

# Project Week: Florida Everglades

*Global Week 2022 // Upper School*

## Monday

We have arrived safely at our hotel in Key Largo. The flight was easy peasy. We were able to board as a group and all sit together, thanks to Mrs Drown, which on Southwest is an achievement!

We were met at the baggage claim by our guide, Mark, who has worked for WorldStrides many years. He has led this trip many times so we are excited for his knowledge and expertise. On our bus trip he was imparting flora and fauna knowledge as we passed brackish waters. That is where the fresh water starts to mix with the sea water.

We have a 7:30 a.m. call time tomorrow, and a day full of turtle hospital, feeding tarpon (big fish), and more discoveries at sombrero beach.

## Tuesday

Today we found ourselves at Turtle Hospital. The largest sea turtle hospital, which is currently taking care of over 50 sea turtles. They rescue them and nurse them back to health from being hit by boats, from an invasive virus, losing limbs to other sea creatures, or getting pneumonia from a shock cold front. When they are back to health they are released back to the ocean, and if they will never be healthy enough to survive on their own, they are adopted by zoos, or sanctuaries.

We continued our day at the ocean. Sombrero beach is a common point for releasing the sea turtles back to nature. Students made some PSA's for the sea turtles. We had lunch and swam in the same waters Ponce de Leon navigated looking for the fountain of youth.

We made our way to Robbie's which is a tourist must according to locals. Here we had the chance to feed tarpon, which was quite harrowing.

Upon returning to the hotel, we had dinner and decided to cap the day with a night swim in the hotel pool.

## Wednesday

We began our day picking up some snorkel gear and practicing in a controlled environment (hotel pool). This was in preparation for tomorrow's adventures. After some practice everyone seemed comfortable with the gear.

We ventured into the John Pennekamp State Park and hiked a little to see the different plant life, and some insects and reptiles. There was also an aquarium with the sea life we will observe tomorrow in our snorkel dive. The students got to see and name the many fish native to the coral area we will swim.

The day then found us swimming with dolphins!! We learned about the process of training dolphins and got to use our knowledge of classical, operant, and observational learning. Thank you Pavlov and Skinner. The trainers were amazing, not a Dr Landy in the bunch. Each student was able to not only pet the dolphins, but in the water the dolphin would interact and pull or push them swimming!

And the hits just keep on coming... After dinner we went back to Bayside and the students observed sea life in a touch tank. They handled different aquatic animals and learned specifics about each one. They were also able to dissect a squid, and identify the anatomy.

## Thursday

Today we began by kayaking through John Pennekamp Coral Reef State Park. We were taught how the red musgraves help protect the shoreline

during storms. They have developed a unique way of being a saltwater plant. The sacrificial leaf is very interesting, ask your student about this.

We continued on to test our new found snorkel skills, in the ocean. We were brought out to the coral reef where we experienced first hand being one of the hundreds of animals that occupy the space. So many fish and colors, words or pictures couldn't do justice.

We moved closer to where our final hotel stay will be up in the Everglades. We went to the national park for a night hike where we came way too close to alligators (from my perspective). The students found many more reptiles, and insects to go along with the alligators. Definitely a split group of those that enjoyed being that close to the alligators, and those who are sane.

## Friday

Today we experienced Everglades National Park during the daytime. We were treated by a tour guide to their wealth of knowledge of the flora and fauna of the "river of grass." We saw many species of birds, of course more alligators, and even one of three American crocodiles that call Everglades home.

The day continued to a tourist trap called "Robert is Here." A fruit stand started by a young boy in 1959 to help sell the fruit from his family farm. It has grown into a local treasure, and has many exotic fruits and a petting zoo. Robert was indeed there as he has been almost everyday these past 63 years.