

A Guide to Kayaking for Beginners at Old Bridge Village

Introduction

A lot of you are probably aware that a new kayak dock was recently installed on New Post Road just beside the bridge that leads to Ian Island.

Well, not having done much “paddling before”, Kat and I received a kind invitation from Jack and Denise Kedian to try the “Kayak experience” and this article describes our intrepid journey from the mangrove hidden waters close to Old Bridge through the tranquil waters of the Riverbend Community and the return journey along the banks of the Caloosahatchee River.

Equipment needed

We were fortunate to use our friend’s kayak and associated equipment, which comprised of a:

1. A tandem kayak - to share the experience



2. A suitable vehicle—simply a car or van



3. A kayak roof rack and straps-to secure the kayak
4. A kayak cart-to wheel the kayak from your vehicle to the launching spot



5. A dry bag -to keep food, drinks and wallets dry
6. Clothing-light clothing, shorts, sandals or a pair of heavy socks and maybe a cheap foldable plastic rain-wear poncho , in case it rains.

Launching the kayak

This was so easy to do at Old Bridge. The kayak was placed on the plastic pipes and slid down onto the non-slip textured platform and then pushed into the kayak slip using ropes attached to the kayak.



The steps and handrails provided at the dock made it a piece of cake to get up and down to the dock.



Once the kayak is in the slip, handrails and an overhead bar, make it easy to get in and out of the kayak.

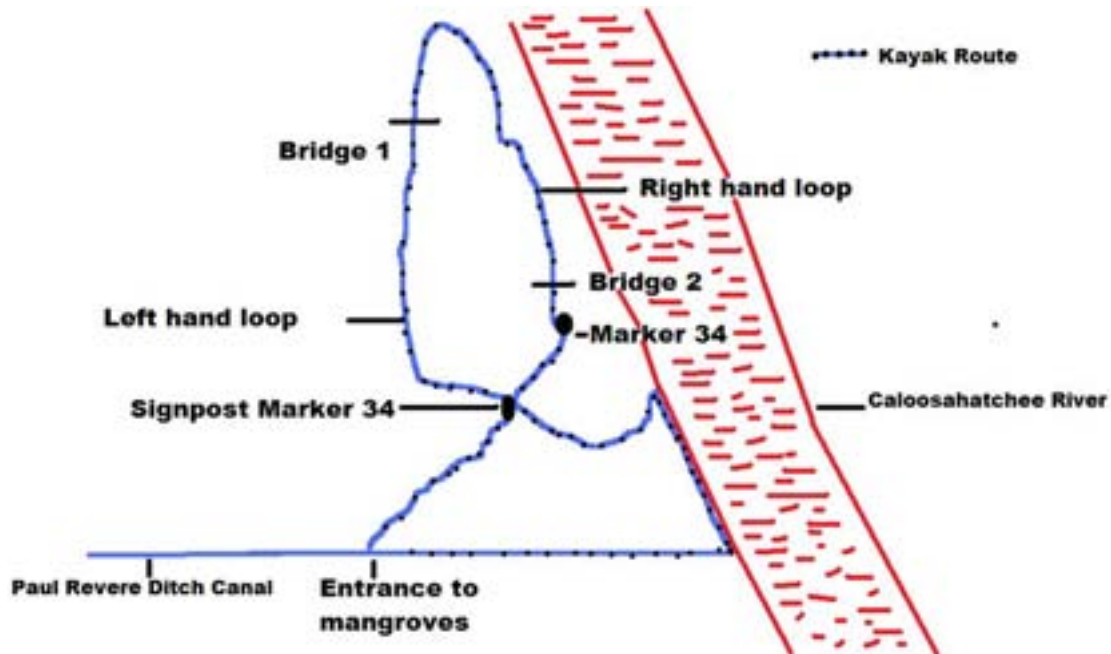




After the kayak was loaded up, we began our journey.



The Journey



Stage 1 (15 mins)

For old and newcomers to Old Bridge, there are three canals here: John Alden Pass (between Adam Drive and Sir Walter Way adjoining New Post Road), Ferry Canal (between Sir Walter Way and Paul Revere Loop adjoining New Post Road) and the Paul Revere Loop Canal (between Paul Revere Loop and the east side of Old Bridge Village adjoining FoxMoor).



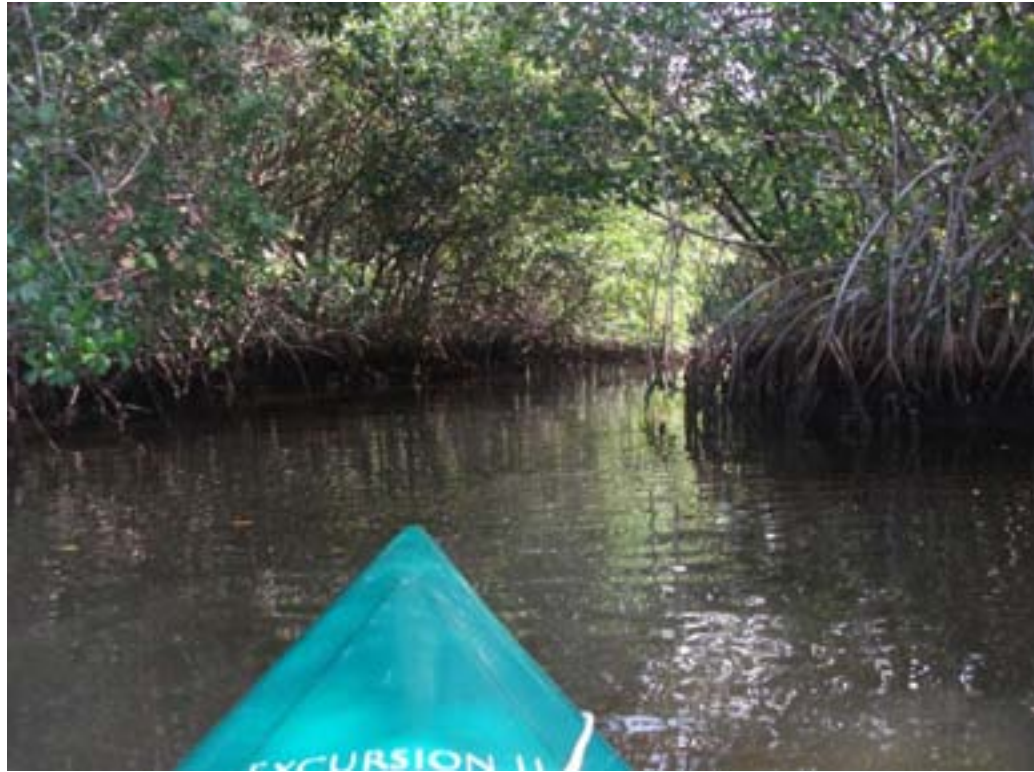
From the dock , we set off north down John Alden Pass. Not many people see this canal in close detail unless they are boaters but this canal is wide and you get an idea of space.



Half way down on the left hand side you get a view of \a most spectacular red flowered tree - a Royal Poinciana.

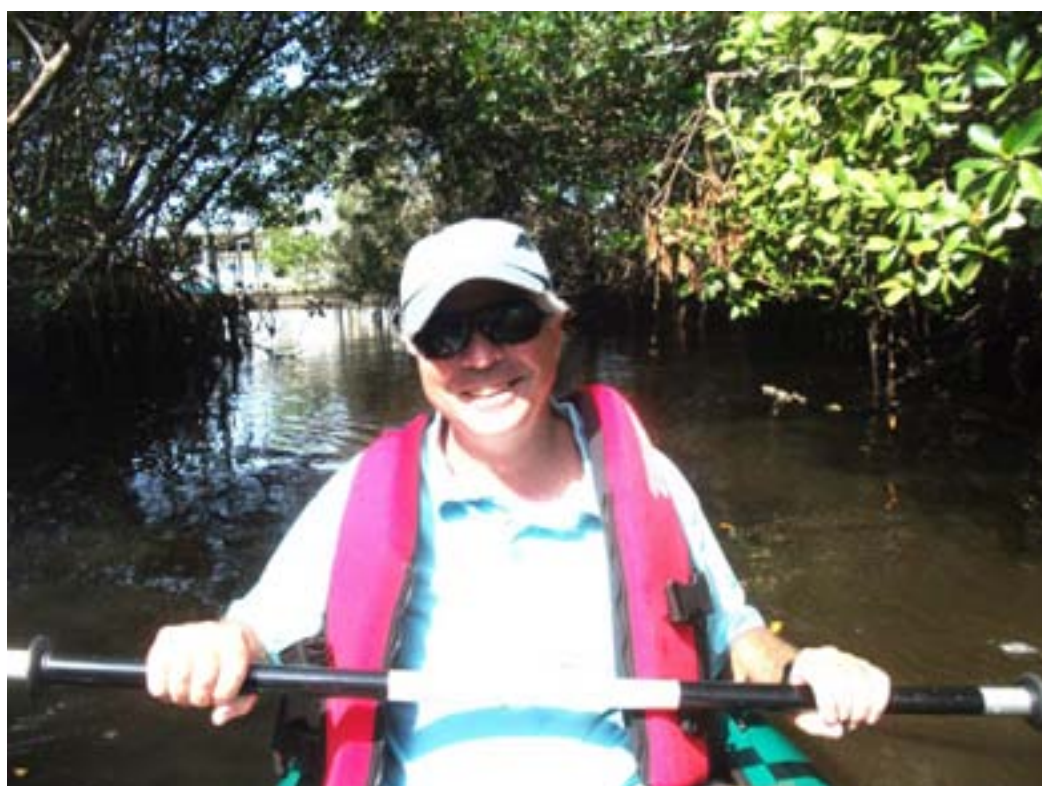
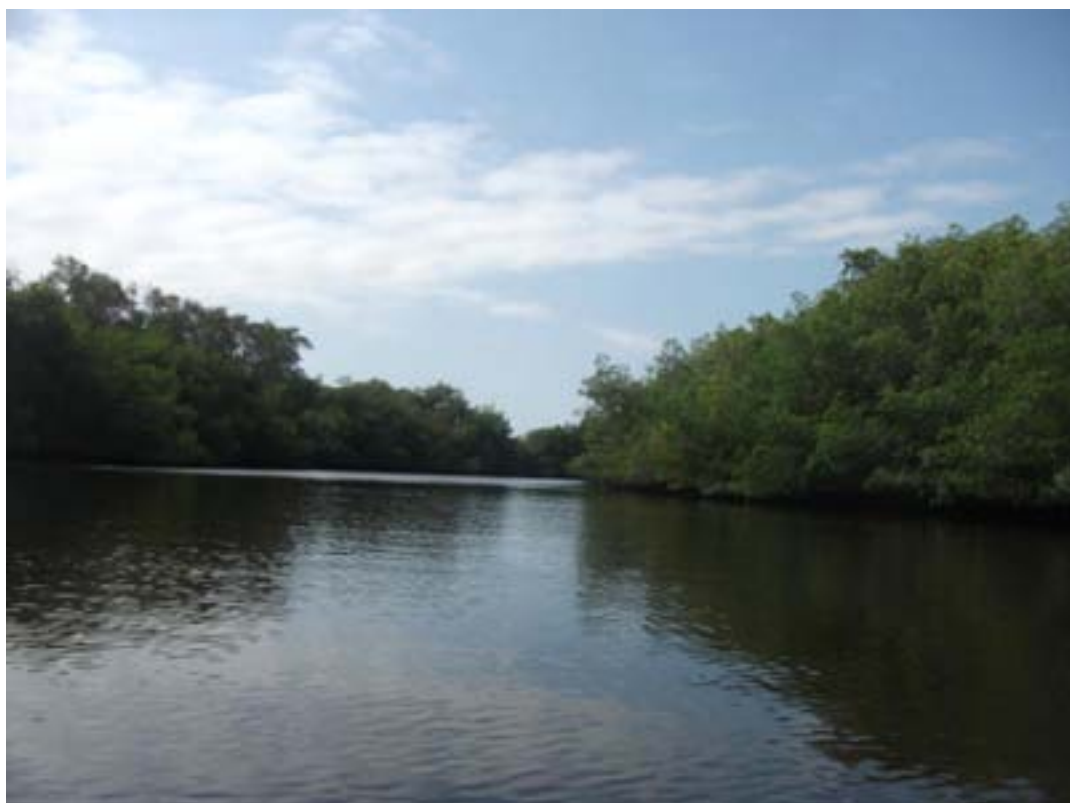


At the end, we veered left towards Ferry Canal and to our right on the northern bank, we saw the small entrance to waters which lie behind the mangroves.



We paddled through this narrow, twisting water course for about 10 minutes until we reached the wider, sunlit waters.





From here onwards, kayaking is very easy and we reached a sign post in the water at a junction which read Marker 34 (to the right). This point is the start of a loop. To the right , about 500 yards, lies Marker 34, and to the left is the start of the River Bend loop.



Stage 2 (30 mins)

At the Marker 34 signpost we turned left (the first part of the loop) and after about 800 yds, we veered to the right and carried on for about 30 minutes in a straight line, enjoying views of some palatial homes set in waterside settings.





Towards the end of this second part of the loop, we passed under a small road bridge to reach the third part of the Riverbend loop.



Stage 3 (20 mins)

The third part of the loop is only about 400yds and marks the start of a condominium area to the right.



The left hand bank is lined with many fine tree specimens including a banyan tree. 20 minutes of paddling -- again almost in a straight line -- brought us to a covered road bridge.



Many of us know this bridge as the bridge to the Marker Restaurant , but not many of us have travelled under it! We had now been paddling for over an hour and so stopped off at the Marker 34 Restaurant, just under the bridge on the left , for refreshment.



We tied up our kayaks, close to the metal ladder on the dock and climbed out.



The Marker serves breakfast if you decide to do this trip in the morning. Jack and I decided to have a liquid breakfast, as we were watching our waistlines.



Stage 4 (10mins)

Suitably refreshed we continued our kayaking back to the start of the loop (by the Marker 34 sign post) but instead of turning right to return to the mangrove passage, we steered to the left and arrived at the entrance to the Caloosahatchee River.





Stage 5 (20 mins)

At the entrance to the river, we turned right and hugged the coastline.



There was a slight chop on the water but the water here is only about a foot deep and it should be emphasized that on average we had been travelling in only a couple of feet of water throughout our adventure. The deeper water had been in the canals of Old Bridge (6ft at most). After just 5 more minutes of paddling, we espied Old Bridge to the right and entered it via John Alden Pass and, being nosy, decided to investigate other parts of Old Bridge.



Stage 6 (5 mins)

We continued straight on and entered the newest canal, the Paul Revere Ditch canal. This short canal is about 700 yds in length and comes to a dead end and so we turned around and came back. The left hand bank is a nature treasure trove for birds; we saw four species of heron.





Stage 7 (10 mins)

We then turned right into Ferry Canal and paddled up to the bridge at Ibis Island and turned around and paddled back to the kayak dock. Once again, traversing these canals by kayak, you get a new and interesting perspective of Old Bridge.



Getting the kayak out of the water

This was easy, we just pulled the kayak using ropes onto the dock deck and then pulled it up the pair of parallel plastic pipes on to the grass and then lifted it on to the kayak rack on the car.



Conclusion

Kayaking is enjoyable and fun and above all easy to do. Oh and by the way, we saw no snakes or gators, just wonderful birds and plants in a natural unspoilt habitat.

Acknowledgments

I am grateful to the Kedians for introducing us to kayaking and to Jeff White for the use of his kayak and his vehicle, and I am particularly indebted to my wife Kat (the Webmaster at OBV) for making this article available in a website version.