

Central Oregon Paddling Destinations



Deschutes Paddle Trail ★★★★★

The Deschutes Paddle Trail includes the upper portion of the Deschutes River starting at Wickiup Reservoir and the Little Deschutes River starting in La Pine, Oregon.

The Little Deschutes River is calm Class I water. The Little Deschutes River meanders for 26 miles from La Pine to where it meets with the Deschutes River.

The Deschutes River meanders for 56 miles from the Tenino boat ramp at Wickiup Reservoir to the take out just before Benham Falls. Below Benham Falls, the river changes from a Class I river to Class III and higher.

Both rivers meander considerably, so paddlers will travel several river miles while traveling very few straight miles. That's one of the wonderful features and what draws paddlers to the Deschutes River Trail.

Important: Paddlers must exit the river before Benham Falls. Benham Falls is **not** navigable.

[Click here](#) for more information.



Lake Billy Chinook ★★★★★

Lake Billy Chinook lies in a canyon carved by three rivers—the Metolius, the Deschutes, and the Crooked. The 28-mile-long lake sits just west of Culver, Oregon, in central Oregon. Steep cliffs border sections of the lake, especially along the Crooked River arm, while along other sections rolling hills descend to the lake.

Early in the season, paddlers on Crooked River can view a waterfall cascading from the top of the canyon. The waterfall is near the Crooked River Campground but only visible from the road at the base of the canyon or from Crooked River.

Chinook Island, owned by the Warm Springs Indian Tribe, lies in the Metolius arm of the lake. The public is allowed access to the island for day use, but please be respectful. No camping or fires are permitted on the island. There is a floating toilet near the island, but the height of the barge the toilet sits on makes it difficult for paddlers to use.

The Cove Palisades State Park has two campgrounds at the lake. Crooked River Campground sits on top of the canyon overlooking the Crooked River arm of the lake, with easy access to a boat launch at the base of the canyon and a nice view of Mt. Jefferson. The campground has spacious campsites with grassy groundcover. Showers are on site. All the sites are set up for RVs, but tent camping is allowed. Deschutes River Campground lies in between the Crooked River and Deschutes River arms of the lake in the bottom of the canyon. The groundcover consists mostly of dirt and pine needles, but there are a few grassy sites. Showers are also available. Near the Deschutes River Campground, visitors can check out the petroglyph rock.

Portland General Electric operates a primitive campground at Perry South. The campground has vault toilets. There is a two-mile gravel road to the campground. Where the paved road ends and the gravel road begins, there is a pull-off where you can walk a few hundred feet to view the balancing rocks and the Metolius River.

Central Oregon Paddling Destinations

There is good fishing for brown trout. Motorized boats are allowed on the lake. Water skiing also takes place on the lake. There is a slalom water ski course near the suspension bridge on the Crooked River arm.

[Click here](#) to view a video of paddling on the Metolius River.



Spring Creek ★★★★★

This little gem is not to be missed if you find yourself in the Klamath Falls area. Located about 30 miles north of Klamath Falls in Collier Memorial State Park, this 2.5-mile creek flows into the Williamson River. The first thing you'll notice about the creek is the tremendous clarity of the creek, which is due in large part to the fine silt that makes up the bottom and the fact the creek is spring fed.

Put in at the Collier Memorial Say Use area just north of the logging museum on the same road. From the day use area, paddle north 1.5 miles to the headwaters. Near the headwaters, you will begin to notice unique formations on the creek bottom called Mare's eggs. These unique forms of blue-green algae are only found in three places in the world.

The water bubbles up from underground springs at the headwaters. Step carefully; otherwise, you can sink into the silt where the water bubbles up. You won't want to stay in the water long because it remains a chilly 40° F year round.

Homes border the creek for about ¼ of a mile, but don't let that deter you from paddling the creek. You'll still get a sense of being in the country even with the homes on the creek.

The creek can be paddled in both directions.

Combine paddling Spring Creek with paddling the Williamson River. Camping is available at Collier Memorial State Park.

[Click here](#) to view a video of Spring Creek.



Upper Klamath Canoe Trail ★★★★★

The Upper Klamath Canoe Trail provides paddlers with a 9.5-mile paddle through a large freshwater marsh. The trail is made up of four segments: Recreation Creek, Crystal Creek, Wocus Cut, and Malone Springs. Wocus Cut is best paddled in spring and early summer because it typically dries by August. Visitors to the trail are treated to spectacular views of Mt. McLoughlin to the west and the south rim of Mt. Mazama (location of Crater Lake) to the north.

The Klamath Basin is a major flyway for migratory birds and home to a large population of bald eagles. Over 260 species bird species have been identified in the region. The basin is also home to beavers, muskrats, and river otters. Wildlife species vary depending on the time of year. In earlier summer, look for western grebes, harlequin ducks, yellow-headed blackbirds, and black terns; in the fall you're more likely to bald eagles, river otters, and a higher concentration of white pelicans than during the summer.

Paddlers can launch at the Rocky Point Resort (if you're a guest), the public boat launch, or the Malone Springs boat ramp. Canoes and kayaks can be rented at Rocky Point.

If you enjoy fishing, there is some awesome fishing to be done in

Central Oregon Paddling Destinations

Pelican Bay and within the canoe trail. Large rainbow trout, some reaching 28" or larger, have been caught in Pelican Bay. Only one trout can be kept a day, however.

[Click here](#) for more information about the trail. [Click here](#) to read a personal account of the trail. [Click here](#) to view a video of the trail.

The canoe trail is best explored over a couple of days. Lodging is available at the [Rocky Point Resort](#) located right on the trail. The resort offers five tent sites, 25 RV sites, five guest rooms, and three cabins. There is a store that sells food and fishing gear, a restaurant, and showers for guests.

You can also camp 32 miles north at [Collier Memorial State Park](#). The park has a logging museum on site. The Williamson River borders the park, and Spring Creek cuts right through the park.



Williamson River ★★★★★

The 100-mile Williamson River flows from an underground spring on the north side of Fuego Mountain south to Upper Klamath Lake. It passes Collier Memorial State Park where it is joined by Spring Creek.

Put in at the day use area on the east side of Hwy 97 and paddle 2.5 miles upstream to the Williamson Campground. The flowrate in the river is slow and allows paddling in both directions, though it does pick up a little where Spring Creek merges with the river.

Look for playful otters around Collier Memorial State Park and bald eagles farther up the river. The river also offers some excellent trout fishing later in the summer.

The best time to paddle the Williamson River is late spring through mid-summer. After that the water level gets too low.

Camping is available at the state park, and several of the campsites are near the riverbank. It's a small campground, so make reservations early.

[Click here](#) to view of video of the Williamson River.



Wood River ★★★★★

The Wood River is a spring-fed river that begins at Jackson F. Kimball State Park north of Chiloquin, Oregon, and travels south to its mouth at Agency Lake. The highly meandering river is very shallow through much of the upper half where the water is also crystal clear. As it approaches the pastures farther down, the water becomes murky. There are sand bars, many strainers, an irrigation sluice gate, and a low bridge that requires experienced paddling skills, especially as the current picks up. Inexperienced paddlers may have trouble negotiating the tight turns with the current and the strainer; experienced paddlers will have a really enjoyable time on the river. It is best to use a polyethylene or Royalex boat on this river. Because of there are several tight corners, 16-foot and smaller boats are best for this river.

Look for deer on the bank and mergansers in the water.

Park a shuttle vehicle at the Wood River Day Use area and unload your boats at Jackson F. Kimball State Park. The park is a great place to cool off when you're hot.

Central Oregon Paddling Destinations