Everglades Forever

Are you ready for a trip through the Everglades National Park in Florida? The Everglades are low, flat, watery marshes. They are sometimes called the “sea of grass.” The park is teeming with many plants and animals.

First, you hike to the coast of Florida Bay near the Flamingo Visitor Center. Here, fresh water from inland rivers flows into the ocean. Salt water from the bay flows into the area at high tide. This mixture of salt water and fresh water creates an estuary. An estuary is a kind of marine habitat.

There’s a green sea turtle swimming in the ocean! A ranger tells you that it’s on its way to lay its eggs on a beach at nearby Cape Sable. People have taken over many of the beaches that were once nesting places.

The next place you visit is a canal near the visitor center. You’re hoping to see some manatees. You are in luck! There is a whole group of them. They are feeding on the sea grasses in the canal.

Manatees have round, gray bodies and flattened tails. They have small heads with spiny hairs growing on their upper lips. They stick their nostrils out of the water to breathe. Manatees often float just under the water, with their snouts at the surface. Because of this, many of them are hit by boats and killed.

From Flamingo, you drive north and see a huge blue-gray bird. It has a white face, a yellow bill, and a very long neck. Its neck is folded like an S. This giant is wading on its long legs near some very unusual trees.

The bird is a great blue heron, hunting fish and shrimp. The trees are mangroves. They look like they have legs growing out of their trunks. These are special roots that grow down into the water. There’s always something to see in the Everglades!