



# Scenic America

## FLORIDA'S GREAT CALUSA BLUEWAY: A WILDLIFE WONDERLAND

(NAPSA)—A rare combination of history and aquatic wildlife awaits visitors to the Great Calusa Blueway in Southwest Florida, described as one of the best kayaking destinations in the U.S. Experts say kayaking is one of the fastest growing water sports.

The Beaches of Fort Myers and Sanibel has opened the first 40 miles of a new paddling trail. The trail treats visitors to an up-close-and-personal view of a diverse array of wildlife, from dolphins to wading birds, all along the trail, from the Imperial River in Bonita Springs north to Punta Rassa in Fort Myers.

“Along The Great Calusa Blueway, paddlers will definitely enjoy the true serenity that our waters provide,” said Nancy MacPhee, recreation supervisor for Lee County Parks and Recreation.

After over a year in the planning stages, The Great Calusa Blueway begins in Bonita Springs, the southernmost point of the Lee County area, where paddlers enjoy exploring the calm waters of the Imperial River and back bays.

Birdwatchers get to share Lovers Key State Recreation Area and the back bays of Black Island with roseate spoonbills and many other wading birds.

The area is also home to one of the world's largest populations of Atlantic bottlenose dolphins and paddlers can observe these creatures in the Estero Bay Aquatic Preserve, designated as Florida's first Aquatic Preserve in 1966.

The history of the Calusa Indian tribe awaits paddlers at the



**The Great Calusa Blueway canoe and kayaking trail offers visitors an up-close-and-personal view of Florida wildlife and history.**

Mound Key State Archaeological Site. Listed on the National Register of Historic Places, the site includes a 32-foot ceremonial shell mound, engineered canal systems, and now dry inland lakes.

To the north, adventurous paddlers can find remnants of a religious sect established in 1894 at the Koreshan State Historic Site. Paddlers can camp, picnic, and fish, while learning about this unique utopian community.

The blueway continues west through the back bays of Fort Myers Beach, offering paddlers stopping points with a wide variety of overnight accommodations and dining options.

Royal Palm Tours of Fort Myers is organizing a 7 day/6 night paddling package or customized trips. For details, call (800) 296-0249.

Funded by the area's tourist development tax, the canoe and kayak trail is a project of Lee County Parks and Recreation and the Lee County Visitor and Convention Bureau. To learn more, visit the Web site at [www.GreatCalusaBlueway.com](http://www.GreatCalusaBlueway.com).