

Assateague Kayak Camper Trip Report

By Melissa Boyle



Michell Major, Melissa Boyle and Jim Zawlocki photo by Mr. Ed (the horse, of course!)

Kudos to Jim Z (the trip leader) for an AWESOME trip to Assateague over the weekend! Three of us CPA'ers- Jim Zawlocki, Michelle Major and Melissa Boyle- headed to the shore for a wonderful weekend. We really couldn't have asked for a better weekend for this trip.... the weather gods were with us! And Mother Nature put on a pretty good show for us all around!!

We met up at the National Park Service Bayside Campground on Friday evening and set up camp there. Then headed down to the picnic area to have our Subway dinners and watch the sunset. Two stand-up paddle boarders came in and we watched a family try to clam, as the sun went down. It was a beautiful evening! Jim even went for a moonlit stroll on the beach!

Saturday morning we were at the Ranger's Station at 8am ready to get our backcountry permit for Green Run. We packed up camp and headed off to Ferry Landing. As we were loading up our boats, the State Park Naturalists headed out with a group on sit on top kayaks out to look for wildlife. Jim didn't have to look very far...while in the parking lot a pony came right up to him and stuck its head into his rubbermaid food bin!!! These ponies know exactly what they are doing...

We launched from Ferry Landing and started paddling. It was a most gorgeous day on Chincoteague Bay! We stopped between Tingles Island and Pine Tree for a break and lunch. Fine dining on the waterfront with PB&J! We watched a pony "soap opera" take place in the marsh... one bachelor was run off and left without a gal in the end, while the other stud had two ladies! Then we had a horseshoe crab wandered on up to check us out... I picked it up to show Jim and Michelle, and then safely released it. Horseshoe crabs are amazing prehistoric animals! (The Full Moon and high tides in May bring the horseshoe crabs up on the sandy beaches to spawn...) As we continued our paddle to Green Run we stayed fairly close to shore to look for ponies- which we easily saw 50+ that day!! Jim may have taken a picture of each one!! Also in the shallows, the water was clear and we saw horseshoe crabs and diamondback terrapins swimming along as we paddled. Staying in shore may have extended our paddle mileage a bit, but the sight seeing was well worth it! We had a slight headwind (~10mph) as we paddled down to Green Run on Saturday, but it was a beautiful paddle.



Paddling with Ponies—the Post Card photo by Melissa Boyle

We arrived at Green Run and were greeted by the official Assateague welcoming committee of mosquitoes! They were out in force in the tall grass at the landing, but a nice breeze blowing through the campsite kept them away. Overall, the bugs were not nearly as bad as we had expected, but we were prepared and pleasantly surprised! We set up camp and were just having some wine, cheese, salami and hummus before dinner appetizers when 8 backpackers came in! They had hiked the same mileage on the beach as we had paddled that day! Luckily the campsite was plenty big and they settled in where we hadn't. Jim got to work on making firewood so we would be ready for the evening. I spotted a beautiful blue indigo bunting near our campsite! Before dinner, we took a stroll out to the beach to visit the Atlantic and check things out there. Enjoyed a lovely dinner with Michelle's home-made soup and Jim's chicken alfredo, with roasted marshmallows and brownies for dessert. We enjoyed yet another near-perfect sunset over Chincoteague Bay, and all turned in fairly early as the whippoorwills sang us to sleep!

We wanted to get a fairly early start on Sunday morning because we had heard that the winds could pick up and late afternoon thunderstorms were possible. We were packed up and were on the water around 8:30. As we left Green Run a mature bald eagle flew over us, and we headed north staying a bit farther off the shoreline on our way back. Spotted pelicans, cormorants and great egrets and even a few ponies on our trip back. It started out cloudy and cool, but the sun eventually poked through with some blue skies. We had a nice tailwind pushing us along, our average speed on the way back was 4.5 mph (according to Jim's GPS) and we were back at Ferry Landing by Noon! Unloaded our boats, packed up the cars, took cold showers and headed home with some great memories from a wonderful, yet rather uneventful (compared to previous years!) trip to Assateague. I think all three of us are certainly looking forward to paddling again at Assateague in the future!! You should, too!!

Photos online at

http://www2.snapfish.com/comcast/thumbnailshare/AlbumID=3941076009/a=34339264_34339264/otsc=SHR/otsi=SALBlink/COBRA_ND_NAME=comcast/ and <http://picasaweb.google.com/lh/sredir?uname=Jimzzz1&target=ALBUM&id=5468390970008642369&authkey=Gv1sR>