

## **A Beach Journal (A Sampling)**

### **Day One:**

Today we drove deep into the Francis Marion National Forest to Stillboat Landing, about 30 miles north of Charleston, SC. We kayaked through the blackwater swamp on Wambaw Creek to the Santee River. We saw lots of alligators, some as large as 10-12 feet, and we camped on Hampton Island, which had once been part of a large rice plantation.

### **Day Two:**

We paddled to our take out and then traveled to Hampton Plantation State Park, where we toured the 300-year-old mansion house. We then made camp at a retreat center on the Intracoastal Waterway. We had a great catered meal at our camp: all fresh local seafood and sweet tea, and then we watched the sun set from a dock on the waterway.

### **Day Three:**

We paddled to a nearby salt creek and toured ancient shell rings built by indigenous people four or five thousand years ago. Our guide was the National Forest archaeologist, and when we got back to camp we had another great catered meal of pulled-pork sandwiches, mac and cheese, and gallons of sweet tea.

### **Day Four:**

We paddled out through small bays and salt creeks to Capers Island, where we will camp for the next several days. It is a barrier island and a South Carolina State Heritage Site. On our paddle, we were paddling among pods of dolphins part of the way, and we even saw a rare loggerhead turtle in one of the creeks. We camped on the beach and we could go swimming anytime only 10 feet from our tents. We explored the island, picked up lots of amazing sea shells, and got loads of sun.

### **Day Five:**

More exploring of Capers and fun in the kayaks. We paddled with our guide to the ocean side of the island and surfed in our kayaks for hours. We cooked pasta for dinner and watched a spectacular sunset over the mainland.

### **Day Six:**

Today we paddled the short distance across Price's Inlet to Bull Island, a part of the Cape Romaine National Wildlife Refuge and, like Capers, an uninhabited barrier island. There are 5 miles of completely deserted ocean beach and the wildlife is extraordinary. We saw lots of alligators in the fresh water ponds on the island, fox squirrels, turkeys, and signs of the red wolves that live on the island. This is a great place to pick up shell--whelks and sand dollars and olive shells. We paddled back through strong surf and prepared burritos for dinner. The sunset was another spectacular one!

### **Day Seven:**

Back to the mainland and our camp at the retreat center. We had another great catered meal with fresh local seafood and veggies, and we sat on the dock to enjoy our last sunset together. I am really going to miss the friends I've made this week. We leave early tomorrow for home.