

How do I go about paddling South Slough?

We offer guided tours several times a year. Visit our website for upcoming events:
www.southsloughestuary.org



We do not provide boats for participants, but we provide a trained naturalist guide and a shuttle to transport vehicles to the endpoint of the five-mile trip. All participants must bring their own boat, safety equipment, and a vehicle to transport their boat.

If you plan to paddle South Slough on your own, the Interpretive Center sells paddle maps for \$4 in the Friends of South Slough Bookstore. Paddle maps are also available for free online:

http://www.oregon.gov/dsl/SS/Documents/PaddleMap_NorthSouth.pdf You can launch from the public dock, or the tide flats at the Port of Coos Bay Distant Water Fleet Facility, located on Troller Lane in Charleston. If you launch from the mudflats, you will have to walk across an expanse of mud to reach the water on low tides.

South Slough staff cannot provide specific advice regarding personal paddle trips, due to complex variables such as wind, weather, tides, paddle craft design and individual skill. The general guidelines below apply to any paddle trip on the slough.

What is the best time to paddle the Slough?

This depends on individual skill, as well as the tides and weather conditions with the following considerations:

Tides are the most important factor in determining the timing of a paddle trip because an outgoing tide can leave you stuck on a mudflat or sandbar. NOAA tide predictions for Charleston:

<https://tidesandcurrents.noaa.gov/noaatidepredictions.html?id=9432780>. *Please note that these are just predictions! Wind, storms and other elements can also affect tides.

High tide trips are most reliable and take several hours to complete. A good option is to center your trip around the high tide by launching from Charleston 2 hours before high tide. This will allow you to ride the tide up the Slough and then back to Charleston when the tide starts going out. Alternatively, and under the right conditions, you can time your trip to ride the tide to Hinch Bridge, but you'll need to plan ahead and have a second vehicle there.

Low tide trips are more difficult and are not recommended without talking to an experienced guide (someone who has paddled the Slough at low tide) or paying extra attention to planning the trip. Low tide trips can be a very interesting way to tour the reserve and are preferable for viewing shorebirds and mudflat animals; however the likelihood of being stranded is greater. Launching from Charleston and planning an out and back trip may be safer if considering a low tide trip.

Winds - Summer winds are generally out of the north, and typically increase in intensity into the afternoon, dying off in the evening. Winds from the south are generally storm winds and may bring rain and increasing intensity as the storm hits land. Strong coastal winds can create potentially dangerous conditions for paddlers. It is always important to check the weather, paying careful attention to the forecast for wind conditions the morning of your paddle trip. A calm morning could quickly turn into a very windy afternoon.

What should I Bring?

You will be paddling for an extended period of time as well as carrying the boat and walking over uneven terrains, so make sure you are comfortable and prepared. Bring all items in a waterproof container.

Each **boat** should have the following items:

- Paddle & 1 spare per group
- Sponge or bilge pump
- Dry bag
- Whistle or horn
- Throw bag or tow rope
- 1st aid kit
- Aquatic Invasive Species Permit*

Each **person** should have the following items:

- Personal Floatation Device (PFD) (lifejacket)
- Water bottle
- Food (lunch or snacks)
- Sunscreen
- Insect Repellent
- Sunglasses and hat
- Camera in waterproof case

*All boats over 10 feet long are required to have an aquatic invasive species permit. For information on where to purchase one, please visit: <https://myodfw.com/articles/buying-aquatic-invasive-species-prevention-permit>

What should I wear?

Water temperatures remain cold enough that even on warm days, there is risk of hypothermia if you get wet.

- Dress in layers using clothing made of synthetic fabrics such as fleece, polyester, nylon, neoprene, and polypropylene. **Avoid** cotton!
- Carry waterproof jacket and pants for splash and rain protection.
- Bring extra clothing in a waterproof container, in case the weather is more severe than predicted or you get wet.
- Wear a hat with a bill or brim to help shield your face from wind, sun and rain. Also carry a hat that will keep your head warm in cold weather.
- Wear secure fitting river shoes or old sneakers to protect your feet from sharp objects in the mud. Be careful to avoid shoelaces catching in or on the boat. With the cold temperature of the water neoprene booties or socks are recommended.

Additional Resources:

American Canoe Association *Best Practices for Paddlers and Paddlesport Programs*:

<http://www.americancanoe.org/page/Resources>

Charles River Canoe & Kayak *Advice*:

<http://www.paddleboston.com/advice/dressforcoldwater.php>