

Carol Kay Project Summary

I am an artist and photographer living in Tampa and Toronto. I have been hiking and kayaking in Florida for over 10 years now and I take my camera on all my adventures. I don't use a tripod with my photography. Crystal clarity is not as important as being ready to capture a mood, a moment, or a beam of unusual light on a scene.

The Lower Hillsborough River Wilderness Preserve just north of Tampa, has some of the most beautiful stretches of river in Florida, impressively wild and beautiful for many of its 55 miles. The swamps of the Hillsborough make up a large portion of its watershed and is the main feature of my presentation for this River Project. These somewhat ephemeral swamps tell the tale of a pristine old growth cypress forest felled in the early 1900's to build the City of Tampa and then, with incredible resilience returning and maturing again, changed but no less beautiful. It is rarely, if ever, visited by paddlers--too far off course, water hardly ever high enough to go in very far, and too easy to get lost.

My guide, Hadrian Alegarbes, had taken advantage of the unusually high water in November, 2011 and explored these flooded areas on his own. He returned and raved about this place of spectacular, almost unparalleled beauty. He absolutely insisted I accompany him on another foray! The next day, with some trepidation, I followed him in to the swamp, quickly losing sight of the main river. From the moment we entered the stillness I felt transported to another world! The photos, taken mostly from a moving kayak in late afternoon and sunset, captures a sense of almost dreamy hyper-reality. The light was incredible! It was hitting the trees and roots and knees almost at right angles and selectively lighting up various areas and throwing others into deep shadow. A photographer's paradise! We went back 3 more times over the next 4 weeks and each visit yielded even more amazing images. Incredible what beauty and richness can be found in your own back yard! Thank you for visiting my gallery here on this site. Please click the links below to see more images of the swamps, more photos of the Hillsborough, and many other beautiful places in Florida and beyond.