

Bayou Macon Paddling Trail

Paddling the Trail

State park ramp to Delhi (6.5 miles):

In this section of the Bayou Macon, the landscape subtly changes as the Macon Ridge becomes less prominent and the forest becomes drier and thicker with locusts, sycamores, cottonwoods and willows. Some of the land is used for grazing cattle. Some tallow trees are found along the banks, and more and more swamp-like vegetation can be seen from the canoe.

Continuing down the bayou past the boat ramp, the river opens up noticeably, and the current lessens, partly due to some dredging and channelization done in the 1960s. You will start seeing more and more waders – the water-loving class of birds that includes white pelicans, herons, egrets, storks, roseate spoonbills and anhinga. Bald eagles have been sighted here, as well as osprey and harriers.

As you paddle along, watch carefully for old oxbows of the Bayou Macon that were isolated during channelization.

At most water levels you can paddle into one of these lakes for a view of classic Deep South scenery – Spanish moss draped cypress trees full of egrets and waters thick with turtles, snakes and that most famous of all southern amphibians, the American alligator.

Big gators have been seen in these oxbows. (Caution: Children especially should stay in their vessels. Watch your pets, if you are carrying any.) You will pass four oxbows, one at mile 13.5, one at 14.1, one at 14.7 and the last at 16.1. The first and last are accessible from the river at medium to high water levels, but the middle two have been incorporated into the Poverty Point Lake and cut off by the levee.

Along a wooded bend of the river at mile 15.5 you will paddle past the four cabins of Poverty Point Reservoir State Park that overlook the Bayou Macon. These cabins can be rented but they are popular sites, so make your reservations well in advance.

Other constructed landmarks in this section of the bayou include a high-voltage transmission line (mile 15.9), an oil pipeline, a natural gas pipeline and several openings through the woods on the west bank where you could clamber up the levee and get a view across the reservoir.

Paddling around the last bend in this section at mile 18 you will see the Highway 80 bridge downstream and should start making plans for your final approach. Beware: There is a dangerous weir not

far below this take-out. The boat ramp is under the bridge to your right (west bank). You will see a stout pier sticking out into the channel that you can tie your vessel to if you don't want to run it up the ramp.

The Highway 80 boat ramp is a steep concrete ramp and always accessible. Beware there is a low-head dam 200 yards downstream. This ramp is located within the Delhi City Park on the eastern edge of town. Camping is OK with permission but not recommended. The best choice for camping is at Poverty Point Reservoir State Park.

Lodging Along the Trail

Poverty Point Reservoir State Park has cabins overlooking Bayou Macon with a giant lake on the other side. Rent a cabin and make several day trips from these beautiful cabins with large screened porches. There is great birding on the lake and on this lower section of Bayou Macon.

Poverty Point State Park

1500 Poverty Point Parkway, Delhi, La. 71232
318-878-7536 or 800-474-0392 (toll free)
For reservations, call 877-CAMP-N-LA or 877-226-7652 (toll free)
Email: povertypointres@crt.la.gov

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www.lsuagcenter.com/agritourism

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More information is available for this trail and tourism in the area at Explore Louisiana North.



Connecting Poverty Point
Reservoir State Park to Delhi

Northeast Louisiana: Outdoor Series

Bayou Macon Paddling Trail

This short paddle is great for beginners and starts at the Poverty Point Reservoir State Park ramp and meanders to Delhi, which is 6.5 miles away by water.

Getting There:

Poverty Point Reservoir State Park
1500 Poverty Point Parkway, Delhi, La. 71232
318-878-7536 or 800-474-0392 (toll free)
Email: povertypointres@crt.la.gov

From Interstate 20, take the Delhi exit and go north approximately 3 miles to the park entrance. GPS Coordinates: N 32 28 56.958; W 91 29 40.656.

Nearest Towns:

Delhi, La.
Epps, La.
Lake Providence, La.
Oak Grove, La.
Bastrop, La.
Monroe, La.
Vicksburg, Miss.

Skill Level

If you are a beginning paddler, you could go straight to the Poverty Point Reservoir State Park's boat ramp and make a round-trip paddle of any distance. Park your vehicle at the ramp and paddle upstream as far as you want; then turn around and paddle back with the river's flow helping you return.

This flat-water paddle has no topography changes. The 6.5 miles has no snags or blockages of any sort. It can be run at any water level, but check with park officials about any possible local changes. During periods of high water, currents could be swift.

As with all southern rivers, water levels can vary on Bayou Macon and will have significant effects on water speed, safety and usability.

Note: There is a dangerous unmarked low-head dam (or weir) not far downstream of the U.S. Highway 80 bridge. There is no concern during low water, but it could be catastrophic in fast water.

Trail Length

This 6.5-mile paddle is perfect for beginners. The total length of the trail from the historic park to the reservoir park is 18.4 miles.

Beginners can count on making 1-2 miles per hour. Advanced paddlers can do 2-3 miles per hour. Of course, the strongest paddlers can go even faster. Regardless, check the mileage of your route and make sure you have enough time for your ability.

River Levels

Go to www.RiverGages.com and view the river gauge for Como, La., for the best indication of river conditions in this section of river. Como is south of this section, so what you see on the charts already will have happened on the river in this area. Low water (too shallow) is below 36 on the Como Gauge (when some dragging through shallows and mud flats might be necessary).

Ideal level: 40-50 on the Como gauge. Above 55 on the Como gauge, the current will be swift, and caution is advised. Flood stage is 62 on the Como gage. During the hot, dry months of the summer and fall, regional farmers depend on Bayou Macon for irrigation, which sometimes affects local water levels.

Historical Water Levels:

Looking at data for the Bayou Macon from the past 10 years, the river typically runs around 36 feet on the Como gauge – with spikes due to rainfall and runoff, sometimes spiking up to 60 feet or higher. Bank full is at 62 feet, a level it has reached only two times in the past 10 years. During the Mississippi River flood of 2011, Bayou Macon stayed high for several months because of the amount of water seeping under the levee and emerging in all of the oxbow lakes, bayous and drainages, such as Chicot Lake, Ark., where Bayou Macon is born.

What You Will See on Trail

Possible wildlife sightings include wild turkey, white-tailed deer and lots of birds, especially egrets, pileated woodpeckers, blue jays and kingfishers. Be on the lookout for waders such as pelicans, herons, egrets, storks, roseate spoonbills and anhinga.

The best time to view animals is either early in the morning or late in the day. The best times for birding really include all times of the day but are especially good around dawn and dusk.

Access Points to Trail

Poverty Point Reservoir State Park
Boat Launch West Bank (RBD): N32.531942, W91.470465

Oxbow Lake No. 1, Mile 13.5
East Bank (LBD): N32.516855, W91.472855

Oxbow Lake No. 2, Mile 14.1 (*incorporated into lake and inaccessible due to levee*)
West Bank (RBD): N32.506287, W91.480236

Oxbow Lake No. 3, Mile 14.7 (*incorporated into lake and inaccessible due to levee*)
West Bank (RBD): N32.482735, W91.48538

Oxbow Lake No. 4, Mile 16.1
West Bank (RBD): N32.482687, W91.485472

Poverty Point Reservoir State Park (4 Cabins for Rent), Mile 15.5
West Bank (RBD): N32.491122, W91.483111

High Voltage Transmission Line, Mile 15.9: N32.484688, W91.4858

Natural Gas Pipeline Crossing: N32.47169, W91.484193

U.S. Highway 80 Boat Ramp: N32.457487, W91.476205

DANGER: Low-head Dam, 200 yards downstream of Highway 80 bridge
N32.456417, W91.475832

Paddling Tips

Carry plenty of drinking water during the summer and fall months to prevent dehydration. During the winter months, carry extra warm clothing as well as an emergency kit including fire-starting materials. Hypothermia is a risk during the winter.

Always pack your overnight gear just in case you have an unexpected delay (such as severe thunderstorm or medical emergency). This paddle is through a remote, rural area with few services.

Watch for poisonous plants and venomous snakes.

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