

SEA ISLAND LIFE

FALL/WINTER 2020/21

Pecan *and* Beyond

CLASSIC PIES
FOR EVERY
CRAVING

NATURAL REMEDIES

Outdoor experiences
that promote wellness

PIECING IT TOGETHER

Puzzles combine
tradition and trend



Kayaking with Kin

Families make lasting memories while paddling across the water, enjoying fresh air, exercise and nature's theater.

By Joe Rada

Interest in paddle sports—such as kayaking and stand-up paddleboarding—has surged lately among travelers of all ages. It's a great way to exercise outdoors, bond with family and explore some special places, all while avoiding crowds and following the COVID-19 social distancing guidelines. Equipment sales are rising, and rental programs like the guided tours at Sea Island are more popular than ever.

Perhaps that is no surprise on Georgia's coast, with its terrific opportunities to skim along in one- or two-person sea kayaks while exploring the creeks, marshes and open waters surrounding the area's mosaic of barrier islands. No prior experience is needed to enjoy the outing. "About 70% of families that sign up for kayaking have paddled before and already





Paddler Practices

WHETHER YOU ARE A FIRST-TIMER OR VETERAN KAYAKER, HERE ARE SOME PADDLE ADVENTURE TIPS FROM SEA ISLAND'S HEAD GUIDE, JESSE JOHNSON.

Wear something you won't mind getting wet, and show up ready for some fun.

Apply sunscreen—yours or what your guide provides. Creams stay on better and last longer than sprays, especially in saltwater.

Stay hydrated. Bring your water bottle or enjoy the water provided by the guides.

Getting in and out of a kayak can be awkward, whether alongside a dock, on a beach or in shallow water, so be sure to have someone assist you.

Rather than risk dropping cameras or phones overboard, leave electronics behind and count on guides (who do this all the time) to take photos and email them to you.

know they like it," says Jesse Johnson, head guide with the outings program at Sea Island. "The other 30% have never been in a kayak and may need instructions on balancing and steering. But it's super easy to learn, so before long they're grinning and having fun."

Whether you're an expert or a first-timer, kayaking offers exciting opportunities to witness wildlife, and every outing is unique. A pair of American oystercatchers might swoop past, wingtips flapping just above the saltwater, and disappear beyond swaying marsh grass. A mother-and-calf pair of bottlenose dolphins may surface in sleek gray arcs. Or you could see a lone mullet leap, quiver briefly in midair and splash back down.

"It's like this all the time out here, nature putting on a show," says Johnson, who enthusiastically narrates such marvels as they happen. "For our kayaking members and guests, we use every opportunity to talk about wildlife and tides and the natural world. There's so much to see, so much to learn."

Shoving Off

For groups leaving from the Rainbow Island Water Sports Center for two-hour tours, the tide determines their kayaking route. "If

the ramp to the floating dock is straight out, that's high tide, and if it's a steep slant down, that's low tide," Johnson explains. "We see tide changes of up to 9.5 feet here, making a big difference in where we paddle on any given trip."

High tide usually means heading north, where narrow paths through mazes of tidal grasslands become more accessible. "In the marsh, we see so many birds," Johnson says. "Ospreys perching on treetops, pelicans flying in formation, egrets wading. ... If I rub my paddle on the river bottom in the right places, explosions of shrimp all jump at once. Kids and parents love that, and it gives me a chance to talk about how so much of the seafood we eat comes from these coastal waters."

Low tide leads to heading south on open waters lined by marshes and beaches. "Going south, we see more seashells, sea turtle nests in the summer, sometimes dolphins or a manatee swimming alongside us, and shorebirds like plovers, terns, gulls and skimmers," Johnson says. "I always point out exposed oyster reefs. You want to avoid them because oysters are very sharp, but you don't want to miss seeing hundreds of them spitting water from the outgoing tide."

Pulling Ashore

The Rainbow Island Water Sports Center offers a variety of paddling tours, including the Family Salt Marsh Kayaking, Kayak Shore Lunch, Kayak Fishing and Sunset Kayaking excursions.

During the popular Kayak Shore Lunch outing, paddlers reach the southernmost tip of Sea Island and pull ashore on a wide, secluded, seashell-strewn beach. Coolers filled with picnic lunches preordered from a resort menu await, including options such as pasta salads, deli sandwiches, chicken flatbreads with avocado and gigantic cookies.

The on-land portion of this excursion continues with exploration of the beach, tidal pools and dunes, where topics range from sea turtle nests and the habits of hermit crabs to knobbed whelks, the official Georgia seashell, and whatever interesting items wash ashore.

"We tailor each trip to the guests," Johnson says. "If they are interested in nature, we search for it. If they just want to enjoy the quiet, that's great as well." Whatever they choose makes for fine memories. ○