

Atsena Otie Paddle

Information:

Atsena Otie Key is the closest island to Cedar Key, approximately 1,250 yards from the main waterfront area of Cedar Key. Atsena Otie Key is owned by the Suwannee River Water Management District and is managed by the United States Fish and Wildlife Service through the Cedar Keys National Wildlife Refuge. Atsena Otie is the only refuge island that is fully open to the public, as all other refuge islands only allow public beach access, not island interior access. This key is where the City of Cedar Key was originally located before a storm wiped out much of the island's infrastructure in 1896. Following this storm, many of the inhabitants of Atsena Otie chose to relocate to the islands to the north, which are now formally referred to as Cedar Key. Visitors of Atsena Otie Key will enjoy the hiking trail that winds through the island and allows the opportunity to view the historic cemetery of Atsena Otie and the remains of the Eberhard Faber Pencil Company factory. While exploring Atsena Otie, keep in mind that this island is the most mosquito infested area in all of Florida, primarily during the late spring to fall season. Atsena Otie Key is easily accessible and offers a wide variety of fishing opportunities.

Top Baits:

Heddon's Super Spook in natural and mullet colors.

Popping cork rigged to a shrimp tipped jig-head.

Gulp Shrimp

Z Man Paddler baits in white and mullet colors.

Red Fish Magic Spinner Baits

Mullet, Shrimp, Bull Minnows, Shrimp

Length:

2.8 miles or 3.3 miles depending on route

Paddle through island: 2.8 miles

Paddle around island: 3.3 miles

Resources:

Kayak Rentals at Cedar Key public beach (launch point for Atsena Otie paddle)

Kayak Tom, Cedar Key

(352) 543 - 9447

<http://kayakcedarkeys.com/>

or

Cedar Key Paddling

12293 State Road 24

Cedar Key, FL 32625

(352) 665 - 1276 (texting friendly)

<https://www.cedarkeypaddling.com/>

Weather, Tides, Wind, Lunar:

https://www.windfinder.com/forecast/cedar_key_daughtry_bayou

<http://fl.us harbors.com/monthly-tides/Florida-West%20Central/Cedar%20Key>

WARNINGS:

Always be sure to pay mindful attention to changing weather conditions, changes in tidal flows, channel crossings and windward island sides. It is recommended that paddlers stay in their kayaks unless stepping onto white sand beaches. Cedar Key is riddled with oyster reefs and mud like quicksand so paddlers should make every effort to remain in their vessel while fishing around these oyster bars and mud flats. Grass and mud flats are also inhabited by stingrays so tread lightly and don't forget to do the stingray shuffle if you do decide to wade fish.

Information:

Paddle time from the Cedar Key public beach located next to boat ramp, paddling to, around, and back from Atsena Otie Key will take approximately two hours. Extra time should be allocated for fishing purposes. An experienced paddler paddling in fair conditions should be able to reach the northeast side of the key (the near side) in about 20 minutes. Changing tides, wind and weather may add additional time to the paddle. This paddle should not be attempted in winds more than 12 MPH but winds less than 8 MPH are ideal.

Peak Fishing Times and Areas:

Spot 1: Fish the shoal edges and grass flats south of the observatory pier on the west side of the island. Top water plugs fished at day break in this area can be deadly on redfish and trout.

Spot 2: South of Spot 1, there are good oyster bars along the west, southwest side of the island. Due to these oyster bars' close proximity to deeper water, these bars will hold fish on both tides.

Spot 3: This spot offers ample fish habitat including: sandy holes, lush grass clumps and shallow shoal areas to trap bait. Fish all around Spot 3, especially along the lines where the sandy bottom meets the edges of the grass flat.

Spot 4: This area marks some of Atsena Otie's most productive grass flats and is located off the key's northeast tip. This is another good area to find redfish.

Spot 5: This spot features a very productive oyster bar that will often hold redfish.

Spot 6: On high tide, fish the north-east side of the island and look for tailing black drum pushed up against the oyster bars and small grass clumps that mark these bars. Redfish will also be pushed up tight against the oyster bars on high tide. Try using a live shrimp rigged beneath a popping cork for a catch all bait in this area.

Spot 7: This is another good oyster bar to fish on a high or rising tide. Look for fish to be right up against the edge of the grass so direct your casts in this direction.

During high tide, paddlers can explore through the center of Atsena Otie Key. Look for redfish and black drum feeding along the island edges and be ready to make a cast. Again, jig-heads

rigged with live or fresh dead shrimp are an effective way to catch fish in this area. Try using a popping cork to keep weighed baits off oyster bars and reduce snags. Live baits such as mullet and bull minnows can be cast netted off any of the white sand beaches along the Key's north east side.

Paddling to Atsena Otie by way of the channel also presents the opportunity to fish for Spanish mackerel, bluefish, tarpon and sharks by way of trolling, jigging, casting or soaking.



*Lower Suwannee
National Wildlife Refuge*

2,600

feet

