Paddling the Mississippi River Tributaries

Experience the rivers, bayous and lakes of the Mississippi-Louisiana Delta

Although you won't find much white water in Mississippi or Louisiana, you will encounter some beautiful scenery and plentiful wildlife while paddling our waterways. Many creeks, streams, bayous and rivers in both the Mississippi and Louisiana deltas are lined by deep woods that are home to a variety of plant and animal life. Birding from a kayak or canoe can take on an entirely new dimension. Paddle the Miss-Lou and discover a new perspective on our region. The best time to paddle is during the spring or fall. Water levels are generally high enough in the summer to paddle lakes and rivers, too.

If you are looking for real adventure you may want to consider a trip on the Mississippi River with John Ruskey of Quapaw Canoe Co. John conducts daylong and overnight trips on the river where you can paddle with others in one of his large handmade wooden canoes or rent your own.

Paddling Trails

1. **Sunflower River, *Clarksdale*** - Take a 10-mile paddle out of the fertile fields of Coahoma County into the busy little city of Clarksdale. The Sunflower follows an old channel of the Mississippi River as it winds between farms, neighborhoods, wetlands and abandoned sharecropper shacks.
2. **Yalobusha River, *Downtown Grenada to Holcomb*** - Explore the diverse topography of this region as you paddle from downtown Grenada, Miss. and the scenic loess bluffs into the flatlands of the Mississippi delta.
3. **Yalobusha River, *Holcomb to Malmaison Wildlife Management Area*** - There are opportunities to view ample wildlife as you paddle through Malmaison Wildlife Management Area. Alligators, beavers, foxes, otters, deer and all types of birds may appear in and along the river.
4. **Yalobusha River, *Malmaison Wildlife Management Area to Avalon*** - Malmaison Wildlife Management Area is one of the most diverse and unique in the state, with 10,000 acres spanning the hills and delta floodplains. Mature forests, oxbow lakes, cypress swamps and seasonal wetlands are abundant. Hiking trails and primitive campsites are located near the boat ramp where you will put in to paddle this trail.
5. **Yalobusha River, *Avalon to Downtown Greenwood*** - Wildlife and beautiful scenery are plentiful as you paddle from Avalon into downtown Greenwood, Miss. where three rivers, the Yalobusha, Tallahatchie and the Yazoo, all meet and come together to eventually flow into the Mississippi River.
6. **Sunflower River, *Anguilla to Rolling Fork*** - Along this portion of the Sunflower River, some of the densest mussel shell populations in the world can be found. Some of these are endangered species, such as the sheepnose and spectaclecase mussels.
7. **Little Sunflower River** - This easy day trip is a scenic roundtrip excursion into the heart of Delta National Forest, the only bottomland hardwood forest in the national forest system. Put in at the Little Sunflower boat ramp in the forest and paddle south; turn around whenever you get tired or at the confluence with the Big Sunflower River.
8. **Yazoo River** - Paddlers using canoes, kayaks or stand-up paddleboards can follow the Yazoo River out of the Mississippi delta to its end at the loess bluffs of Vicksburg. The Yazoo River banks are wooded along the route, and the main channel is free of debris and easy to navigate.
9. **Pearl River** - This trail is entirely within the greater Jackson metropolitan area, but it has a remote feel to it. Luxurious white sandbars abound, inviting picnicking and exploring.
10. **Bayou Bartholomew Paddling Trail** - Bayou Bartholomew and its tributary Chemin-a-Haut Bayou are the crown jewels of the rivers of northeast Louisiana. It is the longest undammed waterway on the lower Mississippi River, making it the wildest and most scenic, with cypress trees large enough to pull a canoe into.
11. **Tensas River Paddling Trail** - The possibilities for paddlers on the Tensas River and adjacent bayou, backwater and tributaries are almost endless. This 15.2-mile paddle starts at the Fool River boat launch and goes to the Ben Lilly boat launch.

12. **Bayou Macon Paddling Trail** - This short paddle is for the beginner and starts at the Poverty Point Reservoir State Park ramp and meanders to Delhi, which is 6.5 miles away by water. The rest of the trail provides unlimited paddling on the Poverty Point Reservoir State Park.
13. **Tensas River National Wildlife Refuge Paddling Trail** The Tensas River flows out of Lake Providence and meanders south before it descends into the expansive woods of the Tensas River National Wildlife Refuge. The graceful loops actually are ancient channels originally carved by the violent floods of the Mississippi River. The spectacular old cypress trees line most of the waterways within the refuge.
14. **Lake Country Trails - Lake St. John** - Lake St. John is an old Mississippi River oxbow and is lined with houses and fields on all but its northeastern extremity. So the best paddling and most plentiful wildlife is found as far north as you can venture. This 10-mile paddle is relaxing and great for beginners.
15. **Lake Country Trails - Lake Concordia** - Lake Concordia is the clearest water of any oxbow lake in north Louisiana. It also boasts the best birding. Its waters are more than 150 feet deep in places. It is great for swimming, but be wary of alligators. On the northern end there are roseate spoonbills, snowy egrets, green herons, ibis and other spectacular birds.
16. **Lake Country Trails - Lake Bruin** - Lake Bruin is a beautifully clear oxbow lake cut off from the Mississippi River centuries ago. It has 3,000 acres of open water awaiting exploration and enjoyment. The recommended trail, a two to three hour paddle, begins and ends at the Lake Bruin State Park, leaving lots of time for relaxation.
17. **Lake Country Trails - Lake St. Joseph** - Lake St. Joseph is thought to be one of the oldest oxbow lakes along the lower Mississippi. It's also the site of Louisiana's first Christian mass, which was conducted by the LaSalle expedition. Along its bank is "Winter Quarters," the only plantation remaining after Union armies came through the area. Here the paddler can enjoy skirting through the stands of cypress trees.
18. **Lower Mississippi River National Wildlife Refuge - Bayou Cocodrie** - Bayou Cocodrie is a state designated scenic stream. The paddling trail starts at the Bayou Cocodrie National Wildlife Refuge boat ramp and runs to the Wallace Lake check station. The canoe trail features miles of forest-lined shores featuring huge cypress trees and sections of marsh. The bayou supports excellent fishing and a variety of birds and other wildlife.
19. **Lower Mississippi River National Wildlife Refuge - St. Catherine's Creek** - The Lower Mississippi River Refuge Complex includes St. Catherine's Creek, Bayou Cocodrie and Cat Island National Wildlife Refuges. All three are within 5 miles of the Mississippi River. From loess bluffs to cypress swamps, each refuge has its own unique landscape. These lands were set aside to allow our nation's wildlife to thrive, but, you can experience the refuges by hiking or paddling on designated trails.
20. **Lower Mississippi River National Wildlife Refuge - Cat Island** - The Big Cypress Trail at Cat Island is a short out-and-back trail through a unique mixture of bottomland hardwood forest. The destination for most paddlers is the National Champion Baldcypress tree, an extraordinary landmark in the state of Louisiana. It is the largest tree east of the Sierra Nevada Mountains.

The complete trail brochures are available online, in Mississippi and Louisiana visitors' centers and in the convention and visitor bureaus and welcome centers in the towns where the trails begin and end. Details and maps for any of these trails may be found at: www.lowerdelta.org/paddling-trails.

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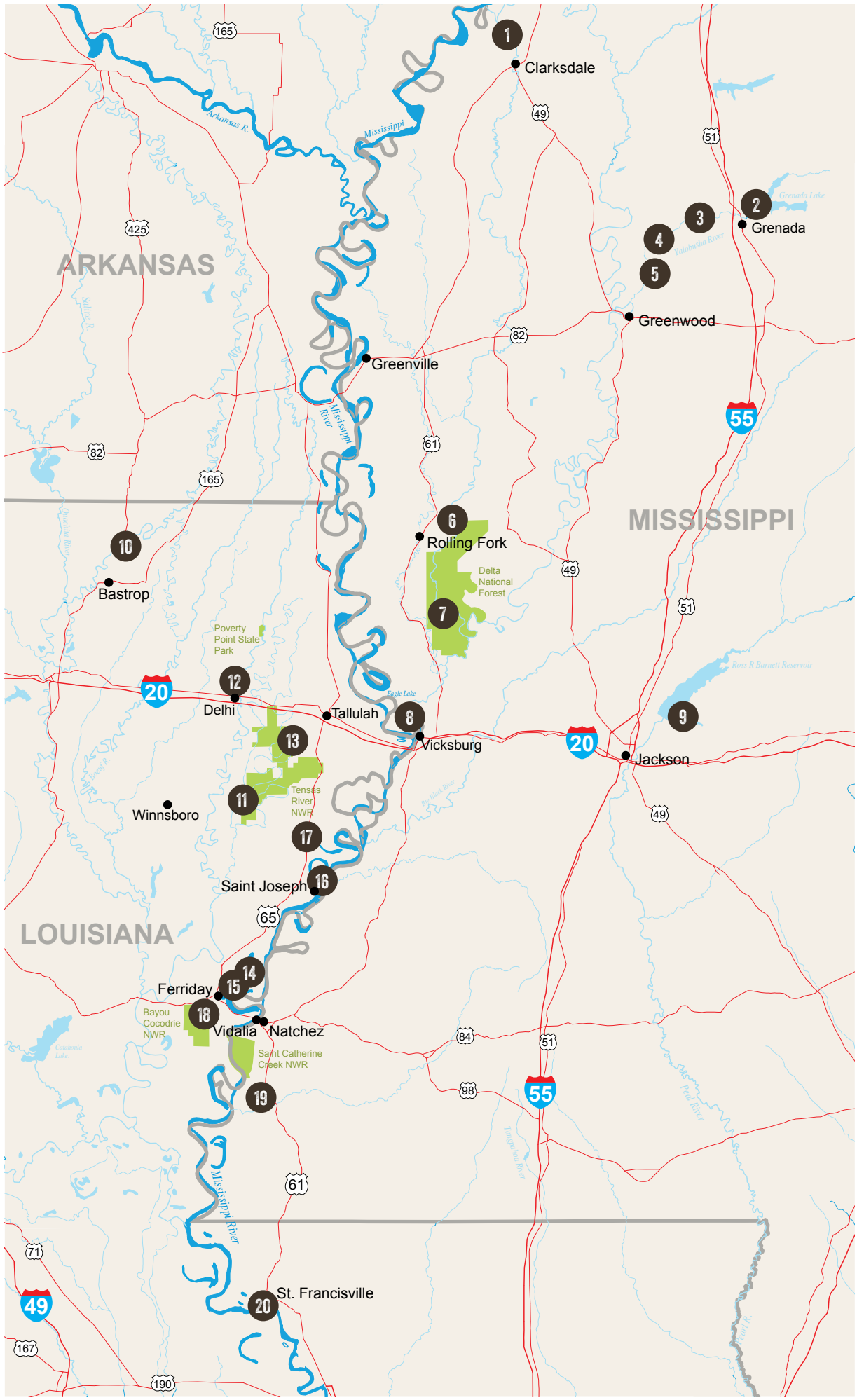

Outfitters/Services

These rural areas offer few outfitters and services, so go prepared and carry your own canoe or kayak!

- Quapaw Canoe Co. - 291 Sunflower Ave., Clarksdale, MS 38614, 662-627-4070 or 662-902-7841

Lodging

Click on each town below for a link to online hotel listings for the area.

- Bastrop, La.
- Oak Grove, La.
- Rayville, La.
- Tallulah, La.
- Winnsboro, La.
- Vidalia, La.
- Clarksdale, Miss.
- Greenwood, Miss.
- Greenville, Miss.
- Vicksburg, Miss.

If you would like to stay at a campground, click here. This website will allow you to select the town and the amenities that are important to you.

In this area, there are many state parks with lodging, too. Click on the park below to search for accommodations near Bayou Bartholomew, Bayou Macon and Tensas Trails in Louisiana and near the Sunflower and Little Sunflower in Mississippi.

- Chemin-A-Haut State Park, La.
- Black Bear Lodge, La.
- Poverty Point Reservoir State Park , La.
- Lake Bruin State Park, La.
- Leroy Percy State Park, Miss.
- Delta National Forest, Miss. (primitive camping only)

Eateries

The delta is known for its delicious food, and this region has lots to offer the traveler. Almost every small convenience store has a delectable menu and is a great place to dine with local people.

Our grocery stores are filled with meats and fresh vegetables found in abundance in the area. That's a great place to shop if you are camping or packing food for your paddling trip.

Eateries in this area often change, so the best advice is to ask locals where they eat.

Louisiana Delta Adventures – Growing Nature-Based Tourism

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Mississippi's Lower Delta Partnership