, mammals, fish, and reptiles—was a prolific ecosystem that replenished the aquifer, the source of clean water for south Florida.



kee, perhaps understood the Everglades best. Many non-Indians moved to the area in the 1800s and early 1900s and viewed this sensitive wetland as a worthless swamp. Dams, floodgates, canals, levees, and roads were built, diverting precious water from natural wetlands, reducing freshwater flow to productive estuaries, creating land for agriculture, growing communities, and setting the stage for ecological problems. Soon the Everglades was drying up. To complicate matters, invasive nonnative plants and animals, began to spread and compete with native species. Everglades National Park was created in 1947, but outside its borders people waged war on this wetland.



Projected global changes in temperature and precipitation may continue to alter the Everglades. Sea level rise erodes cultural sites, changes habitats, and increases salinity in estuaries and urban water supplies. Today the Comprehensive Everglades Restoration Plan is working to mimic the historic natural flow of water. Early results are encouraging—birds are returning to nest and nonnative plants have been removed in the wetlands restoration west of Royal Palm. Restoration efforts are helping the park address regional challenges and the global issue of climate change. You can help by reducing your carbon footprint.

The American Indians who lived here—the early Calusa and Tequesta, and later the Seminole and Miccos-

Major Influences

Everglades National Park's collage of habitats (below) is dynamic. Water, elevation, fire, and hurricanes are major influences on the health of the Everglades.

Water Water flow is essential to all habitats in the Everglades. There are two main seasons here—wet and dry. The wet season (May–November) is a time of abundance and renewal when wildlife disperses, following the flood of rain-water across the landscape. During the dry season wildlife

congregates in and around ever-shrinking water sources such as ponds and gator holes.

Elevation Although measured in inches instead of feet, elevation defines each habitat, from the lowest freshwater marsh to higher tropical hardwood hammocks.

Fire Natural and prescribed fires help create the mosaic of habitats found in the Everglades and maintains the open,

sun-lit environments typical of freshwater marshes and pine rocklands.

Hurricanes Powerful hurricane winds and storm surges can destroy vegetation and re-shape shorelines, but these storms contribute to the park's biodiversity by opening coastal landscapes that favor certain plants and animals.



Wood stork
© BOB PETERSON



Black skimmer
© PHILIP SORANI



Roseate spoonbill
© PHILIP SORANI

Marine and Estuarine

Marine and estuarine waters extend from the Ten Thousand Islands to Florida Bay. Seagrass beds lie beneath these waters, providing critical food and shelter for marine life. The health of this environment is dependent on management of freshwater flows by people and is key to sustaining productive fisheries outside the park.

Mangroves

Mangroves are found in coastal channels and winding rivers where fresh and salt water intermingle. Mangrove forests stabilize coastal land, sustain nurseries for marine life, and provide nesting habitat for wading birds. These forests are the first line of defense against storm winds and surges.

Freshwater Marsh

The Everglades freshwater marsh is a wide, shallow, slow-moving "river of grass," the iconic ecosystem of the park. Two major drainages—the broad Shark River Slough (pronounced *slew*) and the narrow Taylor Slough—are the main avenues for freshwater flow.

Cypress

Cypress trees thrive in flooded conditions. Cypress forests often grow in the shape of a dome, with taller trees in the center of the dome, or in a linear "strand" where tree growth follows the flow of water. A long-lived, deciduous wetland species, cypress can live as long as 600 years.

Pine Rockland

Pine Rockland, the rarest and most diverse habitat in the Everglades, occurs on the highest elevations, along a limestone ridge on the east coast of south Florida. This habitat includes slash pine forest, an understory of saw palmetto, and over 200 varieties of tropical plants.

Tropical Hardwood Hammocks

These dense island forests grow on slightly elevated land and rarely flood. Temperate trees, such as live oak, are outnumbered by tropical mahogany, gumbo-limbo, mastic, and others. Ferns and air plants thrive here. Natural moats around hammocks help protect them from fire.



ILLUSTRATION: NPS / ROBERT HYNES

Exploring the Everglades



Camp at a primitive site on the Gulf Coast.



View the Everglades from the Observation Tower.



Walk along the Aninga Trail.



Paddle through the mangroves.



Watch a beautiful sunset.

Gulf Coast

Gulf Coast Visitor Center, staffed daily, is located 4.75 miles south of US 41 (Tamiami Trail) on State Road 29 in Everglades City. It offers information, exhibits, wilderness permits, sales items, picnicking, restrooms, and ranger-led activities in winter. Marinas and boat launch facilities are located near the visitor center. Motorboat and paddling trips into nearby waters provide opportunities to see dolphins, birds, manatees, and other wildlife. Phone: 239-695-3311.

Boat Tours, offered daily, provide a glimpse into the mangrove estuary and the Ten Thousand Islands. Information and tickets are available in the lower level of the visitor center. Call 239-695-2591 for information.

Canoeing/Kayaking provide paddlers with a special experience to view wildlife in the Ten Thousand Islands. Canoe and kayak rentals are located in the lower level of the visitor center. Check with rangers for weather conditions and safety information.

Sandfly Island Trail 2.4-mi. Paddle to trailhead; 0.9-mi. walk features mangrove and tropical hardwood hammock habitats and cultural sites. Phone: 239-695-3311.

Shark Valley

Shark Valley Visitor Center, staffed daily, is located on US 41 (Tamiami Trail) 30 miles west of the Florida Turnpike exit for SW 8th Street. It offers information, exhibits, sales items, restrooms, and ranger-led activities in winter. Phone: 305-221-8776

Bobcat Boardwalk 0.4-mi. Walk from the visitor center through a sawgrass marsh and a bayhead.

Otter Cave 1.0-mi. Walk from the visitor center through a tropical hardwood hammock.

Tram Road 15.0-mi. Bike or walk this road to see alligators, birds, turtles, fish, and the vast Everglades wilderness.

Bicycling Rentals available or bring your own. Permits required for groups of 20 or more. Helmets required for ages 16 and under.

Tram Tour Take a guided two-hour tour, offered daily, to see wildlife and learn about this freshwater ecosystem. Call 305-221-8455 for reservations. Fee.

Ernest F. Coe and Park Road

Ernest F. Coe Visitor Center, staffed daily, is located at 40001 State Road 9336, 11 miles from Homestead, Florida. It offers information, film, exhibits, sales items, and restrooms.

The Main Park Road is a scenic 38-mile drive from the Ernest F. Coe Visitor Center to Flamingo. We recommend these stops:

Royal Palm, staffed daily, is 4 miles past the Ernest F. Coe Visitor Center. It offers information, sales items, restrooms, and ranger-led activities in winter.

Trails
Aninga Trail 0.8-mi. A must see, with great opportunities to view birds, alligators, turtles, and fish, especially in winter.

Gumbo-Limbo Trail 0.4-mi. Explore this dense tropical hardwood hammock.

Pinelands Trail 0.4-mi. Walk through this subtropical pine forest, the most diverse habitat in south Florida.

Pa-hay-okee Overlook 0.2-mi. View the vast Everglades wilderness.

Mahogany Hammock Trail 0.4-mi. Walk through this jungle-like island forest.

Paurotis Pond Nesting site for aninga, wood stork, great egret, white ibis, roseate spoonbill, and other species.

West Lake Trail 0.4-mi. Explore a mangrove forest and see trees that grow in salt water.

Flamingo

Flamingo Visitor Center, staffed daily in winter and intermittently the rest of the year, is located 38 miles past the Ernest F. Coe Visitor Center. It offers ranger-led activities and sales items in winter, and exhibits, information, restrooms, and wilderness permits year-round. Call 239-695-2945 for hours.

Boat Tours Daily narrated excursions into Florida Bay and mangrove estuary depart from the Flamingo Marina. Concession Services Marina, store, gas station, and food service in winter. Call 239-695-3101 for information.

Wildlife Viewing American crocodiles and manatees may be found around the Flamingo Marina. At certain times bird viewing

can be excellent at nearby Mrazek and Eco Ponds. At low tide, birds congregate on the mudflats in front of the visitor center.

Canoeing/Kayaking Information and trail maps are available in the visitor center. Ask rangers for safety information and weather conditions. Suggested paddling routes include Nine Mile Pond, a 5.5-mi. loop, and trips into Florida Bay.

More Information

For Your Safety Bring water, insect repellent, and sunscreen. Supervise small children at all times. This is a wilderness area, wildlife moves about freely. Do not feed or approach wildlife. Be aware of alligators, poisonous plants, and snakes.

Camping Drive-in camping is available at Long Pine Key and Flamingo. Get more information at visitor centers and the park website.

Explore Further The park offers wilderness camping, greater solitude on longer trails, outstanding night skies, and much more. For things to do, ask a ranger or visit the park website.

Pets Please control pets on a six-foot leash. They are permitted on public roads, campgrounds, picnic areas, maintained grounds, and boats. Temperatures are extreme. Do not leave pets in a parked car.

Fishing Ask at a visitor center or check the park website for fishing regulations.

Prohibited Drones, Jet Skis, water-skiing and off-road vehicles are all prohibited in the park.

Accessibility We strive to make our facilities, services, and programs accessible to all. For information go to a visitor center, ask a ranger, call, or check our website.

Firearms Florida state law applies to firearms in the park. Hunting is prohibited.

More Information Everglades National Park 40001 State Road 9336 Homestead, FL 33034-6733 305-242-7700 www.nps.gov/ever

To learn more about national parks, visit www.nps.gov. National Park Foundation. Join the park community. www.nationalparks.org

Emergencies call 1-800-788-0511



Great blue heron © PHILIP SIDMAN

Everglades Ecosystems

Marine and Estuarine Coastal Marsh Mangrove Cypress Coastal Prairie Freshwater Slough Pineland Freshwater Marl Prairie Hardwood Hammock



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