

Safety Harbor Kayak Cruises

I will describe 4 different kayak trips in the Safety Harbor East Clearwater area.

The first is “Tour d’Harbor”

About 2-3 hours. Always near land. Easily shortened for shorter trips. (Just turn around early and go back by same route)

Leave from the Safety Harbor Marina Boat ramp. The tides do not matter. Watch out for trailers. Bathrooms there. Tocobaga Tours Kayak rentals there by appointment
<https://www.tocobagatours.com/>.

Launch and recover at boat ramp which is very slippery and slimy.

Go out thru passage. Go left/Northeast staying just left North of the channel Red even triangle #10 Daybeacon. Hug the shoreline (not too close at low tide) and go in- between the pilings from the now-destroyed Safety Harbor Pier (or go around it after passing Daybeacon #2.

Go close to the shore on your left/west past the “Stonehenge” pavillion and the Festival Field, past the Safety Harbor Spa pool, up to the tiny little white sand dog and human Safety Harbor “Beach” and the start for the boardwalk. Keep land to your left/west and paddle next to the mangroves. You will pass a “T” extension out into the bay from the boardwalks, and can see the “Locks of Love” hanging on the South wire fence.

Keep on paddling into a moderate bay, but be careful of sand bars at low tide; stay out about 100 meters. There is another Boardwalk extension, but if you stay just east of the mangroves in the middle of the bay is the (small almost hidden) entrance to Mullet Creek (the start of the Mullet Creek Kayak trail, trip #3, Up the Creek with Paddle). If you go part way up the Creek, you will go under the Footbridge on the Boardwalk. There is a relatively deep channel 1 foot that leads out from Mullet Creek just south of the Sandbar that can be used to enter Mullet Creek even at low tides. Just north of this channel is a large jutting out sandbar, dry at medium and high tides, usually covered with shore birds.

Go way out East of the sandbar, then turn and paddle North. Stay offshore 1/6 nm as there is a nasty Oyster bar just North of the Mullet Creek sandbar. You will paddle about 1/2 nm parallel to Bayshore Blvd N, passing a few private piers, but watch out for another large oyster bar just North of “Grand Ave, an inland road just before the “Italian Stature Garden” on shore. You will go past another small creek under the footbridge leading into Philippe Park. Slightly up north are 4 small “micro beach” Kayak put-ins just N of the Power Line, (some of these micro-beaches are hard to see in the mangroves) , but they have with on- land parking, and are accessible from the paved road about 3/4 mile south on the Philippe Park road, famous for dog-walkers, people strolling and bicycle riders. The foot bridge connects the North turn-around on N Bayshore Blvd, Safety Harbor, to Philippe Park; no good Kayak launches near that footbridge until inside the park.

Past the 4 micro-beaches is mangrove until you come to the Philippe Park Point Sandbar marked with a daybeacon. Go around the east of the daybeacon and see the Philippe Park “Main Beach” with SUP board self-service rental racks. This is a popular spot to launch small beach sailboats. The main deep water channel to the Philippe Marina is about 1/4 NM way east of the daybeacon in the middle of Old Tampa Bay, and runs between the first and second Powerline towers. The City of Oldsmar main park/beach is right across from here, 1/4 nm North of the powerline. There is a small Oldsmar beach near the third tower.

As a side note, there is an underwater “fish coral” primitive rock/concrete oval structure partially marked by PVC pipes just above the water level, that can be found about 200 meters North of the Westernmost powerline tower about 100m offshore of Philippe Park. Marked is an obstruction on the charts in about 2 feet of water. Just what this is, I don't know.

Back to the cruise. North of Philippe sandbar and beach is a new “Oyster farm” concrete ovals offshore of the mangroves just before the start of Philippe Seawall and walkway. A small microlanding between the mangroves and Seawall just South-east of the Indian Mound is a good resting point. Around the east Point of the seawall are wooden steps up from the water to the walk that is dry a high tide. A good landing spot as the Mound is there, with Picnic Pavilions there. Bathrooms are there also. It is a very popular spot for landlubbers.

From the Safety Harbor Marina to here is 2 land miles. See the small map. North along the seawall and past the Mangroves is the Philippe Park boat launch with a dock to tie up and get to the land and restrooms. This is often a busy boat ramp for small powerboats. This is the usual turn around spot. It is another ½ mile beyond the wooden stairs. You can easily cross over Old Tampa Bay to Oldsmar, or cruise on down South ¼ NM offshore going under the first powerline Tower, line of site back to the Spa. Or you can cruise ½ nm offshore and following the line of shallow water daybeacons all the way down to Coopers Bayou about 3.5 NM.

You can also go North of the Philippe Marina, just offshore of the Philippe Park mangroves and private mansions up under the Route 580 bridge and the Railroad bridge up the Lake Tarpon Outlet Canal about halfway, turn around at the Dam.

Jack Willy's restaurant is hidden in a canal just East of the 580 bridge, which has an unused boat ramp to take-out and visit the TikiBar, one of the few boat-up on the water restaurants. It is too shallow for powerboats.

IF you keep on paddling south from the East end of the 580 bridge, just West of the Oldsmar shoreline, you will cruise past Oldsmar city park and its beaches.

Head south to the eastern powerline tower, where there is another beach and the torn-down old electricity power plant. From that point it is a moderate line of site 3 NM paddle back to Safety Harbor; aim for the tallest SH building (the 7 story Condo).

OR you can continue around the old powerplant point and go East to Mobbly Bay or way further east to the Double Branch River and the sandbar islands that lead up to the North Hillsborough Park Kayak trail and “fancy” kayak launch, Welcome Station, bathrooms and road that runs north to Hillsborough Blvd at the Rally gas station at Double Branch road.

Incidentally going east by car from Pinellas/ Hillsborough county line Race Track Road at the Oldsmar Flea market, about 2 miles East to the traffic light at the Rally gas station, gets you to Double Branch road. A short distance South on this road gets you to the Upper Hillsborough Conservation Park (small entrance fee) with its Visitor's Center bathrooms, kayak/canoe rentals (by reservation thru the Park) and their fancy Canoe/kayak launch.

From there it is a long expert endurance paddle to Rocky Point going East, or to the Cortney Campbell Causeway going South, or Safety Harbor going a long way SouthWest. Those routes are long stretches of open water for experienced paddlers only!

Turn around/ go-back points are usually Mullet Creek or Philippe Park.

You can also launch at the Philippe Park Boat Ramp or at the south end of the Park road near the Western power line tower, at one of the 4 parking spots/micro-beaches. The Philippe Park road U-turns at the footbridge to Safety Harbor Bayshore Blvd. There are legendary Redfish and Snook that sometimes can be fished along this route.



More Cruises to come!

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