

# TURKEY CREEK



## MAP LEGEND

Mile Marker



Canoe/Kayak Launch



Blueway Trail



Point of Interest



**LEVEL** Beginner to Intermediate

**START/END** Gulfport Lake Boat Launch

**TRAIL MILES** 5 miles round-trip

**PADDLING TIME** 3 hours round-trip

**DESCRIPTION** Light chop in Bernard Bayou to flat water with light current in Turkey Creek

**SCENERY** Wet Pine Savanna, Marsh Coastline, Historic

**ACCESS** Public Boat Launch

Turkey Creek is an historic black community settled in 1866 by emancipated men and women emboldened by slavery and the Civil War, who dared to sow the seeds of freedom, faith, and self-reliance which still flourish in this place.

Turkey Creek begins in central, rural Harrison County and flows toward its confluence with Bayou Bernard, just north of the Gulfport-Biloxi International Airport. **The creek is popular for fishing, swimming, and canoeing and is a historic and present contributor to the local culture and quality of life.** Turkey Creek watershed drains just over 17 square miles of land that has relatively flat topography, creating a slow-moving coastal stream with tidally influenced areas near the coast. The upper watershed is composed mostly of rural lands covered by wet-pine savannas and forests whereas the lower portion of watershed has a lot of developed lands. This more developed area includes Gulfport-Biloxi International Airport, Gulfport and Long Beach, and the Interstate-10 business corridor.

The Gulfport Lake Boat Launch is located behind Bayou Vista Golf Course on Washington Avenue, in Harrison County, MS at N30.42419° W89.06040°. Local fishing boats use the ramp year round, with pleasure boats and jet skis in warmer months, especially on weekends. There is an asphalt parking area, and a sandbeach to the side of the boat ramp for kayak and canoe launching. The usual tidal range is less than 2' between high tide and low tide, influenced by the Mississippi Sound. The water in Bayou Bernard is brackish, and Turkey Creek is mostly freshwater in the upper reaches. There may be times in the year when the upper reaches (generally past mile marker 2) are too shallow for paddling.



## Points of Interest

- 1 Mouth of Turkey Creek
- 2 Rippy Road Bridge
- 3 Island Loop
- 4 Bait Pond
- 5 Sloping Bend
- 6 Historic African American Cemetery
- 7 Ashton Park Apartments
- 8 Inlet
- 9 Airport Road Bridge

Bernard Bayou is part of the Biloxi River Marshes Preserve. The oligohaline marshes in this area are dominated by needle rush (*Juncus roemerianus*) with duck-potato (*Sagittaria latifolia*). Narrow disjunct bands of smooth cordgrass (*Spartina alterniflora*) occur along the creeks with bands of high-level salt-meadow grass (*Spartina patens*) occurring along the upland borders. This unique location provides excellent feeding, resting, and wintering habitat for numerous types of migratory bird species, such as the Brown Pelican, White Pelican, Ospreys and cormorants, and this area is known to be an Osprey rookery.



AVOID PADDLING UNDER THE INFLUENCE OF DRUGS OR ALCOHOL. ALWAYS WEAR YOUR LIFE JACKET AND CARRY A WHISTLE OR OTHER SOUND PRODUCING DEVICE, PREFERABLY ATTACHED TO YOUR LIFE JACKET. PADDLERS SHOULD CHECK WATER LEVEL AND TIDES, WEATHER, AND WATERWAY CONDITIONS PRIOR TO EVERY TRIP. REMOVE WHAT YOU BRING, CLEAN UP MORE IF YOU CAN. AVOID TRESPASSING ON PRIVATE LANDS. PLEASE BE AWARE OF YOUR SURROUNDINGS AND ALWAYS RESPECT THE WILDLIFE. REPORT ANY PROBLEMS YOU ENCOUNTER TO THE LOCAL AUTHORITIES IF APPROPRIATE.

