

WISCONSIN

5th Edition

Flambeau River

paddleflambeau.com (800) 269-4505



Photo courtesy of Pure Water Paddlers

Rapids Ratings Used in this Guide

Below are the rapids ratings used in this guide. Remember, rivers are a force of nature and therefore constantly changing—what is easy water today might become

hazardous as water levels fluctuate. Approach any whitewater with caution.

Class I - Obstacles easily spotted and avoided. Some fast water with small waves. Novices should have few problems with these rapids.

Class II - Moderate rapids with faster currents and multiple channels. There are also more rapids or longer stretches of rapids.

Class III - Difficult rapids. Solid whitewater paddling skills necessary. Irregular waves, frequent obstructions fast current and a difficult to recognize course.

Class IV - Extremely difficult rapids requiring very strong paddling skills. Must have the ability to quickly maneuver around obstructions and hazards. Strong currents unavoidable.

Class V - Extreme danger—for experts only. Large rocks, holes, waves and violent current.

No person may possess glass bottles within the Flambeau River State Forest boundary at Little Falls/Slough Gundy scenic area or within a watercraft launched or removed from designated launching sites on the Flambeau River.

Paddling the Flambeau

Price and Rusk counties are home to the majority of the river's course. As the Flambeau passes through these counties, the river shows an amazing array of moods, from whitewater to slow, gentle curves and pool. There is a stretch for every paddler, young and old, beginner to expert. This is the best paddle in all of Northern Wisconsin.

A word about Pure Water Paddlers

Pure Water Paddlers is a group of canoe and kayak enthusiasts around the West Central Wisconsin area. Our goal is to provide a wide variety of paddling experiences for paddlers of all skill levels.

If you are either a beginning paddler, or just interested in finding out what paddling is all about, we invite you to attend one of our events. We would be pleased to introduce you to our sport and assist you in getting started in a fun and friendly environment.

If you are an experienced paddler of any level, we hope that you join us for paddling related camaraderie and fun both on and off the water! Visit us at www.purewaterpaddlers.com for more information.



Photo courtesy of Jim Manning

The Story of the Mighty Flambeau

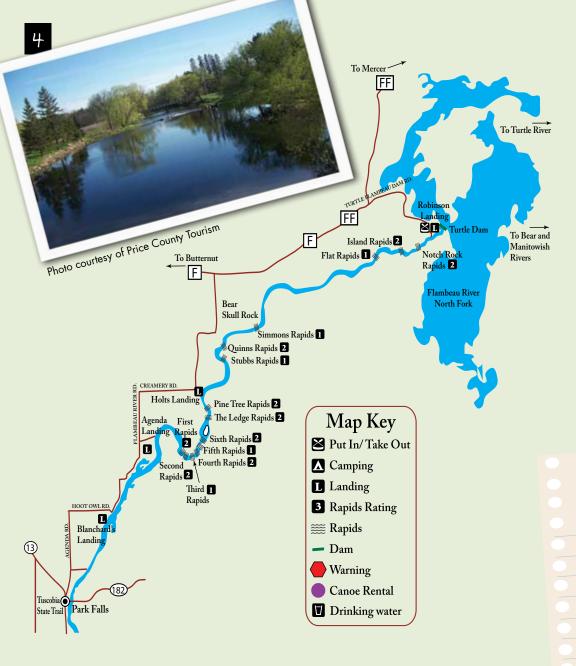
Down through the Northwoods and through history, the Flambeau flows for 150 miles to its confluence with the Chippewa.

For centuries untold, Native Americans hunted, fished and journeyed down the Flambeau's winding course. In the 17th and 18th centuries, the river became a highway to fur traders carrying pelts out of the forests of the north. And in the 19th and 20th centuries, the Flambeau was one of the great Wisconsin rivers that helped to build the nation, carrying the white pine logs downstream to the mills of America.

Today, the Flambeau is a piece of history, a riverway that flows down through the millennia—a shining example of the beauty of the Northwoods. To paddle the Flambeau River is to journey down one of the great waterways of North America and to experience your place in the history of the Northwoods. **This is paradise. This is the Flambeau River.**

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For more information on canoeing and kayaking the Flambeau River, as well as additional maps, driving directions, specials and promotions, and visitor information, visit **paddleflambeau.com**.



North Fork, Turtle Dam to Park Falls — 18 miles, 8 hours

A good mix of challenging whitewater and wild scenery.

Launch below Turtle Flambeau Dam for an 18-mile voyage that immediately begins with some excitement. The first mile of the trip is through fast rapids, leading to the very challenging, narrow and potentially dangerous Notch Rock Rapids. It is important to stay to the middle along this stretch to avoid contact with the steep rock walls. About 400 yards below Notch Rock Rapids is Island Rapids. Stay to the left of the island—the right side is quite dangerous!

Immediately after putting in, we were into some awesome whitewater! And the scenery was fantastic—this is some of the most untouched country I have ever seen.

Next, you will paddle through Flat Rapids, and 3 miles later pass
Bear Skull Rock. For the next 3 miles, the river will pick up speed and you
will find several rapids, including Quinn's Rapids. The next 2 miles hold many
smaller rapids that are easy to navigate. As you pass First Rapids, the river will
begin to take on a slower character. This continues for the next 5 miles to the
town of Park Falls. There is a portage of about 400 yards through Park Falls
where the river runs through the paper mill's dams. You can take out at Agenda
Landing, north of Park Falls, or at Hines Park and Campground, on the left
bank in Park Falls.

North Fork, Park Falls to the take out at Nine Mile Creek— 12 miles, 6 hours

A very relaxing journey over calm water.

Below Park Falls, the Flambeau grows deeper and widens into a flowage. It is a relaxing paddle with excellent fishing along the way. Begin your paddle at the Highway 13 bridge and enjoy the easy paddle through Smith Lake, the location of Smith Lake County Park & Campground, and Pixley Flowage for several miles down to Pixley Dam. Portage around Pixley Dam along the left shore. There is a rustic campground with 2 campsites available near the dam for paddlers. Less than 6 miles downstream from Pixley Dam, you will find Crowley Dam, which has a rustic campground. The paddle to the take out at Nine Mile

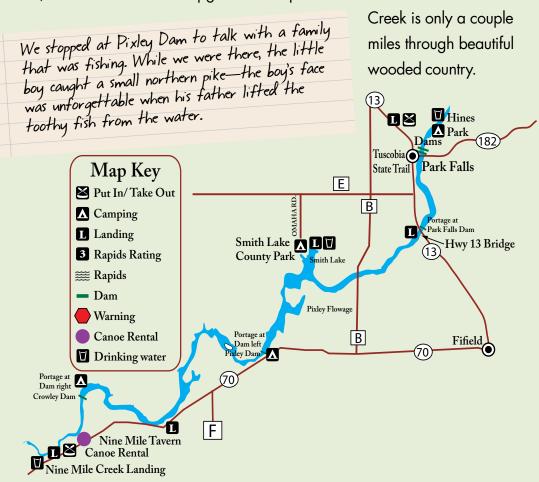


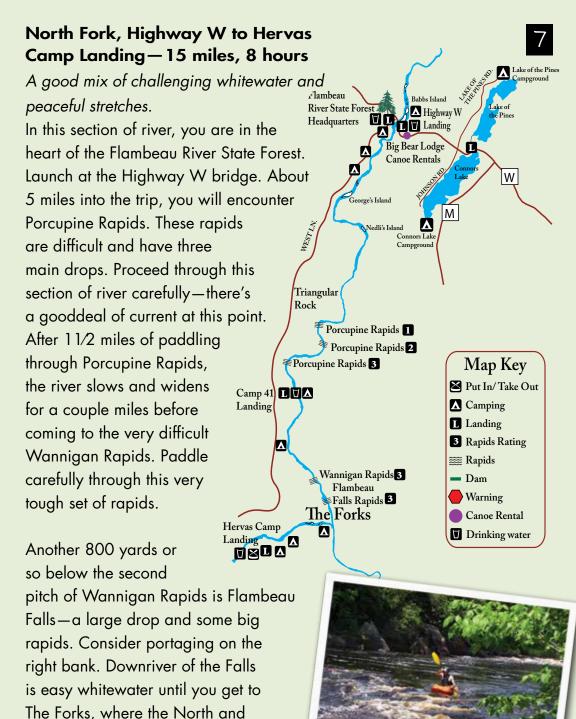


Photo courtesy of Pure Water Paddlers

of the river, and there is a feeling of being deep in the wilderness. The only major whitewater of this stretch is Barnaby Rapids, but it is not a particularly difficult piece of whitewater. Every few miles, you'll find a campsite along the river. In all, the 90,000 acre Flambeau River State Forest has

14 canoe camp areas on the river which are available to river travelers only. There are 2 to 3 campsites at each area complete with a table, fire ring and pit toilet. As the river begins to widen out and curve, you are in the area known as the Oxbo. Downstream from the Oxbo, you will find that the river becomes swifter, but there are no difficult rapids for the rest of this leg of the journey. Take out at County Highway W. There are 2 campgrounds a short drive east of the take out: Lake of the Pines off Highway W and Connors Lake off Highway M.

This morning, an eagle joined us for part of our journey. We would see him sitting in a tree up ahead, but by the time we caught up to him, he'd fly away again. We followed him like this for nearly two hours. It was absolutely thrilling.



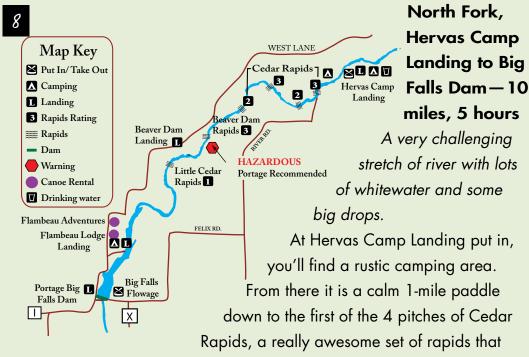
meet. Take some time to savor the feeling of this magicalplace on the river.

South Fork of the Flambeau finally

There is a camping area on the left bank and another just 1 mile downstream on the same bank. Expect a quiet paddle all the way down to the take out at Hervas Camp Landing, located 2 miles downstream.

Photo courtesy of Pure Water Paddlers

This was one of the most wonderful days of paddling in my entire life. There is something about that part of the river where the two forks meet that was hard to describe. The banks of the river are quite wild and beautiful here, but it was something more than just that—it felt like we were in an important place. We lingered there for quite a while before heading downstream again.



is challenging, but navigable. About a mile below the last pitch of Cedar Rapids is Beaver Dam Rapids. This is a very dangerous drop and should be portaged on the left bank. Below Beaver Dam Rapids is a small rapids known as Pine Island Rapids—they are small and should be quite easy.

From Pine Island Rapids to Big Falls Flowage is about 2 miles of swift current and rapids. Another paddle of about 3 miles will take you to Flambeau Adventures and Flambeau Lodge. It is another mile or so of paddling before you get to Big Falls Dam, where you can



Photo courtesy of Midway Bar

portage on the left bank over the dike. You will find a rustic campsite here. Paddlers can also take out at either end of the dam.

Today was whitewater all day. We had to stay sharp to get through some of that rough water. At one point, you could hear everyone in the group laughing and screaming, even above the sound of the whitewater. What a blast! This beats any roller coaster l've ever been on.



A Big Falls Dam

An easy, relaxing paddle with excellent scenery and great fishing. For this scenic, flat-water float, launch at Big Falls Dam. Fishing is excellent in all of the lakes along this route and the scenery is fabulous. Josie Creek Park, 2 miles

Today was a nice change of pace after yesterday's whitewater. We went ashore and had a great meal in Ladysmith. We're going to stay here tonight and try and make it all the way down to the Chippewa tomorrow.

available, complete with electricity and pit toilets. You will pass underneath the Hwy I bridge about a mile later. The banks of the river are steep and the scenery is

Einar Johnson Boat Landing

ortage Ladysmith Dam

downstream from Big Falls Dam, has camping

Reservior
Josie Creek
County Park

Dairyland

Portage
Dairyland
Dam
Community Park

spectacular.

Ladysmith

▲ Camping
■ Landing

Map Key

Put In/ Take Out

The Point

Bridge
Warning

Canoe Rental

There is a park to the left of Dairyland Dam that has a good landing. You will need to portage around the hydro-electric dam. There is a short stretch of fast water running downstream from the dam, but the current

Photo courtesy of Price County Tourism

soon slows as you enter the calm waters of Ladysmith Flowage. Passing through Ladysmith, you will see many homes and buildings along the river. Memorial Park is a good place to put in and take out.



Photo courtesy of Pure Water Paddlers



North Fork, Ladysmith to Thornapple Dam—11 miles, 5 hours Easy paddling—another great beginner stretch.

From Memorial Park in Ladysmith, it is about 1 mile to Ladysmith Dam. The portage around the dam is on the left bank. The first couple of miles you will pass through the charming community of Ladysmith. But as signs of



Photo courtesy of Jim Manning

civilization taper off, the scenery becomes wilder. Imagine the river 100 years ago, when it was literally choked with logs coming down from upstream. About 2/3 of the way into your paddle is Whiteford Rapids. This is one of the few stretches of fast water on this leg of the trip. Below this, the current slacks again all the way to the flat water of the Thornapple Flowage. The calm water continues for the next 5 miles to Thornapple Dam. The take out is located on the bank, to the left of the dam.

We caught sight of a sturgeon sunning himself in the shallows. We also saw several heron feeding and a pair of wood ducks. It's amazing just how close you can get to birds when you're paddling quietly through the water.

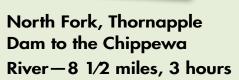




Photo courtesy of Pure Water Paddlers

only one small rapids about 1 mile downstream of the put in. Just upstream of Pine Island, there is a set of rapids. It is best to take the left channel around the island. The next 5 miles of the trip are very enjoyable, with the occasional stretches of low-hazard whitewater. Take out at Flaters Resort at the forks.

Just downstream of the dam, we caught two walleye on nightcrawlers. We took our time getting to the landing and it was dark by the time we got there. We just didn't want the trip to end.



A quick and exciting trip for the beginner.

This is the final stretch of the Flambeau before it merges with the mighty Chippewa. It is a quick trip from the put in at Thornapple Dam down to the take out at Flaters Resort, near the confluence of the two rivers. The first 3 1/2 miles of the trip are on fairly calm water with

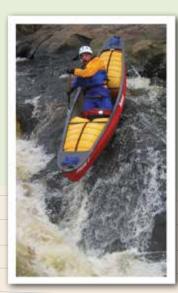
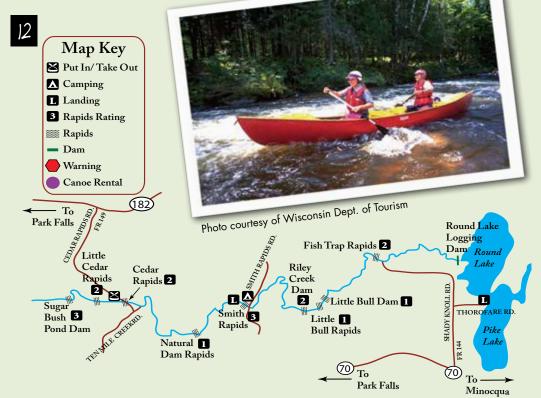


Photo courtesy of Pure Water Paddlers



South Fork, Round Lake to Cedar Rapids — 12 miles, 7 hours

A mix of quiet water and small rapids.

The South Fork of the Flambeau River begins in northeast Price County in some of the wildest and most beautiful country imaginable. The river and this trip begin at Round Lake, a large lake famous



Photo courtesy of Pure Water Paddlers

for its great fishing. Launch at the landing between Pike and Round lakes and paddle to the west shore where the Flambeau flows out of the lake. You will need to portage around Round Lake Logging Dam.

We started the day seeing this amazing old logging dam just below Round Lake. And then towards the end of the day, as the sun was getting lower, we came to this covered bridge. It was really a surprise to see it, this beautiful wooden bridge out here in the wilderness. It really felt like we were paddling backwards in time.



Photo courtesy of Mary Feranec

Round Lake Logging Dam is a carefully and accurately reconstructed 1800's logging dam, and it's well worth your time to spend a few minutes viewing it. The river below the dam has perhaps the most beautiful woodland scenery in all the Northwoods. About 2 miles below the dam, the river passes under the Forest Road 144 bridge. Fish Trap Rapids is just downstream of the bridge

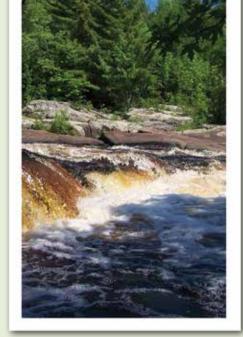


Photo courtesy of Pure Water Paddlers

and provides the first significant whitewater of the trip. Two miles later is the site of old Little Bull Dam followed by Riley Creek Dam. A safe passage over these small rock roller dams is easy if you make sure you stick to the deeper, fast-moving water that flows over or around the dams. Another 2 miles of paddling takes you to Smith Rapids Covered Bridge, a beautiful wooden bridge. Visitors come from miles around to see the bridge, and



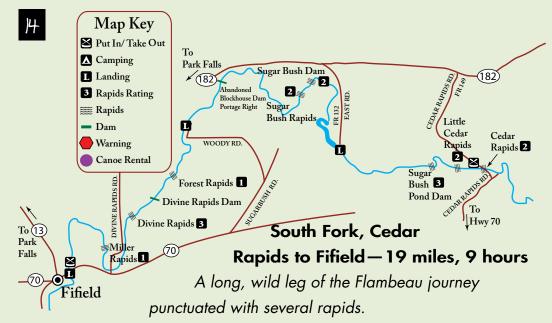
Photo courtesy of Pure Water Paddlers



Photo courtesy of Pure Water Paddlers

you might want to take a few minutes to enjoy it, too. If you choose to stop here, there is a nice campground. But if you continue with your journey, there's a fun stretch of challenging whitewater just below the bridge.

A mile downstream is a narrowing of the river known as Natural Dam. Natural Dam should be run down the center.
Cedar Rapids is a 2-mile paddle downstream from Natural Dam. The take out is at the Forest Road 149 bridge.



For this leg of the Flambeau journey, launch at the Forest Road 149 bridge. One mile downstream from the bridge is Sugar Bush Dam. Paddle through the center chute of water. Four miles of calm water await you below the dam until you come upon Sugar Bush Rapids. Again, the best way to get through these rapids is paddling through the center. Below the rapids, the water calms again for 2 more miles.

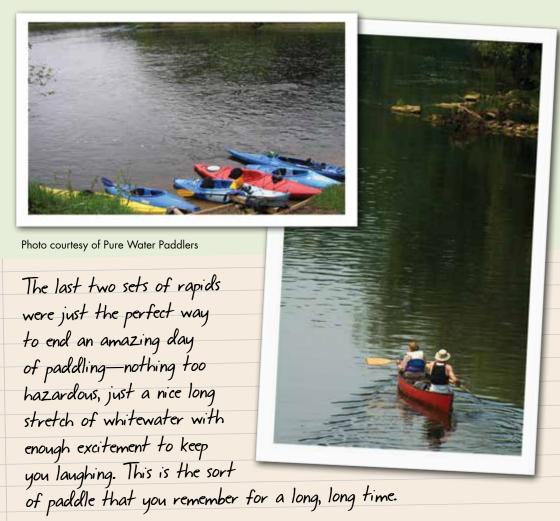
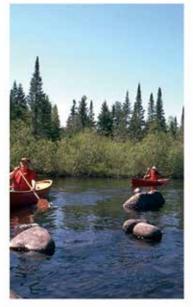




Photo courtesy of Pure Water Paddlers

It is advised that you also portage Divine Rapids Rock Dam, another 2 miles downstream. Just below the dam, you'll find Divine Rapids. Stay to the center until the last section of the rapids, where you will want to stay to the leftmost channel.



The next rapids, Miller Rapids, are an easy set of rapids. Three miles

below, this last set of rapids is in the town of Fifield where you can take out below the Highway 70 bridge.

South Fork, Fifield to County Highway F-12 miles, 5 hours (map on next page)

The first half of this paddle has a meandering character—the second half has some challenging whitewater.

Put in at the Highway 70 bridge in Fifield. Two miles downstream from Fifield, you'll pass the Highway 13 bridge, another place

Photo courtesy of Pure Water Paddlers

that makes a great put in. The river is calm for the next 3 miles until you reach Simons Rapids, a relatively easy set of rapids. Just 2 1/2 miles later is Boars Rapids, a more challenging set of rapids.

We started with an incredible breakfast in Fifield—and we needed a good breakfast for the whitewater we ran into later in the afternoon. We had the river all to ourselves today. Our only company was a group of otters in a small creek that spilled into the main



About a mile downstream of Boars Rapids is the exciting Rock Ledge Rapids. Rocky Carry, a very challenging set of rapids, is another mile downstream, paddle carefully. Take out at the County Highway F bridge about a mile downriver.

This morning's paddle was awesome—just the right mix of rapids and runs. I couldn't ask for a better piece of water. We saw a group of kayakers eating lunch near Rock Ledge Rapids—they told us that

Photo courtesy of Jim Halvorson

they run the South Fork at least once every year.



South Fork, County Highway F to County Highway W— 10 miles, 4 hours

A quick, exciting leg of the Flambeau River journey.

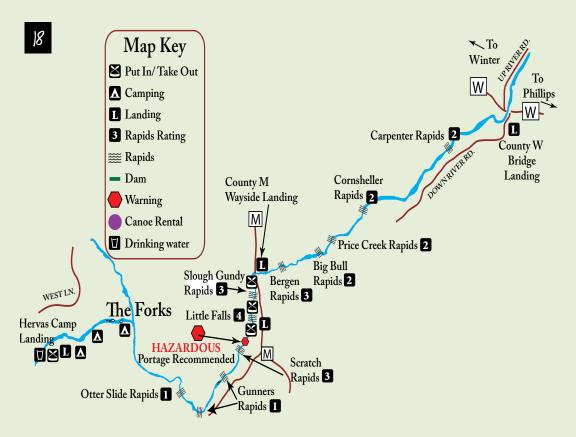
Begin this exciting paddle at the County Highway F bridge. One mile downstream is an easy bit of whitewater. Another mile of paddling will bring you to Stonewall and Little Stonewall Rapids, a visually stunning section of river. Two miles of easy paddling will take you to Rock Ledge

Rapids, which can be difficult.



Photo courtesy of Wisconsin Dept. of Tourism

A mile later, you will reach Davis
Rapids, a challenging piece of
whitewater. After the first pitch, stay
to the right to avoid rocks and small
islands. Only 400 yards after this
rapids, you'll reach Club House
Rapids, an easier set of rapids. Two
miles later, you will reach the pleasant
Carls Rapids. Two more miles of
paddling will take you to the Highway
W bridge, the take out for
this stretch of river.



South Fork, County Highway W to Hervas Camp Landing— 15 miles, 7 hours

A very challenging stretch of river with some ferocious whitewater.

This extremely challenging leg of the journey begins at the public launch area at Highway W. Paddle 11/2 miles to the first rapids,

Carpenter



Rapids, a fairly easy stretch of whitewater. But 2 miles downriver is a really challenging rapids—Cornsheller Rapids. Scout this section of water before attempting it. Less than 3/4 of a mile below Cornsheller is the challenging Price Creek Rapids. And only 800 yards below Price Creek Rapids is the extremely dangerous Bull Rapids. Again, stop and plan your approach to this water before attempting it or portage around it. Just downstream is Prison Camp Rapids and then the Highway M bridge. Sound like a lot of whitewater? It really is—but some of the toughest water is yet to come.

extraordinarily beautiful and challenging water on the whole river. Slough Gundy is famous for its rock formations as well as its dangerous rapids. As with all hazardous rapids, it is best to stop and plan your route or portage.



Photo courtesy of Pure Water Paddlers

The next set of rapids, Little Falls, is so hazardous that it should not be paddled—use the well-worn portage around this rapids. Save your energy for Scratch Rapids, located just 400 yards downstream, and Gunners Rapids less than a 1 mile downriver. Otter Slide Rapids comes up another mile later. Two miles of easy paddling through breathtaking country will take you to the Flambeau

of the Flambeau finally come together. There is a campground here and another 800 yards downstream. Enjoy the scenery you'll see during the last 2 miles of paddling downstream from the forks before you get to Hervas Landing.

Forks, where the North and South Forks

That was some of the roughest water I've ever paddled in Wisconsin. We stopped to rest just above Little Falls, surrounded by the water-sculpted rocks and the sound of rushing water. I was tired from the hard day's paddle, but at the same time I just felt so exhilarated.

This is the sort of journey you don't want to end. I promised myself that I would paddle the Flambeau again soon.

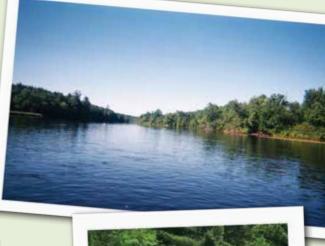




Photo courtesy of Pure Water Paddlers

Wildlife Viewing

While paddling the Flambeau River, be on the lookout for some of the animals that call the river and its banks home. If you paddle quietly and stay observant, you'll have a good chance of seeing a variety of animals. The most commonly seen animals are white-tailed deer—particularly early and late in the day, when they come to drink from the river. Also common



to the area is the ruffed grouse. Even if you don't see these chickensized woodland birds, you'll hear the amazing drumming sound the males make.

Another bird you'll probably come in contact with is the bald eagle.

Open water and abundant

habitat make the Flambeau River home to a large population of bald eagles. Many paddlers have had the experience of following an eagle for hours as they paddled down the Flambeau.

And if you are really lucky, you might see or hear some of the Flambeau River's most elusive residents, such as the timber wolf. The chances of seeing these shy animals are quite slim, but you may find tracks and other wolf signs on the shore.

Riverside Camping

Canoe campsites, rustic and improved,

have been provided at strategic locations along the Flambeau River. There are many canoe camp areas on the river that are only available to river travelers. On heavy use weekends and holidays it is suggested that you plan short day trips on the river and camp at the larger public campgrounds: Hines Park, Smith Lake County Park, Connors Lake, Lake of the Pines and Smith Rapids Campgrounds or at privately owned facilities. Reservations are not taken at any of the free or fee required publicly owned campsites. All camping is on a first come first served basis. There are lodging facilities located in Price and Rusk County towns near the river that take reservations. Please visit www.pricecountywi.net or www.ruskcountywi.com for more information.

Other Attractions: Price and Rusk Counties Wisconsin Concrete Park

See the often larger-than-life size creations of artist Fred Smith at the Wisconsin Concrete Park, 1 mile south of Phillips on Highway 13. In 1950, at age 65, Price County native Fred Smith began construction of what is known today as the Wisconsin Concrete Park. Smith, a lumberjack, tavern owner, farmer, and dancehall musician, created over 200 figures depicting his vision of the local culture and the world. His work is considered one of America's most unique displays of folkart.

Timm's Hill

Timm's Hill, in southern Price County, is the highest geographical point in Wisconsin. The Timm's Hill County Park and National Scenic Trail are a great place to hike, bike and sightsee. There is an observation tower in the park that provides some spectacular views of the surrounding countryside. During the autumn, this is a great place to see the changing colors of the landscape. Amenities include a playground, picnic shelter, well and toilets.

Rusk County/Ladysmith Visitor Center and Railroad Displays

Rusk County Visitor Center is located in a reproduction of a 1903 Soo Line train depot. It's a great place to start your paddling adventure in Rusk County. In addition to obtaining information on the Flambeau River and the surrounding area, you can learn about the logging and railroad history of Rusk County. The town of Ladysmith has a fantastic collection of train cars throughout the town. For more information, visit www.ruskcountywi.com.

The Chippewa River

Another excellent paddling opportunity can be found in Rusk County—the Chippewa River. Dividing Rusk County in half from north to south, the Chippewa takes a meandering route through some beautiful, and often very remote lands, to where it eventually meets up with the Flambeau River at the south end of the county. Much wider and slower moving than the Flambeau, the Chippewa has some very relaxing paddling. The Chippewa also boasts some excellent fishing. Don't miss the Chippewa—it's well worth a paddler's attention.

Lodging, Dining and Shopping in Price and Rusk Counties

Price and Rusk counties have a number of motels, resorts, bed & breakfasts and campgrounds available to the paddler. You'll find many dining options at the excellent cafés, supper clubs and restaurants throughout both counties. The small communities of Price and Rusk counties also have numerous shops and retail establishments to help make your trip fun and convenient. The Northwoods is famous for catering to vacationers and outdoor enthusiasts. You'll find the hospitality in Price and Rusk counties to be exceptional.



Price County Area Canoe & Kayak Rental and Guide Services

Big Bear Lodge

W1614 County Rd. W, Winter, WI 54896

(715) 332-5510 • bigbearrecreationalrentals.com

Located on the North Fork of the Flambeau River, offering rental and shuttle service for canoeing and kayaking the North and South Forks and beyond.

The Crazy Loon

125 N. Lake Ave., Phillips, WI 54555

(715) 339-6254 • thecrazyloon.com

Located on Highway 13 in downtown Phillips, offering rental for canoeing and kayaking to use on Phillips area lakes. Canoes, kayaks and accessories for sale.

Flambeau Sports

N11151 County Rd. F, Phillips, WI 54555

(715) 339-2012 • (715) 492-7763 (Mobile) • flambeausports.com

Located on the South Fork of the Flambeau River, offering rental, shuttle and guide service for canoeing and kayaking the North and South Forks and beyond.

Nine Mile Tavern/Canoe and Kayak Rentals

W10590 State Rd. 70, Park Falls, WI 54552

(715) 762-3174 • ninemiletavern.com

Located on the North Fork of the Flambeau River, offering rental and shuttle service for canoeing and kayaking the North Fork.

Rusk County Area Canoe & Kayak Rental and Guide Services

Flambeau Adventures LLC*

N7788 Flambeau Rd., Ladysmith, WI 54848

(715) 532-7733 • flambeauadventures.com

Located on Big Falls Flowage (3 miles below Beaver Dam Rapids), offering rental, shuttle and guide service for canoeing and kayaking the North and South Forks down to where the Flambeau meets the Chippewa.

Flambeau River Lodge & Campground

N7870 Flambeau Rd., Ladysmith, WI 54848

(715) 532-5392

Located on Big Falls Flowage, about 1.5 miles above the Falls Dam, offering rental, shuttle and guide service for canoeing and kayaking the North and South Forks.

Flaters Resort*

N270 County Rd. E, Holcombe, WI 54754

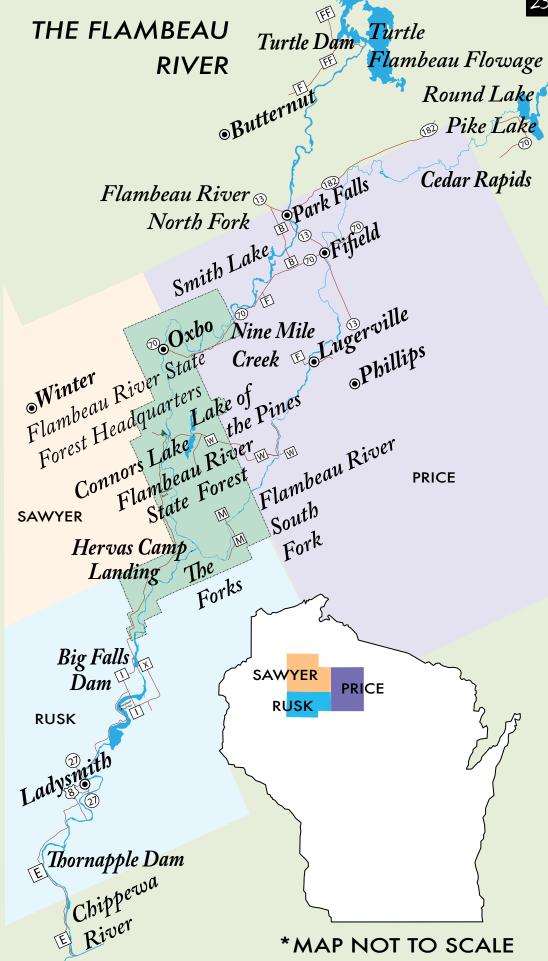
(715) 595-4771 • flatersresort.net

Located on the Flambeau River where it meets the Chippewa River and enters Lake Holcombe, offering rental and shuttle services for canoeing the Flambeau River from Ladysmith Bridge to Lake Holcombe. Also available for Chippewa River Trips.

Wild Earth Eco Tours

W12755 County Hwy. D, New Auburn, WI 54757 (715) 868-1275 • wildearthecotours.weebly.com

^{*} Also available for Chippewa River trips





Price County 715.339.4505 • 800.269.4505 pricecountywi.net

Rusk County 715.532.2642 • 800.535.RUSK ruskcountywi.com



Flambeau River State Forest
715.332.5271
dnr.wi.gov/topic/stateforests/flambeauriver/paddling.html



Greater Ladysmith Area Chamber of Commerce 715-532-7328 ladysmithchamber.com



Park Falls Area Chamber of Commerce 715.762.2703 • 877.762.2703 parkfalls.com



Phillips Area Chamber of Contmerce 715.339.4100 • 888.408.4800 phillipswisconsin.net



The Flambeau River

paddleflambeau.com (800) 269-4505