



# Loxahatchee River Paddling Trail Guide

## The Waterway

The lush, twisting Loxahatchee River is worthy of its status as Florida's first National Wild and Scenic River. The coffee-colored stream meanders through centuries-old cypress trees and an abundance of palm trees that give the upper section a photogenic quality. Trapper Nelson's cabin is a point of interest near the trail's terminus in Jonathan Dickinson State Park. Nelson was an intriguing and colorful fur trapper who came to the area in the 1930s and lived along the banks of the Loxahatchee.

## The Paddling Experience

This outstanding 8.5-mile paddling trail is suitable for intermediate paddlers and has many surprises including two log dams. The dams have pullover structures for portaging or they may be paddled over in high water. Scout these structures before attempting to cross them; portage is likely, especially in low water. Short canoes or kayaks are recommended in the upper section (9-14 feet long) due to its narrow channel and sharp turns. Check with local outfitters about current river conditions and water levels. Large commercial pontoon boats are regularly seen transporting tourists upriver to Trapper Nelson's cabin and back to the state park. Below Trapper Nelson's cabin the river widens considerably. Contact with motorboats is possible and high winds are more likely closer to the state park boat ramp. As you approach the state park boat ramp from upriver, the park canoe concessionaire and swimming area will be on the left about half a mile before you get to the public boat ramp. Please do not use the concessionaire's boat landing or the swimming area unless renting boats from them.

## Access Points

**#1, Start of the Trail, [Riverbend County Park](#), 9060 W. Indiantown Rd., Jupiter**



Take a step back in time and enjoy walking, bicycling, riding, or canoeing through beautiful and historic Riverbend Park. Nearly 10 miles of hiking/biking trails, 7 miles of equestrian trails and 5 miles of canoeing/kayaking trails allow for hours of enjoyment. Stroll along the Loxahatchee River, visit the Cracker Farmstead, and picnic in the shade under a Seminole chickee.

**#2, Mile 8.5, End of the Trail, [Jonathan Dickinson State Park](#),**



As you approach the state park boat ramp from upriver, the park canoe concessionaire and swimming area will be on the left about half a mile before you get to the public boat ramp. Please do not use the concessionaire's boat landing or the swimming area unless renting boats from them. *Directions: Follow the signs from I-95 (Exit 87A) or the Florida Turnpike (Exit 116). Or, take SR 706 east to U.S. 1, go north 8 miles.*

## Outfitters and Shuttle Service

[Beach Water Sports](#), 561-745-6900





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[Jonathan Dickinson State Park concessionaire](#): 561-746-1466

[Jupiter Outdoor Center](#), 561-270-5392

## Base Camp

[Jonathan Dickinson State Park](#) makes a wonderful base camp to explore the area's natural wonders and rich history. The park teems with wildlife in 13 natural communities, including sand pine scrub, pine flatwoods, mangroves, and river swamps. Visitors can enjoy paved and off-road biking, equestrian, and hiking trails. Boating, canoeing, and kayaking along the river are also great ways to see the park. Anglers can fish along the riverbank or from a boat. The nature and history of the park comes to life through exhibits and displays in the Elsa Kimbell Environmental Education and Research Center. Programs for the kids, or for the whole family, are also offered here. The park also offers two full-facility campgrounds and a youth/group primitive campground. Visitors can arrange boat tours of the river and rent canoes, kayaks, and motorboats by calling (561) 746-1466.

## History

Ranger-guided tours of the 1930s pioneer homestead of [Trapper Nelson](#) are available year-round and tour boats based at the park travel to this site. Trapper Nelson became known as the "Wildman of the Loxahatchee" and made his living off the land as a trapper and fur trader. Once fame caught up with Trapper, he transformed his home into one of the area's first tourist attractions, "Trapper's Zoo and Jungle Gardens." Trapper's unsolved death in 1968 gives a fitting sense of mystery to the site. Trapper's is open 9:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m., Thursday through Monday, and is accessible only from the water.

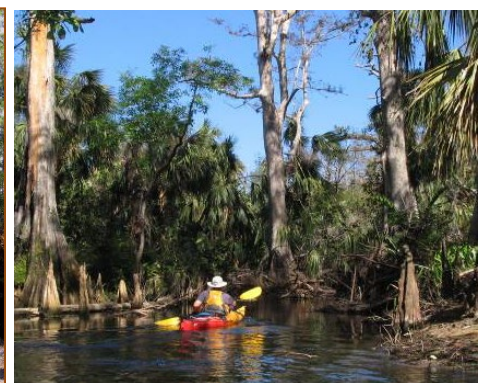
The 11,500-acre Jonathan Dickinson State Park is named for Jonathan Dickinson, a Quaker merchant whose vessel shipwrecked nearby in 1696. During World War II, the land the park now occupies was home to [Camp Murphy](#), a top-secret radar training school with over 6,600 men. The land became a state park in 1950.



Liz Sparks



Barry Richardson



FWC