



The rivers and lakes in South Dakota provide canoeists and kayakers with excellent opportunities to enjoy the outdoors, breathe fresh air, enjoy nature, learn about area history and participate in physical exercise.

The information in this brochure is meant to direct you to water that can provide hours and/or days of fun. As you enjoy these waters, it is important to stay safe and to protect the environment.

Trip Planning

Some South Dakota streams are passable year-round, while others offer seasonal floating only after snowmelt or rain in spring and early summer.

Canoe/kayak trips can be as short as a couple hours or a week-long adventure depending on the river and your time. This guide has been developed to help you plan a safe, comfortable and enjoyable tour. Access areas, some hazards and parks are identified. The mileage guides are helpful but cannot take into consideration wind conditions and varying stream flows. Sometimes portages are needed to get around dams, fences and sandbars. If paddling on a river, always have a contingency plan to get off the river earlier than planned in case the weather or river conditions change or a paddler becomes sick or tired.

Most shorelines in South Dakota are privately owned. Permission must be secured before going on the land. When paddlers are polite and respectful of property rights, most landowners are happy to grant camping permission. River sandbars may appear to be excellent camping sites but be aware that water releases from the dams on the Missouri River and rainfall can result in rising water.

South Dakota law requires that non-motorized boats over 12 feet long, including canoes and kayaks, be licensed in South Dakota or another state.

The registration decal must be shown on each side of the bow. Paddlers are encouraged but not required to display license numbers on their watercraft for easier identification, to provide more theft protection and to operate in other states that require affixed license numbers.

Every person in the watercraft must have a U.S. Coast Guard approved personal floatation device that fits properly, is readily available and in good and serviceable condition.

Canoeing & Kayaking in South Dakota

Useful Websites

For SD state park information
www.sdgfp.info/Parks

For road maps
www.sddot.com/PE/data

For current water conditions
<http://waterdata.usgs.gov/sd/nwis/rt>

For more information on canoe trails or additional brochures, please write:

Division of Parks and Recreation
Department of Game, Fish and Parks
523 E East Capitol
Pierre, SD 57501
(605) 773-3391
Email: parkinfo@gfp.state.sd.us

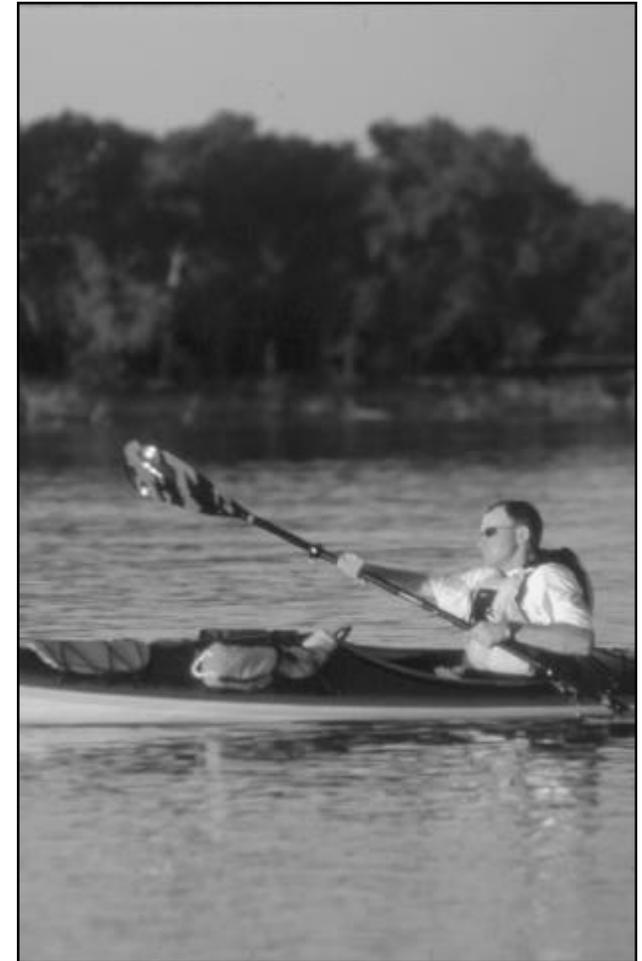


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Canoeing & Kayaking

in South Dakota



**South Dakota Department of
Game, Fish and Parks**

WESTERN SOUTH DAKOTA RIVERS

Belle Fourche River

The Belle Fourche River winds through gentle-to-steep rolling plains, interspersed with buttes, peaks and pinnacles. The numerous spring-fed creeks that empty into this river often make it possible to paddle in the fall.

If the water is high enough, many paddlers put in at Spearfish Creek near Spearfish. From here they float to the Red Water River and on to the Belle Fourche.

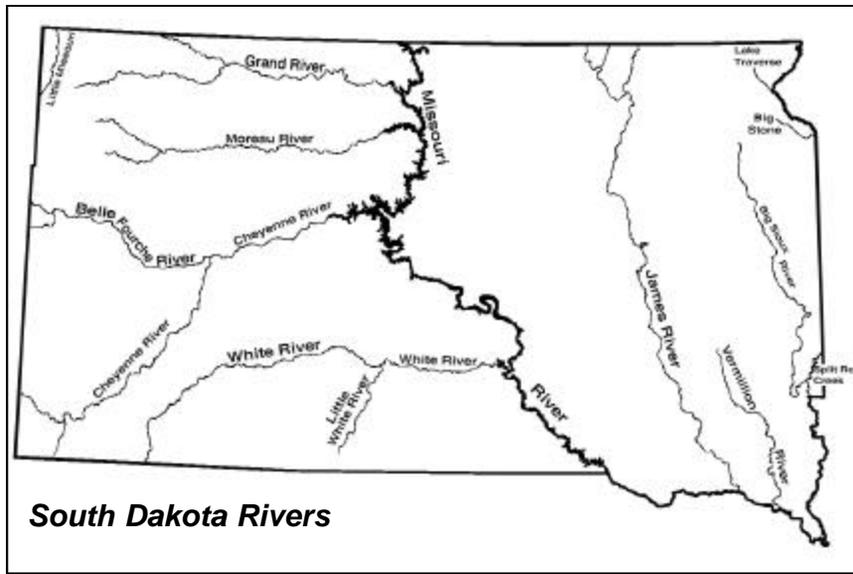
After a portage at a diversion dam just downstream from the city of Belle Fourche, the river can be paddled to where it joins the Cheyenne River.

Access Points County	River mileage to next access point
1. Highway US 85, Butte	10.3
2. Highway US 212, Butte	24.3
3. Highway SD 79, Butte	38.8
4. Highway SD 34, Meade	21.0
5. Unpaved road W of Hereford, Meade	13.5
6. Unpaved road S of Hereford, Meade	23.5
7. Unpaved road N of Hereford, Meade	23.5
8. Cheyenne River (no access)Meade

White River

The White River, named for its milky water, flows a wide course through badlands, grasslands, and crop-lands. Along upper stretches of the White, little evidence of civilization exists. Although more roads cross the White in downstream sections, centers of population do not exist on the river.

Access Points County	River mileage to next access point
1. Highway US 18, Shannon	10.9
2. Unpaved road E of Smithwick, Shannon	12.1
3. Unpaved road N of Oglala, Shannon	45.3
4. Paved road so. of Scenic Shannon	61.4



South Dakota Rivers

LAKES TO PADDLE

Many South Dakota state parks have lakes that have easy access and are fun to paddle. For safety reasons, the parks with the very large lakes have been left off this list. SP = State Park
• RA = Recreation Area

Park	Nearest Town
Angostura RA	Hot Springs
Bear Butte SP	Sturgis
Burke Lake RA	Burke
Custer SP	Custer
Shadehill RA	Lemmon

5. Highway SD 44, Jackson	44.3
6. Highway SD 73, Jackson	33.7
7. Highway SD 63, Jackson	21.2
8. Unpaved road S of Stamford, Jones/Mellette	51.5
9. Little White River, Jones/Mellette	1.89
10. Highway US 83, Jones/Mellette	30.1
11. Highway SD 53, Lyman	20.4
12. Highway US 183, Lyman	1.7
13. Unpaved road S of Kennebec, Lyman	29.5
14. Highway SD 47, Lyman

Moreau River

The Moreau winds through a remote area with little access. Paddlers can usually travel this river in the

spring. The area nearest to Lake Oahe is often a favorite because access is more readily available.

Grand River

The Grand River runs through

ravines, trenches and deep-cut hills in an area that is noted by ornithologists for the number and variety of songbirds. Paddlers prefer a stretch of the river below Shadehill Dam and a portion of the river near Lake Oahe that is best paddled during spring and summer.

Access Points County	River mileage to next access point
1. Highway SD 73, Perkins	23.0
1. Unpaved road south of Thunder Hawk, Corson	22.3
2. Unpaved road south of Morristown, Corson	34.0
4. Highway SD 65, Corson	28.0
5. Bullhead, Corson	32.0
6. Highway SD 63, Corson	15.2
7. Highway US 12, Corson

Cheyenne River

The Cheyenne River flows through a remote area of grasslands and rolling hills in western South Dakota. It has sufficient flows during spring and early summer for paddling.

A 55-mile portion of the river from the SD 73-34 bridge to the SD 63 bridge is the section most often paddled. Sandbars provide excellent stopping points during a day's journey.

Please be aware of and avoid endangered least terns that nest on the river's bare, sandy beaches.

Access Points County	River mileage to next access point
1. Highway US 18/385, Fall River (near Angostura Rec. Area)	55.2
2. Highway SD 40, Custer	32.2
3. Highway SD 44, Pennington	24.6
4. Near Interstate 90, Pennington	32.2
5. Belle Fourche River (no access), Meade	22.4
6. Highway SD 73-34, Haakon	33.7
7. Cherry Creek, Ziebach	21.6
8. Highway SD 63, Ziebach

Little White

A clear, swift, spring-fed river, the Little White runs a narrow course through wild country characterized by steep timbered cliffs and bottomland.

A favorite stretch through an area called the mini-Black Hills is a 25-mile segment from Spring Creek Day School (in Todd County) to US 18. Ghost Hawk Park, 4 miles northwest of Rosebud, provides camping and picnic facilities.

Access Points County	River mileage to next access point
1. Bennett/Todd County line	17.0
2. Spring Creek Day School, Todd	25.0
3. Highway US 18, Todd	23.5
4. White River Dam, Mellette	2.5
5. Highway US 83, Mellette	13.0
6. White River, Mellette

Little Missouri

The Little Missouri runs a curlicue course through sparsely populated short grass country. Only two roads cross the Little Missouri on its path to North Dakota. One is at Camp Crook and the other is west of Ladner. This 28-mile segment runs through an area dominated by summit cliffs and short-and long-pine hills. Paddling the Little Mo is VERY seasonal and mostly limited to times with spring runoff.

EASTERN SOUTH DAKOTA RIVERS Big Stone Lake - Lake Traverse

At the foot of the prairie hills in extreme northeastern South Dakota is a flatland of lakes with excellent paddling.

Lake Traverse's waters flow north to the Red River and then to Hudson Bay. Paddlers typically launch at SD Highway 117 then take out at White Rock (approx. 11 miles).

In times of high water, Lake Traverse's waters flow south to Big Stone Lake. Divided by a floodplain and a flood dike, Big Stone Lake flows south to the Minnesota River and then to the Mississippi. Although each lake flows in opposite directions, the lack of current permits paddling either direction.

Hartford Beach State Park and many other access areas are on Big Stone Lake.

James River

The James River, a typical prairie stream, has been noted as the longest unnavigable river in the world. Fortunately, this distinction doesn't apply to paddlers who travel the river in spring and early summer.

The 28-mile segment from Fisher Grove State Park to the James River Lakeside Use Area near the Diversion Dam in Beadle County is a popular trip.

Several roads cross this meandering segment as it flows through a timbered area dotted with marshes and farmland.

Access Points County	River mileage to next access point
1. Columbia Road Reservoir Dam, Brown	49.1
2. Highway US 12, Brown	59.2
3. Highway SD 20, Spink	36.5
4. Ashton, Spink	27.3
5. Fisher Grove State Park, Spink	24.5
6. Highway SD 28, Spink	8.3
7. Diversion Dam, Beadle	20.0
8. Highway SD 37, Beadle	13.1
9. Highway US 14, Beadle	38.5
10. Forestburg, Sanborn	33.5
11. Highway SD 37, Sanborn	11.5
12. Near Interstate 90, Davison	12.0
13. Highway SD 42, Hanson	38.5
14. Milltown, Hutchinson	33.0
15. Highway US 18, Hutchinson	33.0

16. Highway SD 46, Yankton	9.0
17. Highway US 81, Yankton	21.0
18. Old Highway SD 50, Yankton	5.5
19. Highway SD 50, Yankton

Big Sioux River

Originating in northeastern South Dakota, the Big Sioux River winds southward to Sioux Falls, where it forms the boundary between South

Dakota and Iowa until it meets the Missouri River. With good water levels in the spring and early summer, it is possible to paddle from US 14 near Brookings to the river's confluence with the Missouri River. Paddling northern reaches of the shallow river becomes difficult by midsummer.

Paddlers favor the segment from Lien Park in Sioux Falls to Newton Hills State Park. This stretch can usually be paddled spring and summer. Points of interest include the Big Sioux Recreation Area, Gitche Manitou Park, the old

Klondike Mills site and Newton Hills State Park. Both Big Sioux and Newton Hills have canoe launch sites and camping facilities. A park entrance license is required for these parks.

There are several dangerous low head dams where watercraft must be portaged to the other side. Know where the dams are and portage them. They look fairly harmless but the water action just below the dam has taken human lives. Dams have been identified at Flandreau, Dell Rapids, two at Baltic, the spillway at Sioux Falls, Klondike, Canton and Hawarden. There may be more dams not listed here. Be certain to locate ALL dams before setting out.

Access Points County	River mileage to next access point
1. Highway US 14, Brookings	18.5
2. Old Highway 77, Brookings	3.8
3. Near Interstate 29, Moody	21.2
4. Highway SD 13, Moody	5.0
5. Flandreau City Park, Moody	8.0
6. Highway SD 34, Moody	13.6
7. Trent, Moody	11.1
8. Highway 77 (Dell Rapids) Minnehaha	8.1
9. Baltic, Minnehaha	11.1

10. Renner Road, Minnehaha	2.9
11. Near I-90, Minnehaha	8.5
12. Lien Park (Sioux Falls), Minnehaha	11.2
13. Big Sioux Rec. Area, Minnehaha	4.8
14. Highway SD 42	3.8
15. Gitche Manitou State Preserve	4.2
16. Grandview Co. Road (near Lake Alvin)	7.8
17. Klondike Mill, Lincoln	8.0
18. Highway US 18, Lincoln	3.9
19. Canton, Lincoln	9.0
20. Newton Hills State Park, Lincoln	5.6
21. Fairview, Lincoln	4.9
22. Oakridge Public Water Access, Lincoln	9.7
23. Oak Grove County Park (Iowa), Sioux	7.0
24. Carr's Landing, Hawarden, Sioux	19.0
25. Big Sioux County Park, (Iowa) Plymouth	2.7
26. Highway SD 48, Union	12.7
27. Highway SD 50, Union	32.1
28. Stone State Park (Iowa) Woodbury	4.9
29. Sioux City Riverside Park (Iowa, near I-29), Union and Woodbury	1.9
30. Missouri River, Union

Split Rock Creek

From its source in Pipestone County, Minn., Split Rock Creek winds a scenic route through northeastern Minnehaha County before meeting the Big Sioux River east of Sioux Falls. During high water flow in the spring and after heavy summer rain, it is one of South Dakota's best streams for white-water paddlers.

If you are not an experienced white-water paddler, some stretches can be hazardous. The stream drops 130 feet in 8 miles between the SD 11 access west of Garretson through Palisades State Park to the SD 11 access north of Corson.

Access can be found at Palisades State Park and township, county, state and federal rights-of-way that cross the river as well as at McHardy Park in Brandon. The sheer walls of red quartzite that line portions of the creek provide a scenic trip for paddlers.

Vermillion River

Generally, this scenic river can be paddled from spring to fall from Centerville south to the Missouri River. Launching access may be found at township, county, state and federal rights-of-way that cross the river.

Late summer and fall canoeing is best from the road crossing east of Wakonda to the Missouri River. Colorful fall foliage is especially showy from Vermillion southward.

Missouri River

Two segments of the Missouri River are listed on the National Register of Wild and Scenic Rivers. Today, these sections look much like they did in the early 1800s during the Lewis and Clark expedition.

Due to the currents and sudden windstorms, these segments are for experienced paddlers only. The first segment is 39 miles from the Randall Creek Recreation Area at Pickstown to Running Water. The river is wide and clear, and has many sandbars and small islands.

The second section is 59 miles long from below Gavins Point Dam to Ponca State Park in Nebraska. This segment has several large islands and sandbars. Sandbars and wooded islands make great stopping places as do the few camping, boating and picnicking areas developed by South Dakota and Nebraska. If you choose to camp on islands, pick ones with trees at least 6-8 feet tall.

Protect the endangered piping least terns and plovers who nest on sandbars and islands. Avoid all signed, roped, and/or posted areas and sites where birds appear disturbed or agitated.

Fort Randall Dam to Running Water

Access Points County	River mileage to next feature
1. Randall Creek, Charles Mix	13
2. Greenwood, SD, Charles Mix Sunshine Bottoms, NE	15
3. Choteau Creek, Charles Mix/Bon Homme County Line	8
Verdel Landing, NE, Knox	
4. Niobrara River, NE, Knox	2
5. Highway SD 37 Bridge Bon Homme and Knox	1
6. Running Water, Bon Homme

Gavins Point Dam to Ponca State Park

Access Points County	River mileage to next feature
1. Ramp below Gavins Point Dam near Chief White Crane RA, Yankton	5
2. Riverside Park, Yankton	5
3. James River, Yankton	2
4. Cedar County Park ramp (Nebraska), Cedar	6
5. St. Helena Bend, Yankton	6
6. Myron Grove Public Water Access, Clay	2
7. Goat Island, Cedar	5
8. Clay Co. LUA, Clay	4
9. Highway SD 19 Bridge Nebraska side, Dixon	5
10. Vermillion River, Clay	8
11. Bolton Bend Area, Union	7
12. Elk Point Area, Union	4
13. Ponca State Park (Nebraska), Dixon

LOW IMPACT

One of the key reasons most people paddle is to experience the beauty of the outdoors. To help protect the environment, please adhere to the following principles:

- Carry In/Carry Out - Leave no garbage, yours or other people's, in the water or on the land.
- Camp 200 feet or more away from the water.
- Cut no living trees or pick any plants.
- Use a camping stove instead of having an open fire. Leave no flame unattended.
- When the need arises, bury your human waste at least six inches deep, one hundred feet or more from the water. Carry out your toilet paper.
- Do not disturb wildlife.
- Leave it as you found it or better.

BASIC SAFETY CONSIDERATIONS

- Know your paddling ability and do not exceed it. Boating alone is not recommended.
- Before you leave, let someone know your launch and take-out points and your estimated arrival time.
- Plan ahead. Know the river/lake.

On the Missouri River, water releases from dams can result in rising water downstream.

- Be competent swimmers. PFDs should be worn at all times by non-swimmers, and by all paddlers in cold or dangerous situations.
- Don't overload with either passengers or gear. Put gear in waterproof containers.
- Fasten all ropes to the bow and stern so they are readily available. Secure ropes so there is no danger of being entangled if you overturn.
- Never attempt to go over low head dams. Even these small dams have re-circulating water at the base of the dam that can trap paddlers underwater.
- Stop, get out of your watercraft and look over all danger spots from shore. If in doubt, carry your vessel around the difficulty.
- Paddling perpendicular to the waves can help keep you from being capsized. Light breezes (1-10 mph) can make steering difficult. Moderate breezes (10-20 mph) can create large waved and maneuvering extremely difficult. Strong winds (20+ mph) can be extremely dangerous.
- Beware of overhanging trees,

logjams, brush piles, and other obstacles that the water flows around. You can be pinned against them, possibly under the water, by the force of the current.

- If it appears you are going to bump into an obstruction, do not push away with your paddle as that is a quick way to capsize.
- In most cases, if you overturn, stay with your watercraft as it will float. Don't try to stand in a fast current. Float downstream on your back, feet first, with your toes out of the water. This will keep your feet from getting caught on the bottom. Also, stay on the upstream side of your craft to avoid being crushed between it and a rock or obstacle.
- If others spill, go after the paddlers. Rescue watercraft and equipment only after the people are safe and recovery of the items can be done safely.
- Watch the weather. Conditions can change quickly in South Dakota.
- Minimize the risk of West Nile Virus or other tick or mosquito-borne illness by using insect repellent and wearing a long-sleeved shirt and long pants.
- Know how to identify poison ivy and rattlesnakes and avoid them.

- In cool weather, it is advised to go with at least one other watercraft in case of emergency. Wetsuits or dry suits are recommended for cool weather paddling. Be sure to quickly change from wet clothing into dry clothing.
- Avoid hypothermia, heat exhaustion/stroke and sunburn. Dress appropriately. Stay as dry as possible in cool temperatures. Bring a change of clothing, a hat, sunglasses and drink lots of water.
- Car top racks must be strong and securely attached to the vehicle. Each end of the vessel must be attached, as well.

The SD Department of Health recommends that you bring the following:

- Water - drink plenty of water before, during and after paddling
- Insect repellent - protect yourself from ticks and mosquitoes
- Sunscreen of 15 SPF or higher
- Small first aid kit - be prepared
- Healthy snacks - high energy foods (granola, fruits and energy bars)
- Appropriate clothing and footwear - weather conditions can change quickly