

LOOP ROAD

On / Off-Road Cycle Tour



Loop Road, south of the Tamiami Trail, has an interesting history in itself, but the beauty of the Everglades environment is one of its outstanding features.

For an on / off-road experience you can start your adventure at the Big Cypress Oasis Visitor Center which is 21 miles east of Everglades City and 36 miles from Krome Avenue in Miami-Dade. Cycling west for 4 miles is the entrance at Monroe Station. Leaving the Oasis Visitor Center, take a right on US41 and bike along the shoulders; be very cautious approaching the narrow bridges.

In 21 miles you will reach Monroe Station and take a left onto Loop Road. Early afternoon is an ideal time on this rural road with the bald cypress, slash pine and sabal palm trees providing shade from the afternoon sun. In just a little over two miles is Gator Hook Trail which has a picnic area (with toilets). If you decide to take a walk, you can hike for 5 miles into the swamp along the historic logging road.

Cycling the first 4-5 miles will be rough (like a washboard) as you bike along this gravel lane until you reach Monroe County; then the roadbed

will smooth out. You will eventually pass by the southernmost point of the Florida National Scenic Trail. This 1,400-mile long hiking trail extends north to the Big Cypress Oasis Center and continues through the entire state of Florida. There are many culvert crossings in this area to see wildlife. You should see alligators alongside the road, as well as herons, egrets and roseate spoonbill (as pictured above). Tree Snail Hammock, at 15.6 miles, is the last public trail. You have an opportunity to get off your bike here and take a short walk into higher ground to find these snails attaching themselves to tree trunks.

As you continue biking along the paved section of Loop Road (at mile 16.5) you will be cycling through the old town of Pinecrest where Al Capone had a home, a hotel and a brothel. Gator Hook Lodge was once a bar and dance club serving as the social center for Loop Road. The fascinating history of this location includes fiddle-player Ervin Rouse (famous for "*The Orange Blossom Special*") would entertain the guests. After nearly 20 years the lodge closed in 1977, shortly after Big Cypress National Preserve was established. Many people still live in Pinecrest and members of the Miccosukee Tribe of Indians have homes along the eastern end of Loop Road so please be respectful of the property owners when you bike or hike here.

Continue along the paved road for 5 miles and you will be at the boundary line with Everglades National Park to the south and east and Big Cypress to the north and west; US41 (the east end of Loop Road) is another 2.5 miles; turn left to cycle 15 miles to the Oasis Visitor Center.

Off-Road Only Cycle Tour

Total Distance: 34 miles



Another option (rather than cycling with traffic) is to park at Monroe Station (west end of Loop Road), bike for 17 miles off-road through the Big Cypress Preserve, then turn around and cycle 17 miles back to Monroe Station. For detailed information about Loop Road, visit website:

<https://www.nps.gov/bicy/planyourvisit/upload/bicy-loop-road-scenic-road-final-2.pdf>.

A wide range of accommodations and restaurants are available in Everglades City (see www.mullettrapper.com). Visitors to this historic town enjoy touring the original Collier County Court House (now City Hall), the Museum of the Everglades, the famous Rod & Gun Club, and the Smallwood Store & Museum in Chokoloskee as well as participating in the many outdoor recreational activities.

Today, over one million people explore the Big Cypress Preserve. Cycling the Everglades is the best way to truly enjoy the beauty, the wildlife, and the serenity of this area -- both on and off road. For more information about hiking and cycling in the Everglades, visit the Friends of the River of Grass Greenway website and download map at <https://evergladesrogg.org/tamiami-trail/>.

Trails along U.S. 41

There are many on and off-road options for hiking and bicycling through the various state and national parks.

Collier-Seminole State Park

An original stand of native royal palm trees, coexisting with one of the world's largest mangrove swamps, distinguishes this park; it is also the site of the historic Tamiami Trail "Walking Dredge".

<http://alturl.com/s6nof>

Ten Thousand Islands NWR

Established in 1996, this refuge protects important mangrove and marsh habitats and is the ultimate interface where land gradually gives way to the sea.

<http://alturl.com/dncvm>

Picayune Strand State Forest

Comprised of 78,000 acres, this is Florida's 4th largest state forest and named after the largest of several cypress strands that once occupied its eastern portion.

<http://alturl.com/ezsm8>

Fakahatchee Strand Preserve State Park

Swamps, prairies, tropical hardwood hammocks and pine rock lands with royal palms and bald cypress trees share the forest canopy with native orchids and bromeliad species.

<http://alturl.com/j9cck>

Big Cypress National Preserve

Big Cypress contains a mixture of tropical and temperate plant communities that harbor many protected species, including the elusive Florida panther.

<http://alturl.com/ma366>

Everglades National Park

The Park is dominated by the world renowned "River of Grass" freshwater prairies, tree islands, and many rare and endangered species.

<http://alturl.com/n2q73>

LOOP ROAD

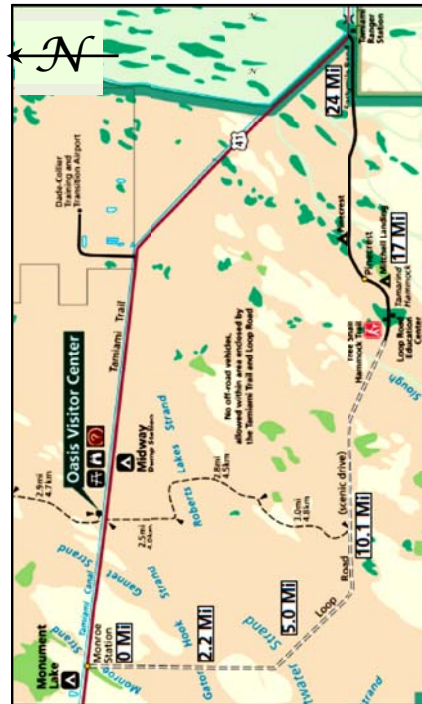
Distance: 34 to 43 miles

Bicycle Type: fat tire or hybrid

Road Conditions: dirt road
and paved road

CAUTION: narrow bridges on US41

Level: any level for off-road
experience with
heavy traffic on-road



This map illustrates a bike route (along the Tamiami Trail) through the Everglades area. While every effort is made to provide accurate and timely information, keep in mind the bike routes are intended for informational purposes only. No guarantee is made regarding the bike route safety because conditions change. In addition, we cannot guarantee anyone's safety by conforming to safety tips. Please use good judgment and be responsible for your own safety at all times.

6/1/2017

Loop Road in Big Cypress Cycle Tour



Friends of the River of Grass Greenway

FROGG, a non-profit organization, is committed to establishing the safe use by the general public of US41 across the Everglades between Naples and Miami, focusing on safety and environmental education and stewardship for those hiking, walking, and cycling through south Florida and the Everglades.

www.evergladesrogg.org

© 2017 Friends of the River of Grass Greenway (FROGG)