

Paddling Route Nine: Drayton Island Loop

Put In and take out: Drayton Island Ferry Public Boat Ramp

Distance: 9.2 miles

Difficulty: Advanced due to the open water section of Lake George

Estimated Time: 5 hours

Description: This paddle includes visits to five Bartram Trail Sites. It is an open water paddle and should only be traveled under calm wind conditions. Lake George, because of its 11 mile fetch, can become extremely rough under high wind conditions and storms can be intense and appear quickly. Paddlers should venture out into Lake George only under calm or low wind conditions and when there are no storms in the forecast. Under windy conditions, it is best to stay on the western side of Drayton Island to Rocky Point, and return to the launch site by the same route.

This paddle begins at the Drayton Island Ferry public boat ramp. Launch at the ramp and paddle towards Lake George along the east shoreline in a clockwise direction around Drayton Island. Stay along the east shoreline of the River until you round Lake George Point, a distance of approximately 1.6 miles. Look for the BTS-26 Lake George Point Bartram Trail Site marker on the east shore of the Point.

Cross the River channel in a south by south-westerly direction and continue along the shoreline of Drayton Island keeping an eye out for the BTS 25 marker on the Island's shoreline approximately 4.4 miles from the launch site. Continue south along the shoreline until you arrive at the southern tip of the Island and cross the west channel of the St. Johns River to the west shoreline at Rocky Point. Keep an eye out for the BTS 27 site marker on the south side of Rocky Point overlooking Lake George. The marker can only be seen from the Lake since it is on the south side of the Point and faces south.

Rocky Point is located in the Ocala National Forest and is public property. This is a good spot to walk in the footsteps of William Bartram as the site is probably much as he found it nearly two and a half centuries ago. From Rocky Point, paddle north into the southwest channel of the St. Johns and along the west shoreline. At the point where the distance to Drayton Island appears the shortest, cross the river channel and follow the Island's shoreline north. BTS 24 is mounted on a piling in the River approximately 1.8 miles north of Rocky Point. Drayton Island is privately owned so the site can only be viewed from the River. Continue along the shoreline of Drayton Island to its northern tip and cross the River in a north-northeast direction to the BTS 23 marker which is visible on the east shore. Continue southeasterly along the shoreline back to the launch site at the Drayton Island Ferry boat ramp.

Coordinates:

Drayton Island Ferry Public Boat Ramp: 29° 23.146'N 81° 38.285'W

BTS-23 Georgetown – Biggs Park Soft Landing: 29° 23.355'N 81° 38.637'W

BTS-26 Lake George Point: 29° 22.342'N 81° 37.008'W

BTS-25 Drayton Island 1774 Camp: 29° 20.792'N 81° 38.627'W

BTS-27 Rocky Point: 29° 20.225'N 81° 39.461'W

BTS-24 Drayton Island 1766 Camp: 29° 21.533'N 81° 39.202'W