

MISSISSIPPI RIVER STATE WATER TRAIL



MAP 1 - LAKE ITASCA TO CASS LAKE



m MINNESOTA
STATE PARKS AND TRAILS

ABOUT THE WATER TRAIL

The Mississippi River State Water Trail begins its 2,552-mile journey in Itasca State Park. Its first 50 miles are narrow, sometimes just five to 10 feet wide, and have few signs of development. You will pass white and red pine, oaks, maples, birch and aspen that support diverse wildlife. You may also notice the past effects of glaciers, where deposited rock and sand formed hills or melting ice flattened plains.

As you travel toward Bemidji, the river's banks become more defined, and you'll begin to notice farms and homes. Wetlands throughout this stretch have dense, maze-like vegetation, which may lead you astray or prove to be an obstacle. In most cases, follow the downstream flow to stay on the main channel.

The river falls an average of four feet per mile. You will find riffles and Class I rapids throughout this stretch. Class I rapids are usually small waves with few obstructions. Hazards include dense vegetation, log jams and large, open water, which can produce powerful waves.



The river meanders through dense wetlands.

TRIP PLANNING AND SAFETY



- Plan your trip with a map before you leave. Tell someone your plans, including put-in and take-out times.
- Travel with a companion or group.
- Most people paddle 2-3 river miles per hour.
- River levels can affect your speed and trip safety. Check conditions at mndnr.gov/river_levels.
- Don't underestimate the power of wind and waves, especially on large lakes.
- Be cautious of obstacles in the river and avoid overhanging and dead trees.
- Bring clean drinking water and a waterproof container with a first aid kit, waterproof matches and extra clothes.
- Wear a life jacket at all times while on the water.
- Purchase a license for your non-motorized watercraft if it's more than 10 feet in length. If you're not from Minnesota, check your state's watercraft license laws.

WATERCRAFT CAMPING



- Camp only in designated campsites, which are often available on a first-come, first-served basis. State and national forests do allow dispersed camping. Be sure to check regulations before your trip.
- Riverbed camping next to private property is not permitted.
- Stay off private property. Stop only at designated sites; much of the shoreland is private property.
- Be sanitary! Use designated toilet facilities or bury human waste away from the river.
- Follow the rules for firewood. State forests allow you to gather dead wood for a fire, but state parks do not.

RECOMMENDED DAY TRIP

Lake Itasca to Coffee Pot Landing

- Put-in location: Mississippi Headwaters River mile **1,341.6**
- Take-out location: Coffee Pot Landing River mile **1,326.2**
- Length: **15.4** river miles

This stretch starts off wooded and intimate. Expect to lift the watercraft over beaver dams during lower water levels, or around road culverts during high water levels. To take a break, pull over at Wanagan. The stretch between Vekin's Dam and Co. Road 2 has Class I rapids, which can be challenging for new paddlers. Conclude at Coffee Pot Landing.

mndnr.gov/watertrails/recommended

EXPLORE ON SHORE

Itasca State Park

River mile **1,341.6**

Stop at the park to experience the headwaters of the Mississippi or to rent a canoe, kayak or stand-up paddleboard.

mndnr.gov/itasca

Paul Bunyan State Trail

River mile **1,284**

Get out at Nymore Beach and hike or bike a portion of the paved trail. Check the City of Bemidji for bike rentals and create a pedal-paddle adventure.

mndnr.gov/paulbunyan

PROTECT THE RIVER

Your experience on the river depends on a healthy environment. As you explore the beauty of this waterway, also do your best to protect it.

Protect Your Waters

Before launching...before leaving

- Clean off aquatic plants and animals.
- Drain all water away from the landing.
- Dispose of unwanted bait in the trash.

mndnr.gov/invasives/aquatic

Buffer Protection

The Minnesota buffer law establishes new vegetation buffers along rivers, streams and ditches to help filter out chemicals and sediment before they reach waterways.

mndnr.gov/buffers

CONTACTS

DNR REGION 1

HEADQUARTERS

2115 Birchmont Beach Rd. NE
Bemidji, MN 56601
218-755-3955

DNR INFORMATION CENTER

500 Lafayette Rd.
St. Paul, MN 55155-4040
888-646-6367

info.dnr@state.mn.us

ITASCA STATE PARK

Lake Itasca, MN
218-266-2100

mndnr.gov/itasca

LAKE BEMIDJI STATE PARK

Bemidji, MN
218-755-3843

mndnr.gov/lakebemidji

MEDICAL

SANFORD

MEDICAL CENTER

1300 Anne St. NW
Bemidji, MN 56601
218-751-5430



IN AN EMERGENCY CALL 911

More Information

mndnr.gov/watertrails

- River level reporting
- River conditions reporting
- Interactive water trail map
- Recommended routes
- River rapids definitions
- Virtual tours

Search for outfitters at
exploreminnesota.com

This document is available in alternative formats to individuals with disabilities by contacting info.dnr@state.mn.us, 651-296-6157, or MN Relay 711.

