

Tales of Water Trails: Pine River

Welcome to 'Tales of Water Trails' presented by the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources.

Our guests, Lynne and Bob Diebel, are experienced canoeists and kayakers who have paddled more than 2,400 miles of Minnesota water trails. They describe these routes for other travelers in their two books, *Paddling Northern Minnesota* and *Paddling Southern Minnesota*.

For this series of programs, the Diebels are sharing their insights about Minnesota's state water trails. The Minnesota DNR manages over 4,000 miles of water trails for canoeing and kayaking including the north shore of Lake Superior and dozens of rivers statewide.

Here are Lynne Diebel and Bob Diebel, talking about paddling on the Pine River.

Lynne:

A swift, crystal-clear delight – that's the way I describe the Pine. The Pine provides great spring and fall paddling. You don't want to try it in the middle of summer because the water levels are generally too low. It's for paddlers who are comfortable in class I rapids.

The stretch we like best is about 39 miles long, and that's between County Road 118 and Upper Whitefish Lake. Then skip over the Whitefish chain and go from Cross Lake Dam to County Road 11, which is just upstream of the Mississippi.

This is really pretty country. It's mostly jack pines in the area. The Whitefish chain is a very popular motorboat stretch, but obviously you're not going to find motorboats on this cute little clear-water river. The bottom of the river is sand and gravel, so you can see your sand and gravel patterns zoom by as you're paddling it. It's a swift river.

Two towns, Pine River and Cross Lake, are along the route. It's best for somebody who's experienced in river paddling, but you don't have to be comfortable in big rapids. These are small rapids, these are class I. And there is camping along the river.

Bob:

The descent into the Upper Whitefish Lake is probably the area that has the most rapids. It's kind of a continuous rapids in the last several miles. Class I, maybe II, if it was really high water and extreme conditions. So that's one area to think about as you're going down the river.

Lynne:

You've got camping possibilities after the Cross Lake Dam. There are a couple of campsites along the way about 6 miles down from the Cross Lake Dam and about 15 miles down from the dam. There is a little rock dam along the way below Cross Lake Dam that you'll need to portage around, but that's an easy portage.

If you do want to go down all the way to the Mississippi – there's an eagle's nest on a tree on the Mississippi – but that means then you have to keep on going further down the Mississippi before you take out.

As I said, you have the possibility of camping, but it makes for great day trips. You'll see osprey, herons, eagles, otters, muskrats – and the fishing is said to be excellent.

One warning though, there are a few low bridges. So watch out for the dams, watch out for the low bridges, and you'll have a wonderful time on the Pine.

Bob:

Yes, a beautiful little river well worth paddling. Have fun.