

## **BEFORE LAUNCH: Entry Speech – Setting the Tone**

Before we head out, I want to emphasize what we're doing tonight—and why we're doing it.

Bioluminescence is a living phenomenon—mysterious, beautiful, and absolutely unpredictable.

Will it glow brilliantly tonight? Will it flicker faintly? Will we see nothing at all?

I don't know. And honestly, that's part of the beauty of this work.

We're paddling into a real lagoon system—one of the most unique and biodiverse ecosystems in North America.

It's beautiful, physically demanding, and sometimes, even a little unsettling.

My role is simple:

- To help you find the beauty
- To support you through any challenges
- And to make sure you stay completely safe.

We might catch a few flickers of glow.

We might witness a full display.

We might see nothing at all.

But I can promise you this—we will see nature.

Wild, unfiltered, and real.

There is no greater truth than what you witness with your own eyes.

That's the real experience. The reason you've chosen to come out here instead of just watching videos online.

This is not a Disney ride.

This is not a routine commute.

This is nature—raw and unrehearsed.

This is a wildlife refuge. The Merritt Island National Wildlife Refuge.

It's not our home—it belongs to the creatures and plants that live here:

- Dolphins
- Manatees
- Birds
- Fish
- And sometimes, comb jellies.

The mangroves, essential to Florida's health, surround us.

And if we're lucky, we'll glimpse the glowing algae we call 'dino.'

We are guests here—paddling sacred waters.

And I believe when we enter a space like this, we must do so with respect, and with reverence.

Some would say we're treading a path forged by our ancestors.

I feel that way every time I paddle out.

## ON THE WATER – STOP 1: Stillness & Sight

As we move into the lagoon, I invite you to do something we rarely do in our daily lives:

Listen.

Look.

Breathe.

This is not entertainment. This is presence.

Even silence is part of the show.

Some nights this place glows like fire.

Other nights, it doesn't glow at all.

Whatever we see tonight—bright or faint, abundant or scarce—is true.

It's honest. And that makes it sacred.

Let your eyes adjust.

Let your expectations dissolve.

You're in it now. This is the moment.

## **STOP 2: Interpreting the Bioluminescence**

What we're seeing tonight... it is what it is.

I'm not here to hype it up. I'm not going to talk you into seeing something that isn't there.  
I just ask you to trust your own eyes.

Take a moment. Ask yourself—what were you hoping to see? And what are you actually seeing?

That gap—that space between expectation and reality—is where the real encounter begins.

Every night is different. Every night is valid.  
I've been here for hundreds of them. This one is its own.

Let's turn this into a dialogue.  
Ask questions. I'll answer what I can.  
Let's explore this moment together—not as spectators, but as witnesses.

## **STOP 3: The Health of the Lagoon**

The Indian River Lagoon is in trouble.

Nutrient pollution—primarily excess nitrogen and phosphorus from human sources—fuels massive algal blooms.

Those blooms block sunlight, kill seagrass, and collapse the food web from the bottom up.

Where's it coming from?

Three hundred thousand septic systems surrounding the lagoon—most not connected to sewer lines.

They weren't designed to pollute, but during heavy rains, they flood.

And when they flood, human waste leaks into the groundwater and into this lagoon.

Outdated wastewater plants leak too.

The result? Human sewage—slowly, silently—choking one of the most biodiverse estuaries in North America.

When the algae die, they sink, creating a blanket of muck that fertilizes the next bloom.

This lagoon is trapped in a nitrogen cycle. Even if the pollution stopped tomorrow, the cycle would continue.

To break it, we'd need to dredge the bottom. Physically remove the muck.

That cleanup will cost billions—and take decades.

And here's the part that stings:

Bioluminescence tours like this one? They bring in millions.

But that's a drop in the ocean compared to the cost of healing this place.

Still, your ticket matters. Not because it pays for the cleanup—but because it makes you aware.

This tour is not the solution. It's the beginning of one.

## **STOP 4: The Call to Stewardship**

As we paddle back, I want to say this clearly:

We were guests in the bedrooms and backyards of wild creatures.

We saw beauty. We saw challenge. Maybe we saw absence. That, too, is a message.

Everything here is fragile. Everything here is endangered.

And everything here is still worth fighting for.

What comes next is yours to decide.

You can forget what you saw tonight.

Or you can become an advocate.

Call your representatives—local, state, and federal.

Support real environmental funding.

Share what you've learned. Tell others the truth.

Demand we protect every remaining inch of natural space.

Or—if advocacy isn't your calling—come back.

Come again and again.

Bear witness while you still can.

Take notes. Tell your children. Because if we don't act, there will be nothing left for them to witness.

I'm not just a guide.

My job isn't to show you glow.

My permit authorizes something far more important:

To teach. To testify. To reveal the rhythm and reality of this place—its beauty, its sorrow, and its hope.

Never forget tonight.

This place needs you.

Or it will be gone forever.



## **STOP 5 / LANDING: Farewell, Gratitude & Tips**

We're now approaching the beach. Here's how this works:

Please allow me to land first.

I'll pull my kayak up and signal for each of you—one at a time—to come in so I can assist you safely.

I want to thank you in advance for your cooperation... and more importantly, for your presence tonight.

I know I can be zealous.

That's because I love this place. Truly.

I do this work for little pay, long hours, and hard paddling... but I do it with gratitude.

Let me ask you something personal:

Did I do a good job?

I'm not asking how much glow you saw.

I'm asking if you felt cared for.

If you learned something. If you felt connected—to this place, to the night, to yourself.

If you'd like to show appreciation:

- Tips are welcome, always optional.

- Reviews help even more: Google, TripAdvisor, Facebook. Each one counts toward a small bonus I receive.

Multiple reviews are allowed—one per guest, per platform.

And finally, a few words of thanks:

To my co-guides, to the office staff, to the wildlife refuge authority, to the federal government—yes, even them—for protecting this land from unchecked development.

But most of all, to you. The guests who choose to come out here, to witness, to listen, to care.

You were wonderful tonight.

Give yourselves a round of applause.

And one last time:

Never forget tonight.

Let it shape how you live, how you vote, how you raise your children.

Let this night matter.