

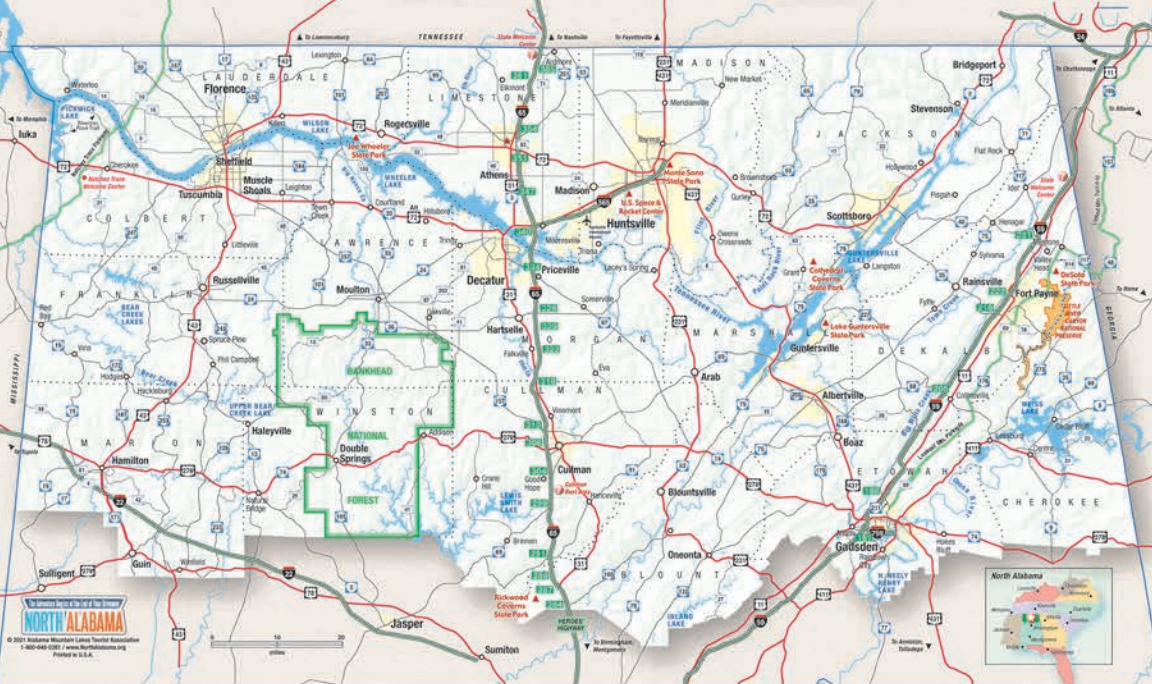


# PADDLING NORTH ALABAMA

*Where the Lakes  
meet the Mountains*







## *Where the Lakes meet the Mountains*

Whether you have a few hours or a few days, pack your bag, load your family or friends into the car, and get ready to explore North Alabama by water and by land.

North Alabama marks the southern foothills of the iconic Appalachian Mountains, creating an outdoor playground for a variety of activities.

The mighty Tennessee River cuts a large valley across the width of our state, creating a countless amount of creeks, streams, rivers, mountains, and lakes. Here you will find level highlands, narrow strips of gentle rolling lowlands on each side of the Tennessee River, and rugged spots with steep mountainsides, deep narrow valleys, and mountain summits reaching 1,800 feet.

This abundance of natural beauty makes it hard to decide what outdoor adventure to pick—paddling or climbing, whitewater rafting or biking?

Luckily, you can do it all! With helpful paddle outfitters along every river and creek, supportive trail towns full of historical culture and attractions, and parks and nature preserves around every bend, North Alabama is the perfect destination for multi-day, multi-sport adventures!

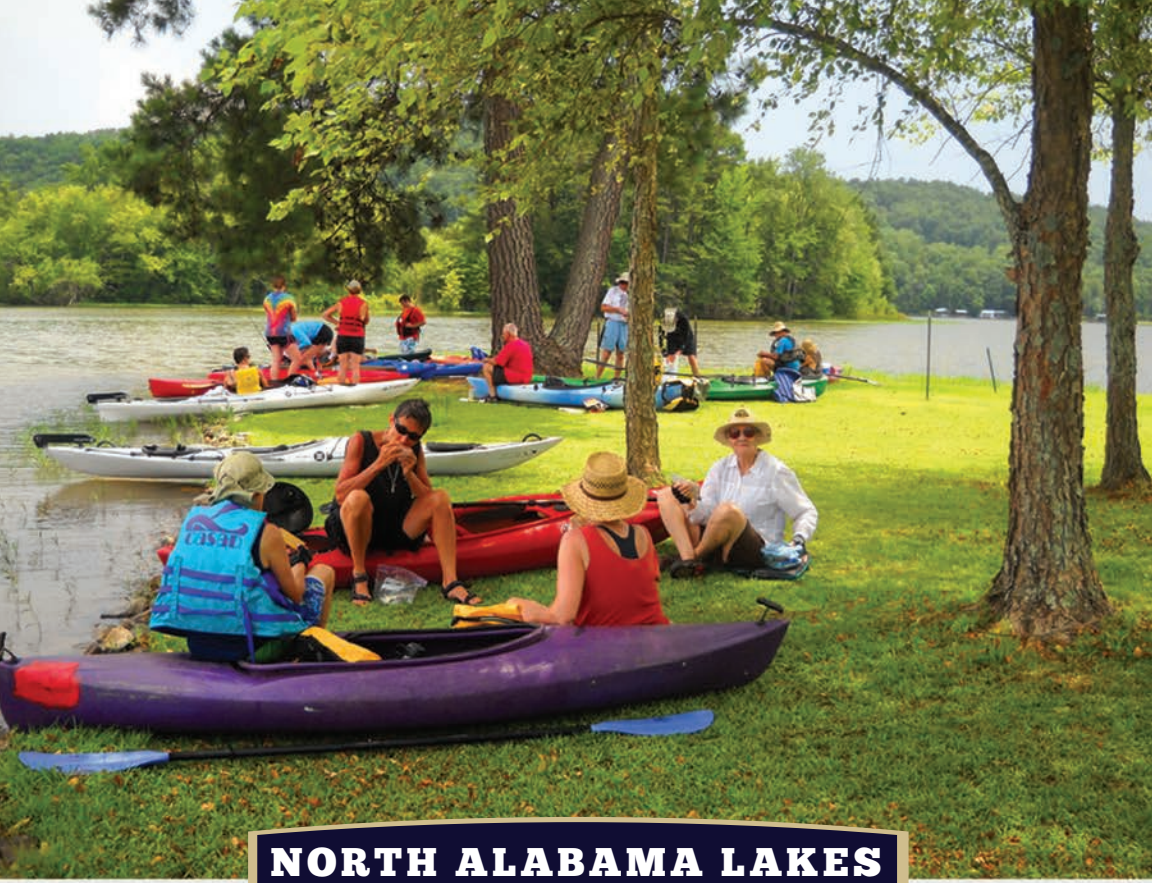


# PADDLING NORTH ALABAMA

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Alabama Mountain Lakes Tourist Association  
402 Sherman Street, SE / P.O. Box 2537 / Decatur, AL 35602  
256-350-3500 / 800-648-5381 / Fax: 256-350-3519  
[www.northalabama.org](http://www.northalabama.org)





## NORTH ALABAMA LAKES

**Bear Creek Lakes** - 8,000 acres total  
Composed of four lakes in each with their own distinct personality that have been rated some of the cleanest recreational waters in the South.

**H. Neely Henry Lake** - 11,200 acres  
The first of Alabama Power's dams built, this lake boasts rippling blue waters, 339 miles of shoreline, and incredible fishing.

**Lake Guntersville** - 69,000 acres  
Alabama's largest impoundment with more than 900 miles of shoreline that's known for both its bass fishing and its lakeside resorts.

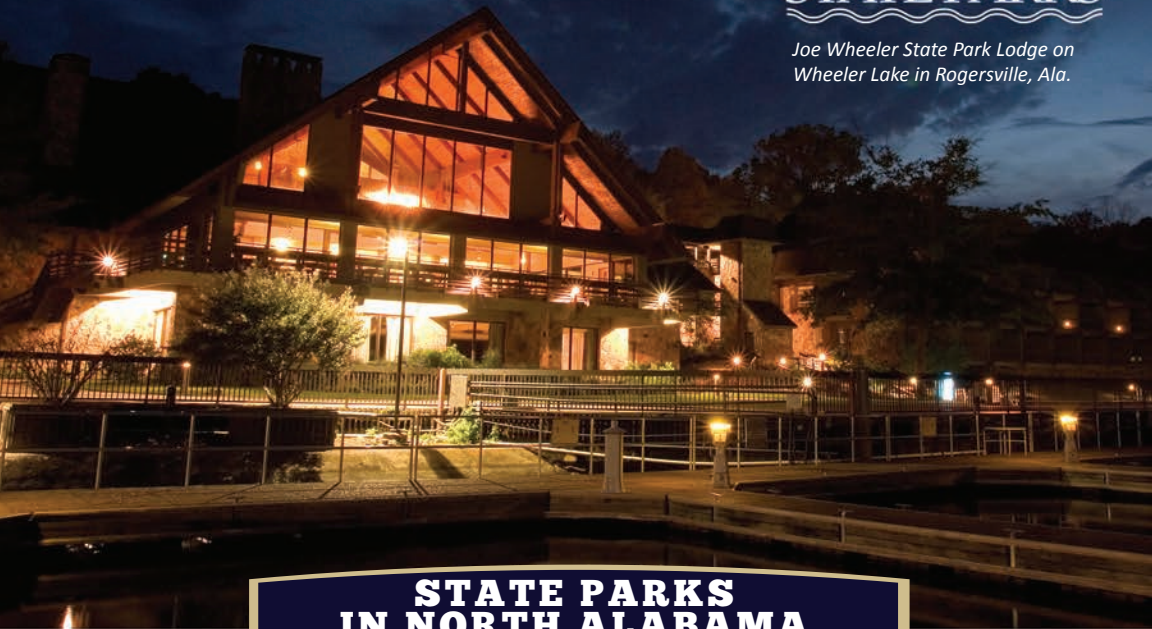
**Lewis Smith Lake** - 21,000 acres  
A deep, clear lake near Cullman with feeder streams, bays, and sloughs. A rainbow trout fishery is located on the Sipsey Fork.

**Pickwick Lake** - 43,100 acres  
Because of the strong currents coming from Wilson Dam, the lake is a superb habitat for both largemouth and smallmouth bass and hosts a number of large fishing tournaments.

**Weiss Lake** - 30,200 acres  
Proudly known as the crappie capital of the world with 447 miles of shoreline, deep channels, and large coves.

**Wheeler Lake** - 67,000 acres  
This reservoir on the Tennessee River hosts many fishing tournaments, is a prime fishing destination, and once held the world record blue catfish at 111 lbs.

**Wilson Lake** - 15,500 acres  
This lake stretches upstream for 15 miles to Wheeler Dam and is a popular destination for both boat and bank anglers.



## STATE PARKS IN NORTH ALABAMA

### **Cathedral Caverns State Park** *Woodville*

Inside the cavern, you will find amazing formations including Big Rock Canyon, Mystery River, Stalagmite Mountain, The Frozen Waterfall, and Goliath, a huge stalagmite column that reaches the ceiling of the cave some 45 feet above! Human habitation can be traced back 8,000 years.

### **Joe Wheeler State Park & Resort** *Rogersville*

A 2,500-acre park on Wheeler Lake offering a lodge, 75 hotel rooms, restaurant, marina, golf course, campground, cabins, tennis, boat launch, swimming, picnicking, hiking, banquet facilities, boat rentals, 30 person group lodge, and pavilions.

### **Monte Sano State Park** *Huntsville*

A 2,140-acre resort atop Monte Sano Mountain with stunning vistas, mountaintop trails, family picnic areas, and a Japanese garden and teahouse. Offers 14 renovated cabins and 89 campsites.

### **DeSoto State Park** *Fort Payne*

This 3,502-acre park is nestled atop Lookout Mountain and has over 30 miles of trails,

interpretive nature programs, mountain chalets, a motel, restaurant, campground, primitive camping, canoeing, boating, and fishing areas.

### **Buck's Pocket State Park** *Grove Oak*

Secluded in a natural pocket of the Appalachian Mountain foothills with more than 15 miles of trails, including a first-of-its-kind ORV (off-road vehicle) trail, and 23 campsites with high-speed Wifi.

### **Lake Guntersville State Park & Lodge** *Guntersville*

A 6,000-acre park located along the shore of Lake Guntersville that offers everything from resort-style accommodations to camping, including more than 36 miles of trails, a zip line, tennis, an 18-hole golf course, and more.

### **Rickwood Caverns State Park** *Warrior*

The 260 million-year-old limestone formations, blind cave fish, and underground pool are just a few of the natural wonders exhibited in the colorful cavern. The park features an Olympic-size swimming pool, hiking trails, and gemstone mining.



# Top Multi-Day Adventure Spots in North Alabama

## 🛶 FLINT RIVER - MADISON COUNTY 🛶

Type of water	Easy current
Distance	48 mi
Outfitters	North Alabama Canoe and Kayak, Flint River Expeditions, Brown Bear Canoe & Kayak
More info	Alabama Scenic River Trail

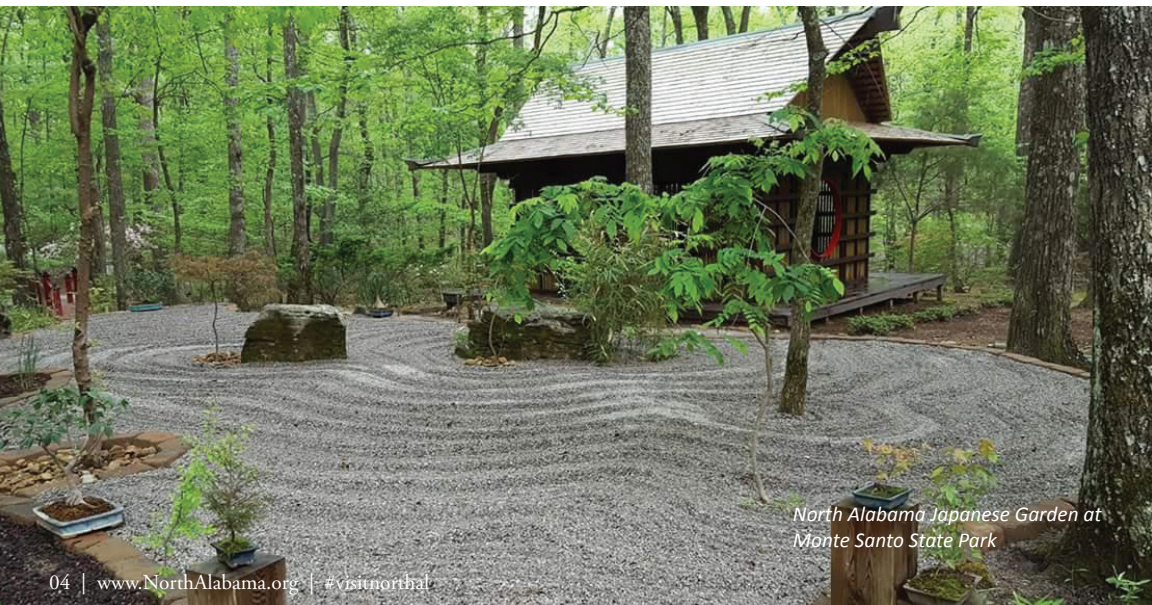
### The Paddle:

The Flint River in Madison County is a prime multi-day paddle in North Alabama but can also be easily broken down into full-day and half-day trips, thanks to its proximity to local roadways and put-ins/take-outs. Featuring 48 miles of easy flow, the Flint is perfect for beginners and families and loaded with prime spots for casting a line.

### Additional Adventures:

The Flint River flows past Huntsville, making a stay in Monte Sano State Park the ideal way to extend your adventure. There are over 22 miles of scenic singletrack hiking and biking trails that show off the rocky and mountainous topography that North Alabama is known for. If you want to give your arms and legs a rest, be sure to visit the North Alabama Japanese Garden within the park for some prime birdwatching and photography opportunities.

You can reward yourself after your adventures by jumping onto a different type of trail—the North Alabama Craft Beer Trail. Huntsville is bursting with award-winning local breweries like Yellowhammer, Straight to Ale, Innerspace, and Rocket Republic.



*North Alabama Japanese Garden at Monte Sano State Park*

## TENNESSEE RIVER TO LAKE GUNTERSVILLE MADISON AND MARSHALL COUNTIES

Type of water	Moderate current and Flatwater
Distance	7+ mi
Outfitters	Alabama Eco Adventures
More info	Alabama Scenic River Trail

### The Paddle:

If you're looking for the perfect multi-day paddle trip centered around lots of activities, look no further than a journey down the Tennessee River from Huntsville to Guntersville.

Starting from Ditto's Landing outside Huntsville, 15 miles of paddling brings you to one of North Alabama's most stunning destinations—Painted Bluff, a rock formation that rises over 250 feet out of the river and is home to Native American drawings that are over 600 years old.

Continuing down the Tennessee, you'll head to Hambrick Hollow Bat Cave, home to thousands of bats that entertain paddlers in the early evening with their feeding habits.

### Additional Adventures:

The Tennessee River widens into Lake Guntersville, where you can trade your boat for a golf club, hiking boots, or tennis racquet. When you're ready to relax, be sure to visit City Harbor on the shores of Lake Guntersville for shopping, dining, and entertainment.

## WHEELER NATIONAL WILDLIFE REFUGE MORGAN COUNTY

Type of water	Moderate current and Flatwater
Distance	18 mi
Outfitters	Flint Creek
More info	<a href="https://www.fws.gov/refuge/wheeler/">https://www.fws.gov/refuge/wheeler/</a>

### The Paddle:

The name says it all—wildlife is the main attraction for anyone paddling at Wheeler National Wildlife Refuge. An 18-mile trip through the Refuge is guaranteed to provide paddlers with over 100 species of fish, almost 300 species of birds, and even alligators! It's a good thing this is an easy paddle, because you'll want to keep your eyes on all the wildlife surrounding you.

This trip is a great multi-day paddle where you stay in the same area throughout the trip rather than moving downriver. With so many coves, creeks, and sloughs to explore, paddlers can really appreciate all that the Refuge has to offer and enjoy the wildlife at a quiet, leisurely pace.

When your hands and arms need a break from paddling, Wheeler has over 100 miles of roadway for bike riding, 5 hiking trails, and an endless amount of spots to practice your photography or birdwatching.

### Additional Adventures:

Make Decatur your homebase during your stay. For a different type of animal-watching, explore the Downtown Turtle Trail—a fun, interactive scavenger hunt with 10 turtle statues that reveal aspects of Decatur's history. For meals, no one would blame you if you ate at the world-famous Big Bob Gibson's Bar-B-Que with the signature white sauce every single day.



# SIPSEY RIVER - LAWRENCE, WINSTON, AND FRANKLIN COUNTIES



Type of water	Moderate current, multiple Class I rapids
Distance	9.5 mi
More info	Bankhead National Forest Ranger Contact: <a href="mailto:bkinfo@usda.gov">bkinfo@usda.gov</a>

## The Paddle:

The best multi-day adventure in Bankhead National Forest involves the Sipsey River. The only National Wild and Scenic River in the State of Alabama, the Sipsey can be divided into three sections with about 10 miles per section.

An adventure on the Sipsey makes you feel worlds away from everything. It features everything from Class I rapids to limestone canyons and dazzlingly-blue waterfalls. Having whitewater experience and backcountry knowledge is important because there's limited cell service and opportunities for easy rescue points. Water levels can vary and there are some tricky portages, so plan accordingly. While this trip isn't for beginners, it's wilderness paddling at its finest. A suggested section to tackle is from the Thompson Creek (iron-bridge) access off Forest Service Road #208, downstream to the Sipsey River Recreational Area at the crossing of Winston County Road 60. Attempting this paddle trip should be restricted to the wetter months to avoid having to drag your watercraft over the shoals.

## Additional Adventures:

Add in some hiking on the over 90 miles of trails throughout the forest, including the elusive and jaw-dropping "Big Tree," and you'll feel like you're truly in the middle of nowhere.

While it feels like you're days away from civilization, Jasper is only a short drive from the Sipsey and offers plenty of entertainment, culture, and dining. You can immerse yourself in the local history by walking the Jasper Mural Trail, play a round of golf at one of their two golf courses, and then quench your thirst at either Twisted Barley Brewing Company or Tallulah Brewing Company.

## Turkey Foot Falls

*Double Springs, Alabama*  
[www.fs.usda.gov](http://www.fs.usda.gov)

Within a 30-minute walk from the Sipsey River Picnic Grounds and Recreation Area, which is the main developed access area off of County Road 6 (Cranal Road). Turkey Foot Creek runs through a sandstone canyon then empties into the Sipsey Fork. The area is rich in Native American and pioneer history. The site is part of the North Alabama Waterfall Trail. Free brochure and information at [www.NorthAlabama.org](http://www.NorthAlabama.org).





# Top Single Day Paddling Trips in North Alabama



## 📍 LOCUST FORK RIVER - BLOUNT COUNTY 📍

Type of water	Whitewater with class II and III rapids
Distance	10+ mi
Outfitters	River Beach Outfitters
More info	Friends of the Locust Fork

The Locust Fork River is a 158-mile tributary of the Black Warrior River that's nationally known for its premiere whitewater abundance and site of the Alabama Cup Races. While you can spend years paddling the entire river, from its technical rapids to its relaxing smooth waters, there are 10-mile stretches in Blount County perfect for a one-day adventure.

For experienced paddlers seeking out the infamous whitewater, put in at Kings Bend Scenic Overlook Park. Contact River Beach Outfitters for more information on how to plan the perfect Locust Fork trip for all experience levels.

## 📍 BEAR CREEK - MARION COUNTY 📍

Type of water	Whitewater with Class I-Class III rapids and leisurely float
Distance	7+ mi
Outfitters	Bear Creek Canoe Run
More info	Alabama Scenic River Trail

Bear Creek is a choose-your-own adventure in that it has a little bit of everything for paddlers of all levels. Because the Creek is fed by Upper Bear Creek Dam, it's the only reliable whitewater in northern Alabama in the summer months. The most popular paddle is from Mill Creek to Rock Quarry Branch, where paddlers will find a class II slide with a wave at the top and bottom at about mile 2.5.

From Rock Quarry to Military Bridge is a 9+ mile relaxing, scenic float with intermittent shoals.

## 🛶 — CYPRESS CREEK - LAUDERDALE COUNTY — 🛶

Type of water	Mild current, leisurely float
Distance	4-7 miles
Outfitters	Beardo Outdoors and Adventures of Kayaking
More info	Cypress Creek Public Access Point

Cypress Creek is the ideal paddle destination if you're in the mood for a relaxing half-day full of floating and fishing, then refueling with local food and beer. The Creek's mild current makes it a popular destination for both anglers looking to fish from their boats and paddlers wanting to leisurely float. Despite being so close to civilization, Cypress Creek is teeming with scenic bluffs and abundant wildlife.

## 🛶 — TERRAPIN CREEK - CALHOUN COUNTY — 🛶

Type of water	Mild current, Class I rapids
Distance	7-14+ miles
Outfitters	Terrapin Outdoor Center, No Worries Kayak Rental, and Redneck Yacht Club
More info	Alabama Scenic River Trail

Terrapin Creek is another stunning Alabama waterway that's one of the most popular paddling trips in the state due to its mild current and accessibility with the local outfitters. Putting in at Stewart's Bridge is perfect for a relaxing float or family trip.

But don't be lulled by this one section's calm waters. If you're a more experienced paddler, different sections of the Terrapin include Class III rapids and can be easily turned into a multi-day trip.

## 🛶 — BIG WILLS CREEK - ETOWAH COUNTY — 🛶

Type of water	Mild current, Class I rapids
Distance	6+ miles
Outfitters	Big Wills Outfitters
More info	Alabamawhitewater.com

Big Wills Creek meanders from Fort Payne to Gadsden and is full of history, scenery, wildlife, and excitement for all levels of paddling. The first hydroelectric power plant in the world was on the banks of Big Wills, which led to the creation of Alabama Power and Southern Company.

A popular put-in is Stephens Gap Road, where the creek is windy and full of shoals and some small rapids but still accessible to beginner paddlers. For those looking for a short one-mile relaxing float, Big Wills Campground in Attala is a popular summertime spot for tubing and wildlife watching.





## ELK RIVER - LIMESTONE COUNTY

Type of water	Mild current, Class I rapids
Distance	20+ miles
Outfitters	Fort Hampton Outfitters

A part of the Limestone County Canoe and Kayak Trail and a tributary of the Tennessee River, the Elk River runs for 21.9 miles and has five easily accessible put-ins, allowing for a variety of distance options for paddlers.

The river is known for its breathtaking scenery, with tall limestone formations, dense forests, sweeping meadows, and an abundance of wildlife. Because the river is so calm in most spots, it's a well-known paddleboard destination. Fort Hampton Outfitters offers both kayak and SUP rentals, as well as lessons and trips.

## PAINT ROCK RIVER MADISON/JACKSON/MARSHALL COUNTIES

Type of water	Mild current, Class I rapids
Distance	5-15+ miles
Outfitters	Paint Rock Canoe & Kayak

It's a tossup of what the Paint Rock River is better known for—its globally rare mussels that can't be found anywhere else in the world, or its proximity to the impressive Walls of Jericho. This tributary of the Tennessee River spans three counties and is varied in its level of difficulty for paddlers.

For those looking for a peaceful day on the water admiring one of the most biologically diverse regions in the state, paddling the stretch in Paint Rock is the ideal day trip. Paint Rock Canoe & Kayak offers rentals and a shuttle service for paddlers of all ages.





# Alabama Scenic River Trail

www.alabamascenicrivertrail.com

The Alabama Scenic River Trail spans the width and breath of the state including paddling and powerboat experiences and exploration abound along over 5000 miles of accessible waterways on over 43 waterways. Featured on the following pages are the Alabama Scenic River Trails found in North Alabama. It's all waiting for the whitewater enthusiast, the naturalist and the family who just wants to play.

**Steam engines hauled barge freight on the Tennessee in the days of the Muscle Shoals Canal.**

**Pickwick Lake**  
NEAREST POOL #12

**Legend**

- 🏠 TWA camp/development area
- 📍 Campsites suitable for dispersed wild camp
- 📍 Campsites suitable for primitive wild camp
- 🚰 Primitive water
- 🚰 Accessible drinking water
- 👤 Tennessee Wildlife Authority

**Camping on TWA Lands**

The lands along the Tennessee River under the stewardship of the Tennessee Valley Authority present an almost endless opportunity to enjoy the Tennessee River, isolated on the maps by their color-coding. TWA lands open for camping and recreation flows much of both sides of the river. If you see TWA lands on the map, you may camp there with certain restrictions. Many of these areas are old and chronically undeveloped. Some of the more casual and traditionally-used campsites have been improved with regular maintenance, water and, in a few cases, toilets. Many of these TWA camping opportunities are located in protected places such as Wildlife Management Areas.

For those with the available technology and within the coverage of cellular data, the following information about a mobile application for the Android and iOS devices will allow you to use yourself located on a map of the Tennessee River. If you use yourself on a mobile device, you are within a permitted TWA camping location. In your application store (Apple Store or Google Play Store on Android), search for "TWA". On Android devices, click install, then Accept and Download. Click on Open in the Android app. On the first main page of the iOS app, click the map icon and search for "TWA (undeveloped Recreation)". From the Apple App Store, download and skip the prompt to sign in and click the map icon. Search for "TWA (undeveloped Recreation)". You will then find a map with TWA designated recreation areas in purple. Check the crosshairs icon in the lower right corner of the screen to show yourself at your current location to determine areas where camping is permitted.

The following regulations apply to the use of undeveloped TWA lands, unless otherwise posted:

- Camping stays are limited to a maximum of 14 days within any 30 day period. After 14 days, campers must move at least one mile before reestablishing a campsite.
- Unattended camping vehicles and equipment may not be left overnight.
- Consumption of alcohol on undeveloped TWA lands is prohibited by local ordinances unless otherwise posted.
- Cutting, carrying, pulling up, or driving nails into trees, stumps, or other vegetation is prohibited.
- Hanging lanterns on trees is prohibited; the heat from a lantern will eventually kill a tree.
- Leaving trash or litter on TWA property is prohibited.
- Recreational use of motorized vehicles on undeveloped TWA land, including utility vehicles, dirt bikes, ATVs, or snowmobiles, is prohibited.
- Campfires must be completely extinguished before leaving the area.
- The operation or use of any non-potable device in such a manner as to unacceptably disturb, annoy, or endanger others is prohibited.
- The excavation, removal, damage, alteration, or defacement of archaeological resources is a felony offense prohibited by federal law.
- Hunting and fishing are permitted in accordance with applicable federal, state, and local laws. Unless posted otherwise, hunting is prohibited on TWA open recreational, power plant recreational, and power substation. Hunting is also prohibited in developed recreation areas, such as campgrounds and day-use areas, and wildlife sanctuaries.
- Unless otherwise posted, possession and use of firearms and other weapons is permissible subject to all applicable state regulations on undeveloped lands.

**Pickwick Lake**  
NEAREST POOL #2, 3

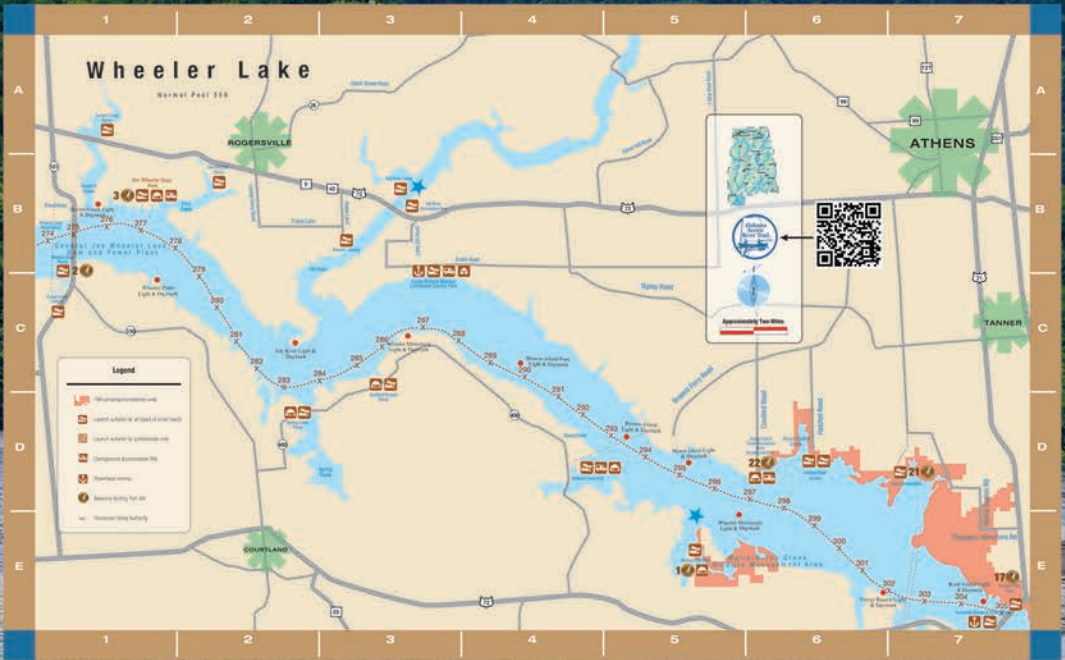
**Wilson Lake**  
NEAREST POOL #18

**Legend**

- 🏠 TWA camp/development area
- 📍 Campsites suitable for dispersed wild camp
- 📍 Campsites suitable for primitive wild camp
- 🚰 Primitive water
- 🚰 Accessible drinking water
- 👤 Tennessee Wildlife Authority







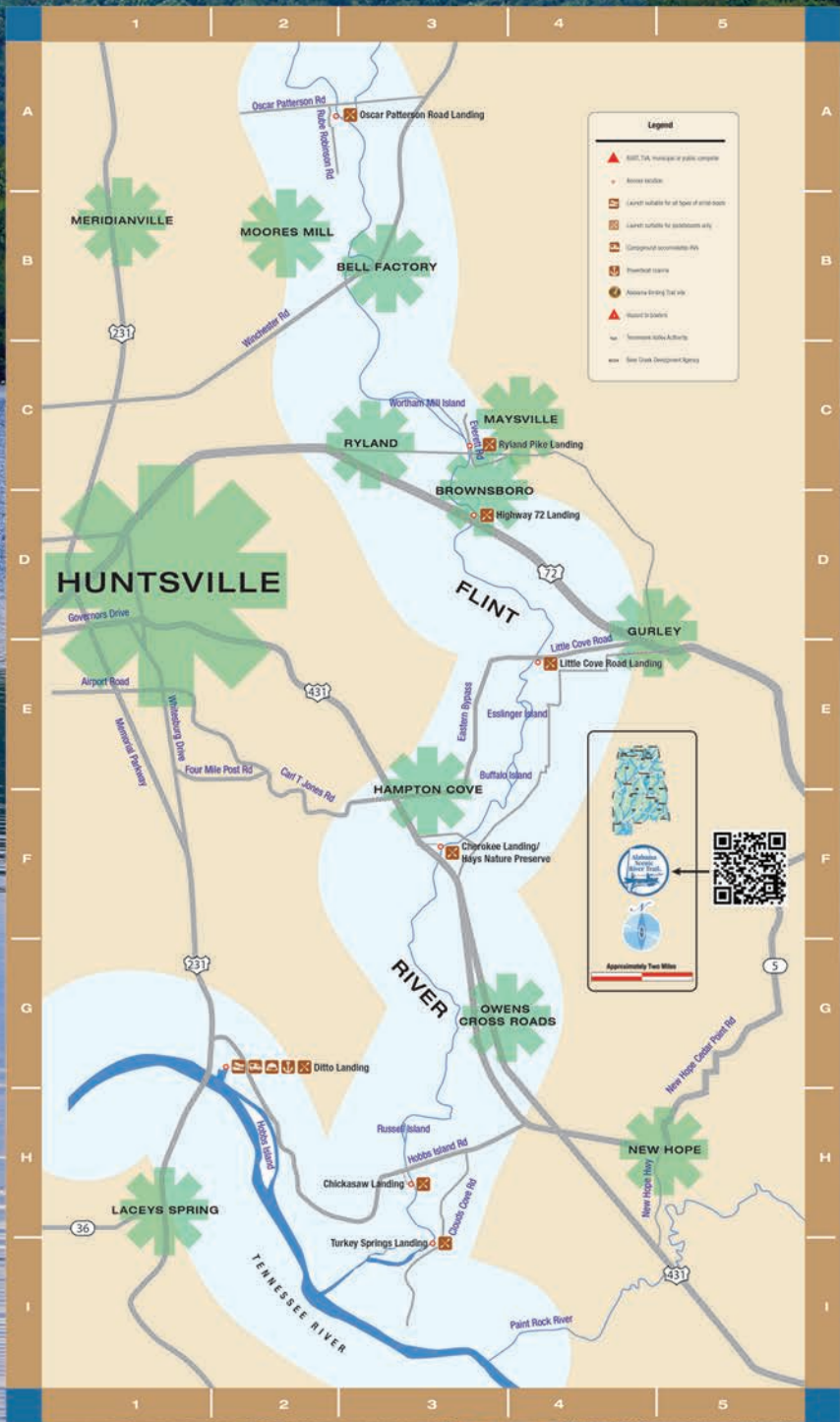
No camping on open lands on Wheeler National Wildlife Refuge lands (green on map)



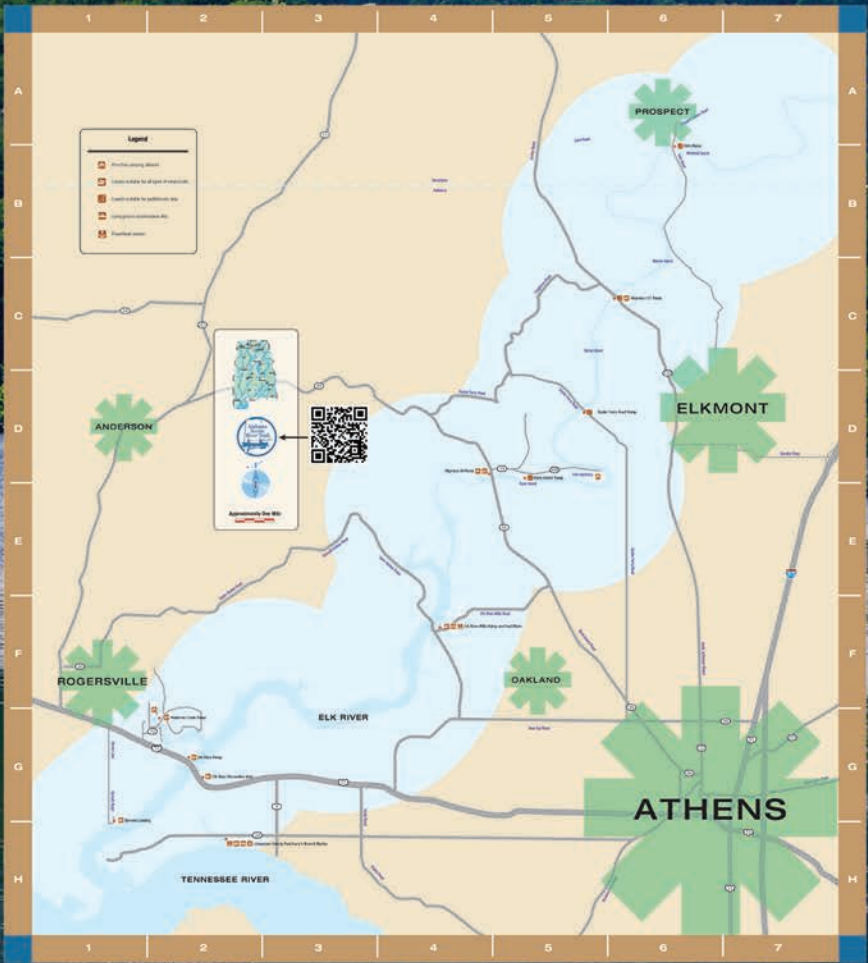
















*Kayak fishing on Flint Creek, a feeder creek to Wheeler Lake, Decatur, Alabama.*





A fisherman wearing a grey long-sleeved shirt, blue jeans, and a tan bucket hat stands in a red and black kayak on a river. He is holding a fishing rod that is bent, indicating a catch. The kayak is decorated with a checkered pattern and the word "Apex" in large letters. There are several medals or patches on the side of the kayak. The background is a dense forest of green trees, and the water is calm with some lily pads visible.

The water is calm with some lily pads visible. The background is a dense forest of green trees. The kayak is decorated with a checkered pattern and the word "Apex" in large letters. There are several medals or patches on the side of the kayak. The fisherman is holding a fishing rod that is bent, indicating a catch.





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