



Area rivers beckon canoeists of all skills

By MARY BEVANS GILLET
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Is there anything more peaceful than gliding your canoe down a quiet river, enjoying the crisp weather and taking in the natural wonder of fall's vibrant colors?

The Grand Traverse region is surrounded by several rivers ideally suited for canoeing. Whether you are a first time paddler or a long time enthusiast, canoeists will easily find a course that complements their skills and provides a colorful passage through shimmering waters and crimson trees.

Seven rivers are located within an hour of Traverse City. Several trips can be taken on each with runs lasting for one to ten hours. County maps, including area rivers, are available for a nominal fee at the Michigan DNR field office located on 14th Street in Traverse City. The more detailed U.S. Geological Survey topographical maps can be purchased at Backcountry Outfitters on Front Street in Traverse City. Canoe renters can also obtain guidance from their liveries.

Another excellent guide is the recently published "Canoeing Michigan Rivers: A Comprehensive Guide to 45 Rivers" written by long time Traverse City residents Jerry Dennis and Craig Date. The book provides maps and specific river information experienced first hand by the authors. "Canoeing Michigan Rivers" is available at local book and outdoor shops as well as bookstores throughout the state.

Area rivers include the Boardman, Crystal, Platte, Betsie, Pine, Manistee and Jordan. The Boardman, Traverse City's hometown river, can be canoeed along the 25-mile stretch from "The Forks" at Supply Road to the mouth of the river in Traverse City. Much of the course runs through the Fife Lake State Forest.

The Crystal River, one of the region's shortest rivers, runs only five miles between Glen Lake and Lake Michigan. The entire course takes about two to three hours and passes through low forests and cedar swamps.

The Platte River is divided between upper and lower sections. Both have their individual flavors. The lower Platte, between M-22 and the mouth at Lake Michigan, is gentle and flowing while the upper Platte, from Honor to Platte Lake, is swift and challenging. Both pass through undeveloped woodlands and countryside.

The Betsie River extends 45 miles from south of Interlochen to the mouth at Elberta. The river offers a variety of conditions and passes through uninhabited

woodlands, meadows and pastures before it empties into Betsie Bay in Frankfort.

The Pine River is considered one of the fastest and most challenging rivers in the lower peninsula. Much of the river runs through the Manistee National Forest. The U. S. Forest Service limits the number of canoes per day through a permit system. Register for a non-fee permit at the Permit Station on M-55, one half-mile west of the M-37 junction or call the ranger station at (616) 862-3333.

The Manistee River is one of the most popular and longest rivers in the state. Beginning north of Grayling and emptying into Lake Manistee, the river boasts approximately 150 miles of navigable water. Trips can be planned for as short as a few hours to as long as a week, with numerous campgrounds and access sites providing added flexibility. Much of the course runs by undeveloped banks and hills of hardwoods and pines.

The Jordan River has a short 10 1/2 mile course running north from Mancelona to the mouth which empties into Lake Charlevoix. Constantly supplemented by spring water, the Jordan is considered to have the purest water of any lower peninsula waterway. A trip on the Jordan will pass by low hills of hardwoods, pines and cedar thickets and through the mostly undeveloped Jordan Valley.

Several area liveries provide canoe rental and trip assistance. These include:

- ALVINA'S CANOE & BOAT LIVERY, 6470 S. Betsie River Rd., Interlochen, MI 49643, (616) 276-9514. Services the Betsie River.

- CHIPPEWA LANDING, P.O. Box 545, Manton, MI 49663, (616) 824-6308. Services the Manistee River. Trips range from two hours to seven days. Free camping at Chippewa Landing for canoeists. Open weekends through October.

- SMITHVILLE LANDING, Box 341, Lake City, MI 49651, (616) 839-4578. Services the Manistee River. Trips range from one hour to ten days. Free camping at Smithville Landing for canoeists. Open weekends through October.

- RAY'S MANISTEE RIVER TRIPS, P.O. Box 709, Grayling, MI 49738, (517) 348-5844. Services the Manistee River. Trips range from one hour to ten days. Open all year, phone ahead between October and May.

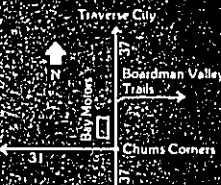
- RIVERSIDE CANOE TRIPS, Rt. #1, Honor, MI 49640, (616) 325-5622. Services both the Platte and Betsie Rivers. Trips range from two hours to four days. Complete country store on site. Open daily through October.

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