Oregon is known to people worldwide for its beauty, natural resources and recreational opportunities. The Willamette River, flowing from one of the world's most beautiful mountain ranges and through one of its richest valleys, is a resource befitting this image. One can find everything along its shores from a graceful great blue heron to a swooping bald eagle. Its waters are home to salmon, sturgeon, native cutthroat trout and many other species. It supports varied recreational opportunities—from boating and waterskiing to fishing and nature viewing.

Beyond its natural beauty, the Willamette is steeped in the history of Oregon territory. Pioneers by the thousands in the mid-1800s ended their long journeys on the Oregon Trail at Oregon City. For them, the Willamette meant new hope and opportunity.

Today, this living museum of our natural and cultural history is a year-round recreational resource for all Oregonians as well as for our visitors. This Willamette River Recreation Guide is your passport to use and enjoy this great river. We hope you accept the invitation.

John A. Kitzhaber
May 1, 1995

For most current information:
http://extension.oregonstate.edu/catalog
Introduction

The Willamette River begins its nearly 300-mile journey in the high Cascades southeast of Eugene. Winding through forest, farmland and city, it travels northward the length of the Willamette Valley before joining the Columbia River at Portland. Along the way, it changes from a rushing mountain stream into a substantial river more than a quarter-mile across.

The Willamette is a vital, multipurpose waterway that touches the lives of millions of people. It provides ports for commercial barges and oceangoing ships, irrigation for crops sold worldwide, an abundant fishery, and recreational opportunities.

Nearly 70 percent of Oregonians live within 20 miles of the Willamette River. As important as it is to us, the Willamette is relatively unknown to many of those who live near it. Although the river passes through nine counties and 19 cities, miles of its channels, sloughs and backwaters cannot be seen from roads or towns. Many communities, no longer economically dependent on it, have turned their backs on the river. The Willamette is often overlooked—a familiar part of our landscape that it sometimes fades into the background.

HOW TO USE THE GUIDE

This guide is designed to make it easy to visit and experience the river whether by boat, bicycle or motor vehicle or on foot. The guide divides the river into five sections, beginning on page 12. For each section, important features are described and mapped. These include state parks, state parks, state greenway and Division of State Lands parcels, boat ramps, major wildlife areas and other points of interest. The maps show public roads that lead to greenway parcels, parks and other public access points. Each section also highlights possible outings.

Maps in this guide show major features, channels, sloughs, islands and navigational hazards. Although considerations tamed from the way explorers found it 200 years ago, the Willamette changes with each season and, in the lower sections, with the daily tides. Never dismiss its power or dismiss its hazards. In some areas, large commercial barges and oceangoing vessels present a hazard; in others, the sheer number and variety of activities engaged in by boaters and other river users is a danger.

This guide also contains information about river history, plants, fish and wildlife, environmental issues, boating safety, recreational activities and what to do in emergencies.

The list of resources on page 32 provides more information. When planning an outing, check the appropriate river section in the guide. Outings and excursions are suggested in each section and on pages 8-11.

The Coast and Middle forks are public to the “ordinary high” waterline on the riverbank. On the main stem, unless property is specifically shown on the maps or signed as public, it should be assumed that it is private above the “ordinary low” waterline. The maps also indicate which islands are in public ownership and available for camping or day use. Care should be taken to respect private property, especially when entering state greenway and other public parcels from the river. Respect all “no trespassing” and “no hunting” signs. There is plenty of land and water to enjoy. For more information on riverbed and riverbank ownership, see Who Owns the Waterways, Oregon Division of State Lands.
History of the Willamette

Perhaps for as long as 10,000 years, the Willamette River basin has been the wellspring of life for the people who have lived along its shores and ridden its waters. It has been a major source of food, water, transportation and commerce in the bountiful heartland of western Oregon—the Willamette Valley.

BEAUTIFUL WILLAMETTE

From the Cascades’ frozen gorges,
Leaping like a child at play.
Winding, widening through the valley,
Bright Willamette glides away.
Onward ever,
Lovely river.
Softly calling to the sea.
Time, that scars us,
Maisins and mars us,
Leaves no track or trench on thee.

—SAMUEL L. SIMPSON, 1868

For Oregonians, the “Beautiful Willamette” is more than just a lovely river. It is a key part of our colorful history, a working river of vital economic importance, and a place to fish, boat, recreate and relax—to enjoy the many gifts Oregon has to offer.

The Willamette is one of the few major rivers in the U.S. that flow primarily north. In narrow and shallow in places that pioneers felled trees for bridges, it widens to more than 2,000 feet across in Portland. Originally, the river meandered in a wide swath across the valley floor, changing channels frequently to form new islands and oxbows. Today, the Willamette is rather tame by comparison. Wing dams, revetments, dredging and flood control projects have altered the flow patterns to create a simpler, deeper channel.

NATIVE AMERICANS

There is evidence of human presence in the Willamette Valley as long as 13,000 years ago. Several thousand years after the end of the Ice Age, when Asiatics from what is now Siberia crossed over an Alaskan land bridge into North America, Native American inhabitants were Kalapuyans—a collection of bands that shared the same dialect. One small band, the Calapooia, lived near and along the Calapooia River. Other Kalapuyans included the Tualatin, Santiam, Yamhill and Luckiamute bands. Chinookan people occupied the lower Willamette below the falls. The Clackamas were members of the Chinook’s family group. The native bands in the valleys combined mostly on nuts, berries and roots, although they also were good hunters—using the spear and trap as effectively as the bow and arrow.

A smallpox epidemic in 1828-29, followed by a malaria epidemic from 1830-33, wiped out 80 percent of the native population. By 1856, surviving members of the various bands were resettled under treaty to the Grand Ronde reservation near Valley Junction.

EARLY SETTLEMENT

The Willamette River was first noted by English navigator Lt. William R. Broughton, a member of Capt. George Vancouver’s expedition, in 1792. Explorers Lewis and Clark, on behalf of the United States, ventured up it for about seven miles in 1806. The first Euro-Americans were the fur trappers, mostly working for the Hudson’s Bay Company at Ft. Vancouver, followed by the missionaries, who tried mightily to convert Native Americans to Christianity. Following them were the settlers, mostly farmers, who crossed the Oregon Trail. Between 1840 and 1860, 53,000 of them reached the valleys of Oregon.

Oregon City figured prominently in early history: not only was it an early Euro-American settlement in Oregon, in 1844 it also became the first city incorporated west of the Rockies. It was established by Dr. John McLoughlin, chief factor for the Hudson’s Bay Company at Ft. Vancouver, who is considered the “father of Oregon.”

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The steamboat Claire, 1918-1952

Brush burning

A common Native American practice was to burn the Willamette Valley each fall at one of its preserves in the Willamette Valley. This created and maintained the oak and grassland savanna that favored elk and deer as well as camas, tarweed and acorn habitat—important foods for the native population. The cleared land helped in the gathering of seeds, roots and bulbs, as well as creating exposed areas for easier hunting. The brush burning also created major areas of open prairie that attracted Euro-American settlers because the land was already cleared.

Early traders

The first large vessel to enter the Willamette was the “Owyhee,” a Boston trading ship that sailed into the falls in 1827. The same year, the Hudson Bay Company established an outpost at Oregon City.
Below the falls, Linnton, St. Johns, Portland, Milwaukie, Linn City (now West Linn) and Oregon City all competed fiercely for dominance. Portland was the eventual winner. The river itself helped settle the issue. The major 1861 flood, for instance, wiped out many promising settlements—such as Linn City and Champoeg—as well as their prospects.

By the 1830s, settlement had gained a solid foothold above the falls. Many retired French-Canadians, who had worked for Hudson's Bay Company, settled around Champoeg and St. Paul in what became known as French Prairie. Their wheat and produce needed markets, and with the 1849 California gold rush came the need for a reliable system of river commerce.

**STEAMBOAT ERA**

From the 1850s to the early 1900s, the steamboat was king of the Willamette. Oregon City was initially the farthest upstream point of navigation. Over time, paddlewheelers began to operate above Willamette Falls. Occasionally, boats made it as far upriver as Eugene. Smaller steamboats even ventured into the Tualatin, Yamhill and Long Tom—small tributaries of the Willamette.

In 1873, the Willamette Falls Canal & Locks Company opened a 1,200-foot-long series of locks near the falls, Linnton, St. Johns, Portland, Milwaukie, Linn City (now West Linn) and Oregon City all competed fiercely for dominance. Portland was the eventual winner. The river itself helped settle the issue. The major 1861 flood, for instance, wiped out many promising settlements—such as Linn City and Champoeg—as well as their prospects.

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In 1873, the Willamette Falls Canal & Locks Company opened a 1,200-foot-long series of locks that lifted boats around the 41-foot-high falls at Oregon City. The locks hastened the growth and development of Oregon's fertile interior At their peak in the 1880s, dozens of steamboats—their whistles sure to draw a crowd to the dock—moved tons of cargo and passengers along the state's vital artery of commerce.

**RAIL AND ROADS: THE TRANSFORMATION**

By the 1880s, steam roads had penetrated into the Willamette Valley. River communities such as Lincoln and Fairfield, once thriving trade centers, were bypassed. In 1869, the transcontinental railroad arrived in Portland, severing the iron link that would siphon away much of the steamboat trade.

The arrival of roads and gasoline-powered vehicles completed the transition away from riverboat trade. By the early 1900s, it was possible to maneuver a vehicle the full length of the valley, and in 1919 the state published its first official road map. Truck and rail transportation soon dominated shipping in the valley. The steamboat whistle was silenced.

**OUR FORGOTTEN RIVER**

Perhaps the most discouraging period in the river's history was that of the early 1900s, when the Willamette became heavily polluted and neglected. With the decline of river commerce, wharves and docks were torn down. In some cities, roads on riverfronts replaced them; in others, new industries located along the river.

Soon, these industries began dumping their wastes directly into the river. Cities and towns did the same. By the 1930s, the river was almost biologically dead—and certainly unsafe to swim. This condition persisted until after World War II, when federally funded sewage treatment facilities and other pollution controls began to restore the river.

By the early 1970s, the cleanup of the Willamette was a national success story. The river was declared safe for swimming in 1972. These efforts not only made it possible for salmon and steelhead runs to rebound, they again made the river attractive for boating, fishing and other recreation.

Starting with the effort to clean up the river, Oregon was the birthplace of the Willamette River Greenway Program. It was created by the Oregon Legislature in 1967 as a testament to the river's historic and natural resource significance, and its recreational potential. The greenway program is a cooperative state and local government effort to maintain and enhance the scenic, recreational, historic, natural and agricultural qualities of the river and its adjacent lands.

**THE MODERN DAY WILLAMETTE**

Today's river bustles with activity. Commercial plows and barges navigate the locks to move wood chips, logs, sand and gravel, and other products to market. Huge freighters and oceangoing barges move tons of cargo through the Port of Portland and private docks in the Portland harbor.

Recreation is now the fastest-growing use of the river. Pleasure boating, skiing and angling are increasing. Portland, Lake Oswego, Salem, Albany, Corvallis, Harrisburg, Eugene and Springfield are among the cities and towns that have greatly increased parklands and public access along the Willamette. The public is reclaiming its river.
Plant and Animal Life

One of the remarkable qualities of the Willamette River is the amount of wildlife it supports even though it travels through Oregon’s most populous region. It is possible—even likely—to come across bald eagles, osprey, great blue heron, Canada geese, deer, otter, beaver, rare turtles, salamanders and numerous other animals along the river.

This variety makes the Willamette a favorite location for nature viewing, fishing and hunting. Having public land and wildlife refuges near the river enhances these recreational opportunities. Care should be taken to minimize human impact on this habitat. Many migratory birds, for instance, are protected by state and federal law. Some plant and animal species are listed as threatened or endangered. In particular, nesting areas should not be disturbed.

Any destruction of protected habitat, violation of fishing or hunting regulations, or any other threat to protected species should be reported to the Oregon Department of Fish & Wildlife (ODFW).

**BIRDS**

One of the most visible birds along the Willamette is the green-backed heron, a larger cousin, the green-pocked heron, and occasionally be seen as well. Nesting areas, called rookeries, are found in various locations, including Ross Island, Oaks Bottom, Goat Island, Molalla Riverfront Park, Landing and Alton Baker Park in Eugene.

Six state and national wildlife refuges are along the river, offering a choice fishery and other opportunities. Care should be taken to minimize human impact on this habitat. Man, migratory birds, for instance, are protected by state and federal law. Some plant and animal species are listed as threatened or endangered. In particular, nesting areas should not be disturbed.

Any destruction of protected habitat, violation of fishing or hunting regulations, or any other threat to protected species should be reported to the Oregon Department of Fish & Wildlife (ODFW).

**FISH**

The spring chinook run is the Willamette’s dominant run of anadromous fish (spawns in fresh water, but grows to adult size in the ocean). The fall chinook run is a major recreational fishery in the Willamette and its tributaries. Any destruction of protected habitat, violation of fishing or hunting regulations, or any other threat to protected species should be reported to the Oregon Department of Fish & Wildlife (ODFW).

**WHITE STURGEON**

The largest fish in the Willamette is the white sturgeon, growing to more than 8 feet in length. These giants are fished mostly in the lower river. Popular spots are below the mouth of the Umpqua, the mouth of the Long Tom, one of the better-known holes.

**YELLOWTROAT**

The largest fish in the Willamette is the white sturgeon, growing to more than 8 feet in length. These giants are fished mostly in the lower river. Popular spots are below the mouth of the Umpqua, the mouth of the Long Tom, one of the better-known holes.

**OTHER FISH**

Salmon enter the river as early as February, and typically pass over Willamette Falls in May and June. A smaller fall chinook run occurs in mid-August to late September.

Steelhead enter the river in both the summer and winter. Summer-run steelhead pass the falls from early March until October, followed by the winter steelhead from early November to mid-May. Cutthroat and rainbow trout are most plentiful in the waters above Peoria. Willamette cutthroat migrate into tributaries in the fall to spawn. Whitefish, another member of the trout family, also are abundant in the upper Willamette.

Panfish are found wherever the water slows and warms—such as sloughs and quiet channels—or around man-made structures. Crappie, bluegill and largemouth bass are the most abundant, but smallmouth...
bass, catfish and perch also can be found. Occasionally walleye, found only below Willamette Falls, are caught.

A wide variety of non-game fish are readily available to the angler throughout the river. Some of the more common species include carp, sucker and squawfish.

Several good fishing areas are highlighted on page 10.

**ANIMALS**

Common mammals are black-tailed deer, raccoon, oter and nutria (a South American import that is similar to a beaver, but smaller). Occasionally, a red fox, coyote or mink can be seen. Oregon's state animal, the beaver, can be found in some locations.

The river corridor also features a variety of reptiles and amphibians, including gopher snake, garter snake, ringneck snake, long-toed salamander, rough-skinned newt, tree frog and the introduced bullfrog. The rare western pond turtle and painted turtle only remain in a few sloughs and oxbow lakes.

**VEGETATION**

The Willamette Valley and river systems contain a rich array of plant life. Early explorers found the river lined for up to two miles on each side with dense forests.

Trees such as black cottonwood, Oregon white oak, Oregon ash, western red cedar, big-leaf maple, Douglas fir, grand fir, ponderosa pine and yellow made up these impressive forests. Nearly all of it has been replaced by agriculture, gravel mining and urbanization. Forest remnants are located at Southeast Bend, Willamette Mission State Park (on Island Island) and Seaside Goose Bay Landing.

Wetland riparian areas and low wet areas along the river's shorelines are abundant with lush growth. The sloughs, islands, marshes and swamp areas are composed of trees, shrubs, grasses, wildflowers and other herbaceous plants. These areas are of extreme importance to the health of the river and support wildlife. The vegetation filters and purifies water as it moves into and along the river. The complex plant communities provide valuable habitat for animals and insects that live along the river. Large native plant communities can be found on Sauvie Island, Oaks Bottom, Cardiani Bar near Yamhill Landing, Wells Island and the Mt. Pisgah Arboretum near Springfield.

**WILDLIFE REFUGES ALONG THE WILLAMETTE**

**Sauvie Island Wildlife Management Area**

Take Highway 30 to Sauvie Island bridge, proceed toward north end of Sauvie Island. Refuge is off Reeder Road.

12,000 acres of state-owned habitat for wintering waterfowl, swans, herons, sandhill cranes, bald eagles and 250 other species. Access restricted during the hunting season and spring. Fishing allowed.

**Tualatin River National Wildlife Refuge**

Located along the Tualatin River east of Sherwood, about 12 miles upstream from its confluence with the Willamette.

Newest national wildlife refuge in Oregon. Now less than 100 acres, it is expected to be expanded eventually to several thousand acres.

**Basket Slough National Wildlife Refuge**

From Rickreall (6 miles west of Salem), go west on Highway 22. Refuge is about 2 miles on the right.

500 acres of forest that support a large population of wintering Canada geese and other waterfowl. Hunting allowed. Public access limited Nov. 1 to April 15.

**Ankeny National Wildlife Refuge**

Escape south of Salem at the Ankeny Hill exit. Follow Walden Road west toward Willamina about 2 miles, where the Refuge is on the right.

2,600 acres of forest that support a large population of wintering Canada geese and other waterfowl. No loop trails. Hunting allowed. Public access limited Nov. 1 to April 15.

**E.E. Helm Wildlife Area**

Between Highway 195 and the river. An hour north of Corvallis. Two observation areas.

State preserve features upland game birds, waterfowl, bald eagles, deer and other species. Hunting permitted in fall and winter. Walk or bike on many miles of old military roads.

**William J. Finley National Wildlife Refuge**

Drive south from Corvallis on Highway 99W about 10 miles to entrance sign on west side of road. Turn west and follow signs about 4 miles to refuge office.

5,235-acre refuge supports large concentrations of Canada geese, including rare dusky Canada geese. Over 200 species of wildlife and numerous observation sites. Hunting and fishing allowed. Public access limited Nov. 1 to April 15.
Boating on the Willamette

The Willamette is one of Oregon's most popular—and congested—waterways for boating. Use of the river by recreational boaters increased 175 percent since 1978. In 1993, approximately 730,000 boat use days were logged—more than half of that in the lower 18 miles of the river within Multnomah County.

Boating activity on the Willamette includes ski boats and runabouts, yachts, sailcraft, rowing shells and sculls, canoes, kayaks, fishing boats, jet boats and personal watercraft (such as jet-skis).

Shallow waters, changing stream conditions and rapids pose dangers along the Middle and Coast forks and in the Eugene-Springfield area. Much of the river below Dexter and Cottage Grove dams can be navigated by most craft, except motorboats with props. Due to many shallow stretches, local knowledge is critical if your motor has a propeller. The upper Willamette, skimmers—trees and branches that have splintered into the river—can capsize a boat and even hold its occupants under water.

While swimming accidents result in the most drownings per year, boating provides its share of accidents and injuries. Most can be avoided if operators follow boating safety rules and use common sense and courtesy at all times.

For the boating regulations, published by the Oregon State Marine Board and updated yearly, contains a digest of all regulations and restrictions. Other guides, including the Oregon Boater's Handbook, offer comprehensive tips on safety, navigation rules and equipment. All of these publications are available from the Oregon State Marine Board as well as from many boat dealers and fishing supply outlets.

BOAT SAFETY TIPS

Here are a few tips to make your outing safe and pleasurable:

- Check your boat and equipment prior to use, especially fuel systems, lights and horns, motors, and trailers. Be alert for leaks.
- Check weather conditions and plan your trip will be for more than a day or in whitewater areas, file a float plan with a friend or neighbor.
- Avoid or limit alcohol consumption—most fatal boating accidents involve alcohol.
- Fit passenger life jackets, operational and emergency procedures, and don't overload your boat.
- Make sure you have adequate and accessible life jackets on board. Check to make sure they fit children and non-swimmers should wear life jackets at all times.
- Row skiers, inner tubes and other recreational devices only between sunrise and sunset. In addition to the operator, there must be an observer in the boat. You also must wave a red or orange “skier down” flag (at least 12 by 12 inches) when a skier is in the water.
- Know how to read channel buoys and markers (see page 7). Many stretches of the Willamette below Canby have in-water hazards, including rocks and snags under the surface.
- Beware of large commercial vessels. Avoid anchoring in the commercial shipping channel.
- Be aware of good boating etiquette. Observe all no-wake zones.
- Be on the alert for others, especially swimmers and skiers. Personal watercraft users should avoid jumping wakes or operating near other boats and big ships. Don't follow boats or skiers too closely or shift direction suddenly.
- Don't boat alone, especially on whitewater stretches.
- Avoid boating after dark—and be sure to use the proper lights if you do.

Boating Basics. Passing this course can save you money on boat insurance.
NAVIGATION HAZARDS

There are a variety of natural navigation hazards on the Willamette River and its tributaries. These include whitewater stretches, shallows and rocky shoals, narrow side channels, dead-heads and streamers (trees, stumps and branches in the water), powerful currents and river eddies, low-head dams, and a major waterfall. Other river traffic—including boats, personal watercraft, swimmers, skiers and anglers—also represent hazards. In addition, weather—including wind, precipitation, fog, sun glare and lightning—must be taken into account. Boaters should be prepared for cold water as the Willamette River is below 60° Fahrenheit most of the year. The river’s currents, channels and levels are highly changeable. Without proper precautions, any stretch of the river can be dangerous.

The chart below describes the general character and types of hazards you may encounter on each river section.

RULES OF THE ROAD

Rivers, like highways, have rules that govern right-of-way. On water, these are called rules of the road. The boat that has the right-of-way on the river is called the stand-on boat. The boat that must yield is called the give-way boat. The rule of the road has the force of law. Boaters are penalized for failure to observe them.

Crossing

When two boats are on intersecting courses, the boat to the right (the starboard side) is the stand-on boat and has the right-of-way. The give-way boat must alter its course or speed to avoid a collision with the stand-on boat. The stand-on boat should maintain its right-of-way course in the crossing situation.

Overtaking

A boat being overtaken or passed by another boat has the right-of-way. The boat being passed must hold its course and speed as it is being passed. The overtaking boat must pass at a sufficient distance to avoid a collision or endangering the other boat with its wake.

Meeting head on or nearly so

When two boats approach each other head-on, each must alter course to the right to avoid collision. If the two boats are far to the left or right of each other, no change in course is necessary.

NAVIGATION AIDS

It is important to know how to read waterway markers:

- **Controlled Area**
- **Information**
- **Left of Channel**
- **Right of Channel**
- **Spherical Buoy**

**ABOVE:** Lane County Sheriff’s Marine Patrol
Excursions and Outings

The Willamette River offers many options for recreational outings. These include boating, water skiing, fishing, hunting, birdwatching, hiking, bicycling, or just a pleasant Sunday drive. Many can be done in a day. Consult the maps in this guide for more information.

PLANNING AN OUTING

Most destinations along the Willamette are only an hour or two apart by car. Therefore, many outings can be day trips—although floating the river’s entire length or taking a leisurely bicycle trip can easily consume a week. In any event, allow adequate time for travel both on and off the river. Seven or eight hours of travel and recreating can be quite enough for one day.

The maps in this guide show all publicly owned lands along the river, plus major historical, cultural and natural points of interest. Connecting roads are marked. Services provided at parks, marinas and marinas are indicated on the maps. At state and local parks with camping, it is wise to reserve a site ahead of time in the summer.

The maps are generally accurate, do not represent all hazards nor are they to be used in place of official navigation charts. Each map contains a brief summary of significant known hazards and their general location as signified by (•). Be aware of other potential hazards and the possibility that a listed hazard may have changed or not be accurately characterized by this guide.

DESTINATIONS

A trip or outing can be organized around state parks and local parks, wildlife refuges, cities and towns, and historic sites. It’s a good idea to plan a day outing around no more than two or three prime stopping points, including lunch. Consider planning trips around themes—such as history, wildlife or a community festival.

Eight Oregon state parks are shown in this guide (see page 11). Of these, only Champoeg has overnight vehicular camping. However, boat camping is allowed at some local parks, both Rock State Park and state greenway parcels, as indicated on the maps. Fires should be confined to fire rings on greenway or state park sites.

A number of game reserves and wildlife sanctuaries, such as birdwatching sites, and local parks with camping, including state and national wildlife areas (see page 5), and special preserves such as Oaks Bottom in Portland. Other good areas to conserve wildlife are accessible to boaters, such as Harkens Lake Landing, the mouths of the Luckiamute, Santiam and McKenzie rivers, or the entire Middle Fork. Many state and local parks offer excellent wildlife viewing.

Historic sites abound. Many are abandoned towns or landings that require considerable research and patience to locate, such as Fairview, Linn City and Canemah. Some sites, however, are quite accessible, including the Bybee-Howell House on Sauvie Island, Portland’s historic Yamhill and Old Town districts, Oregon City and the Willamette Falls Locks, Butteville, Champoeg, Buena Vista Ferry, and the lost town of Orleans east of Corvallis.

For those planning a car or bicycle trip, many other interesting destinations await the curious in cities and towns near the river. Check your library or local chamber of commerce for more information. The list of resources on page 32 of this guide may help.
RIVER OUTINGS

The most popular way to use the river is to be out on it. Boat launches are shown on the maps that follow. In addition to skiing and fishing, enjoyable excursions can include cruises to various parks or other points of interest. Fatigue, sun, wind and alcohol can all play a factor in water recreation—a tired or intoxicated boater is more likely to have an accident. Plan your trips accordingly and limit—or, better yet, avoid—alcohol consumption.

As shown on the maps, numerous state greenway parcels are accessible either from the river or road. Greenway parcels accessible by vehicle are signed at public roads. Greenway parcels accessible only by boat have river milepost signs located for the boater’s convenience.

Please respect private property and obey “no trespassing” and “no hunting” signs. Some sections of the main stem of the Willamette River channel are public only to the ordinary low water line. As such, some of the river bank and gravel bars along the river are privately owned. Use of this property and greenway lands that provide public access to and along the river are especially valuable public resources.

Float trips by canoe, kayak and outer raft are popular except for the upper forks and around the Eugene-Springfield area, there are few whitewater hazards. Above Corvallis, it is not unusual for the current to be swift. Below Newberg, the current is very leisurely.

The chart on this page suggests typical float times between major points on the river. However, these estimates will vary from party to party depending on type of boat, ability of the paddlers, weather conditions and water velocity. Especially in the lower Willamette, winds can greatly slow the progress of hand-propelled boats. In addition, tides can actually push the river upstream below Oregon City.

BIKING AND HIKING

Besides short bicycle rides in and around some of the parks along the river, there are many enjoyable longer rides. Excursions take bicyclists along rural back roads, through small towns, past historic places and to various river crossings on the three remaining ferries—Canby, Wheatland and Buena Vista—can be included on bicycle outings.

Most state parks are popular for hiking and nature walks, as are Sauvie Island, greenway trails in Eugene and Portland, George Rogers Park (Lake Oswego), Minto-Brown Island Park (Salem) and others shown on the following maps.

HUNTING AND FISHING

Hunting for deer, waterfowl and upland game is permitted in some locations. Angling is allowed on those greenway parcels signed with a hunting symbol in this guide—but only during authorized seasons with a shotgun, bow and arrow. Three greenway sites—Hollow Tree on the Coast Fork, Truax Island Access (RM 128) and Wapato Access, in the Tomah Chunk—have special hunting restrictions because of their locations. For more specific information about hunting on state greenway parcels, contact the Oregon Department of Fish & Wildlife (ODFW). See page 31 of this guide for appropriate state park or ODFW telephone numbers.

Hunting on private lands is allowed only by permission of landowner, subject to state game rules. Obey “no hunting” signs. Angling regulations vary along the river. Check the angling synopsis, available wherever fishing licenses are sold, for specifics on restrictions.

Using the maps
Care has been taken to make all river maps faithful to the river alignment (based on 1993 aerial photography), but don’t be unduly concerned. The Willamette is a dynamic river with changes and can be confusing and dangerous to navigate.

Don’t count on the maps to depict every hazard or unpassable channel.

River Miles

All river miles in this guide originate at the river’s mouth, starting with River Mile (RM) 0, and increasing in value moving upstream. The left bank (L) and right bank (R) of all river locations in this guide are determined by facing downstream. At many points along the river, Willamette River greenway signs indicate the appropriate river mile. When used with maps in this guide, these signs can help boaters identify their location on the river.
Virtually all areas of the Willamette offer good fishing year-round. Most libraries or bookstores contain good, locally produced fishing guides that can point anglers of all ages to good fishing holes, baits and lures, and conditions when fishing is best. Some of the more popular spots are listed in the adjacent table.

**SUGGESTED FISHING AREAS**

**Multnomah Channel**
- **RM 0** Good spring chinook salmon fishery; also winter steelhead. Gilbert River and Sturgeon Lake fishing is mainly for warm-water game fish, primarily catfish, perch and crappie. Bank fishing is possible in several areas. Success rates are best during March through June.

**Cedar Oak Island**
- **RM 23** Hides a sheltered lagoon that offers good fishing for perch, crappie, bullheads, bluegill and bass. It is especially good for winter fishing because it is protected from the river’s high-water currents.

**Clackamas River**
- **RM 55** Provides sheltered spots and an excellent place to fish. It is a good spot for fishing in the fall and winter.

**Molalla River**
- **RM 26** Provides good conditions for fishing in the fall and winter.

**Willamette Falls**
- **RM 26** Offers excellent fishing in the fall and winter.

**French Prairie**
- **RM 35-70** Offers good conditions for fishing in the fall and winter.

**McKenzie River**
- **RM 175** Provides excellent fishing in the fall and winter.

**Peoria**
- **RM 141** Offers good conditions for fishing in the fall and winter.

**Middle Fork**
- **RM 187-203** Provides excellent fishing in the fall and winter.

**Driving**
An interesting mid-valley trip could include excursions across the Buena Vista and Wheatland ferries with a side visit to the State Capitol Building in Salem. A nice rest stop is Minto-Brown Island Park south of Salem, which features picnic areas as well as excellent running, walking and bicycle paths. It is best to limit total driving time to 3-5 hours, especially with children.

**Waterskiing**
Popular skiing points include Multnomah Channel, Sellwood to Willamette Park in Portland, the Milwaukie basin, above Willamette Falls, Newberg to Wilsonville, and the Salem, Albany and Corvallis areas. Remember, it is the law to wave a red or orange “water-skiing” flag while skiing in the water.

**Bicycling**
For a full bike ride, the 36-mile Summer City-Harrisburg loop timed to coincide with either the Junction City Scandinavian Festival or Harrisburg’s Harvest Fest.

**French Prairie**
Butteville, St. Paul and Champoeg were originally settled by French Canadian retirees of the Hudson’s Bay Company. Hence, this area is sometimes referred to as “French Prairie”. A riverbank marker denotes location of historic Butteville and its landing, founded in 1845.
Willamette River ferries
The three remaining ferries on the Willamette can be enjoyed in a day outing or a longer bicycle excursion—the Canby Ferry (RM 34) near Canby, Wheatland Ferry (RM 72) north of Salem and Buena Vista Ferry (RM 106) south of Salem. Good picnic points would be Champoeg State Park, Willamette Mission State Park (at the Wheatland Ferry) or Minto-Brown Island Park in Salem.

Eugene/Springfield riverfront (RM 178-186)
This area offers a nice network of public bike paths and trails along both sides of the river, joined by several footbridges. An old canoe way connects Alton Baker Park to the West D Street Greenway in Springfield.

GUIDE TO OREGON STATE PARKS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>River Mile (RM)</th>
<th>Mary S. Young</th>
<th>Molalla River</th>
<th>Champoeg</th>
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<th>Sarah Helmick (Luckiamute River)</th>
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OREGON STATE PARKS

Mary S. Young State Park
Riverfront park features hiking trails, a short bicycle trail and athletic fields. New canoesage connects to Cedar Oak Island, park and natural area managed by the city of West Linn. Located on Highway 43 in West Linn, about 9 miles southwest of Portland.

Molalla River State Park
Features a 1-1/2 mile hiking trail along which waterfowl, trees and songbirds can be viewed. Park also has a large great blue heron rookery; nesting activity occurs from February to late July. Located along the Molalla and Willamette rivers near Canby.

Champoeg State Park
The Champoeg site is most famous for being where the decisive vote for organizing the first provisional government in the Northwest was taken on May 2, 1843. The site is now a state park with grassy fields, boat tie-up, picnic areas, 48-site campground, extensive bike trails and two museums. Located off Highway 99W, 7 miles east of Newberg.

Willamette Mission State Park
Original site of Rev. Jason Lee's Methodist mission. A new 4-mile bike trail winds through river bottomlands. A small lake in the park contains a boat ramp and is good for panfishing. Located on Wheatland Ferry Road, 8 miles north of Salem.

Sarah Helmick State Park
Small park along the Luckiamute River. Offers picnicking and some good fishing holes. Located off Highway 99W, 6 miles south of Monmouth.

Bowers Rock State Park
A Willamette greenway park that is not yet developed or accessible by vehicles. For boat camping, enter from right bank and proceed down between upper and lower ends of park site located between Corvallis and Albany (RM 122), across from Hyak County Park.

Armitage State Park
Park is on the McKenzie River about 3 miles from its confluence with the Willamette. Good fishing and picnicking. Located on Coburg Road, 5 miles north of Eugene, underneath I-5 where it crosses over the McKenzie.

Elijah Bristow State Park
A sprawling day-use park with 16 miles of trail; hiking, biking and equestrian trails, plus several miles of riverfront. Located along Middle Fork of the Willamette off Highway 58, 7 miles southeast of Eugene.
Middle and Coast Forks

Officially, the Willamette River begins where the Middle Fork emerges from Lake Timpanogos high in the Oregon Cascades. However, the river is considered navigable only below Dexter Dam at River Mile 203, some 58 miles downstream from Lake Timpanogos. The smaller East Fork—the Coast Fork—begins above Cottage Grove to the west. The two forks join at Springfield.

Swirling through small channels, over and around downed trees, and creating myriad small whirlpools, the Middle Fork is a swiftly moving stream as it sets off below Dexter Reservoir and through Elijah Bristow State Park. On its journey to the Columbia, the Willamette will change complexion many times. Here it is a remarkably clear stream that is popular with anglers and rafters alike as it flows over rocky beds and boulders. It is common to see osprey, hawks and an occasional eagle flying above, while waterfowl work the shores and eddies. Anglers in drift boats or waders vie for spring chinook salmon, steelhead and native cutthroat trout.

Above the town of Jasper, the Middle Fork is challenging—especially for canoes. Drift boats and rafts have an easier time of it but should stay well above, while waterfowl work the shores and eddies. Anglers in drift boats or waders vie for spring chinook salmon, steelhead and native cutthroat trout.

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The Coast Fork flows from Cottage Grove Reservoir northward for 29 river miles, paralleling the route of Interstate 5. Several public access points, landings and hand launch locations exist along this fork. At river mile 187, it joins the Middle Fork, forming the mainstem Willamette.

MAJOR FEATURES

210 Lowell Covered Bridge
Built by Lane County in 1945, it crosses the mid-section of Dexter Reservoir.

220 Dexter Holding Ponds
Watch adult chinook salmon in fish ladder and holding ponds from May to October. Osprey and wood ducks nest in area April to September.

220 Elijah Bristow State Park
A large day-use park with hiking, picnicking and horseback riding.

220 Pengra Access
Launch point is across for Bynon Pengra, a surveyor of the Oregon Central Military Road.

220 Clearwater Park
A popular put-in and take-out point in Springfield.

EXCURSIONS

A challenging day trip is to float a canoe, drift boat or raft from Dexter Reservoir to Springfield—12 to 18 river miles depending on your put-in and take-out points. There are hazards along the way; only the experienced should try this run above Jasper Bridge.

ESTIMATED FLOAT TIME: 3 TO 5 HOURS.

A shorter trip would be to launch at Clearwater Park, 6 miles downriver.

ESTIMATED FLOAT TIME: 2.5 HOURS.

The Southern Pacific railroad bridge (RM 197) alerts you that Jasper County Park (RM 195) and its river shallows are just a mile or so ahead. Further, on the left, is the Jasper Bridge boat launch (RM 194) that attracts many rafters bound for one of Springfield’s riverside parks, such as Clearwater Park (RM 191) or Island Park (RM 185).

Coast Fork

The Coast Fork flows from Cottage Grove Reservoir northward for 29 river miles, paralleling the route of Interstate 5. Several public access points, landings and hand launch locations exist along this fork. At river mile 187, it joins the Middle Fork, forming the mainstem Willamette.
Cottage Grove Reservoir, completed in 1942, is an Army Corps of Engineers project about five miles south of Cottage Grove. It is used primarily for flood control, irrigation, and recreation. The three-mile-long lake and its shoreline are used for boating, swimming, water skiing, fishing, picnicking, and camping.

Three day-use parks provide opportunities for water-oriented recreation.

Generally navigable only in the early spring. It is difficult to float when water levels drop in early summer. Even when navigable, swift and shallow conditions make it challenging; scout before you float.

**Navigation Hazards**

- Shallows, rocks, and obstructions: generally difficult or impossible to navigate in shallow water in spring; check before you float.

River miles are indicated by a 00 at 5-mile intervals as well as at the top and bottom of each map. River mileage mile-by-mile is indicated in the river channel. Specific hazards are described in the legend on each map and are listed for each mile. Be alert for other hazards as well.

**Legend**

- Boat access
- Road access
- Public land
- Restrooms
- Boat ramp
- Supplies
- Picnicking
- Navigation hazards
- Hunting
- Fishing
- Camping
- Power line
- Division of State Lands
- Public land
- Army Corps of Engineers

River miles are indicated by a 00 at 5-mile intervals as well as at the top and bottom of each map. River mileage mile-by-mile is indicated in the river channel. Specific hazards are described in the legend on each map and are listed for each mile. Be alert for other hazards as well.

**THIS PUBLICATION IS OUT OF DATE.**

For most current information: [extension.oregonstate.edu/catalog](http://extension.oregonstate.edu/catalog)
Springfield: In 1849, Elias M. Briggs located a land claim near here. For many years a portion of his claim was known as “the spring-field”, hence the town’s eventual name. Springfield rated occasional (rare) visits by steamboats from downriver ports during the winter high-water season. Like Eugene, much of Springfield’s Willamette waterfront is a parkway.

Springfield Millrace: The Springfield Millrace diverted Willamette River in order to power early mills. This fueled the local economy. The former Booth-Kelly mill was the largest mill of the largest lumber company of its day, and the flour mill powered by the Millrace was at one time Lane County’s largest, lasting for 75 years.

For most current information: http://extension.oregonstate.edu/catalog
Eliah Bristow was the founder of Pleasant Hill and an Oregon pioneer. With Eugene Skinner and two other Oregon Trail immigrants, Bristow explored the upper Willamette Valley country in June 1846, looking for likely places to stake a claim. Bristow selected this site because of the beauty of the landscape. The park named in his honor is a sprawling state park with several miles of beautiful riverfront and picnic areas.

The Lowell covered bridge, originally built in 1907, now crosses part of the mid-section of Dexter Reservoir. The bridge was rebuilt by Lane County in 1945.

For most current information:
http://extension.oregonstate.edu/catalog

THIS PUBLICATION IS OUT OF DATE.
Springfield to Albany

After the two major forks of the Willamette join forces near Springfield, the mainstem river begins its final 185-mile, 420-foot-in-elevation descent to Portland. Not yet a full-sized river, this upper mainstem of the Willamette still has a few exciting twists, turns and rapids in store.

The current is typically fast through Springfield and Eugene. At least five rapids will be encountered, offering both challenge and a likelihood of getting wet. Of most concern to boaters is the diversion dam encountered just above the I-5 crossing in Springfield. This stretch is recommended only for experienced kayakers and canoeists.

Downstream from Eugene, the Willamette maintains its energy and rapid flow. Between Eugene and Harrisburg, the river flows in many intertwined or "braided" channels marked by occasional snags and strainers—but no real rapids. It is wise to stay alert for shallows and strainers, and unNavigable side channels. Here, the river is naturally unstable and unpredictable in a way that makes even experienced boaters nervous. However, over its shallow channels during high water to create new ones. What is depicted as a channel on the map might now be a gravel bar or marsh.

Even after Harrisburg, the fickle river can lure a hardy boater to a shallow side-channel or through some uncharted water hydraulics. Only after Corvallis does the Willamette begin to slacken its pace and form itself into a more reliable single channel with intermittent islands.

**RIVER MILEPOSTS**

- **Island Park (RM 135)** on the right bank, has a good boat launch. Beware of the dangerous diversion dam and rapids at the I-5 bridge about a mile downstream. Boaters should follow the shallow right channel to avoid treacherous currents along a mid-river stand-off or a three-foot plunge over the dam itself. At the Autzen footbridge (RM 183), the main channel (left) sports three-foot standing waves. Middle right channels can be shallow.

  - **West D Street Greenway (RM 184)** was created by rerouting a local street. **Alton Baker Park** (RM 184-182), the major regional metropolitan park, runs along the right bank to the Ferry Street Bridge. It contains a popular canoe launch about 150 yards above the Washington Street Bridge, for additional paddlers.

  - The McKenzie River joins the Willamette at RM 175, **Armitage State Park**, which has a ADA compliant boat ramp, is about seven miles upstream on the McKenzie, offering an interesting side trip.

  - **Whitely (RM 175.5) and Hileman (RM 173.5)** are maintained boat ramps, but neither is on the main channel and both are difficult to locate from the river. They also may require portages.

  - **Harrisburg (RM 160)**, look for the new gazebo at the riverfront park and a boat ramp just downstream from it. Landing hand-powered craft at **McCartney Park** (RM 156) is difficult because of strong currents. However, it's another 15 miles to the next boat ramp at **Peoria Park** (RM 141). The river above **Corvallis** (RM 140-132) is filled with snags and strainers.

  - **The Crystal Lake Boat Ramp** (RM 133) is at the downriver end of **Willamette Park**. A boat launch is at **Michael's Landing** (RM 131), north of the **Harrison Street bridge**. The remaining 11-mile run to Albany is pleasant and easy. The best boat ramp above Albany is at **Hyak Park** (RM 122).
Maps are generally accurate, but do not display all navigational hazards, including impassable channels, in-water obstructions or rapids. Boaters beware: river conditions change frequently.

For most current information: http://extension.oregonstate.edu/catalog

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Eugene/Springfield riverfronts. A nice network of public parks, bike paths and trails runs along both sides of the river. The paths cross the river on several foot and bicycle bridges.

McKenzie River: Named after Scotsman Donald McKenzie of John Jacob Astor's Pacific Fur Co., who explored it in 1812. The McKenzie is sometimes considered the "third fork" of the Willamette.

I-5 Rapids: Old mill diversion dam immediately upriver from I-5 bridge at Springfield is dangerous; only experienced canoeists or kayakers should run this stretch.
For most current information: http://extension.oregonstate.edu/catalog
Albany to St. Paul/Newberg

This midsection of the Willamette Valley, tamed by settlers during the 1850s through 1880s, became the fertile heartland that fueled Oregon's growth and development. Many prosperous towns and landings sprang up along the river, but today are gone—as faint a memory as the steamboat's whistle.

The middle section of the mainstem Willamette continues to slow and no longer actively creates new channels. River depths average 12-15 feet, although there are occasional shallows and strong currents—especially near obstructions—that can upset a careless boater. In other places, the river slows and deepens to as much as 80 feet. Many sloughs and side channels lure anglers in search of bass, crappie and other panfish. Angling for spring chinook near Willamette Mission State Park can be productive during late April and May.

Scores of abandoned landings, as well as some major settlements of the steamboat era—Fairfield, and Buena Vista among them—have long since declined or disappeared altogether into Oregon's past. Of the early river towns, Salem, Corvallis, Albany, Independence and a few others remain.

This section is particularly bucolic, and features two of the remaining three Willamette River ferries—Buena Vista and Wheatland. Both have been in operation since the early 1850s. Buena Vista was site of important clay pipe and cooking ware kilns that served early Willamette Valley farms. Wheatland was opposite where Rev. Jason Lee founded his Methodist mission in 1834.

**EXCURSIONS**

A good float trip is to put in at the Santiam boat ramp at the I-5 Santiam bridges rest area (freeway mile 241). Float the five miles to the Willamette and then to either Independence Park (18 river miles) or Wallace Marine Park in Salem (28 miles). ESTIMATED FLOAT TIME: 4 TO 6 HOURS.

A good car or bicycle trip is to take country roads to and across the Wheatland or Buena Vista ferries.
Lincoln Access: One of the Willamette’s most successful early-day towns—named after President Lincoln—won fame for shipping out a record 350,000 bushels of wheat one year. It boasted a half-mile-long waterfront of warehouses and wharves, none of which remains.

Sponges Landing: The Spong family settled opposite the old town of Lincoln, where they established a ferry in competition with Doak’s Ferry across the river. The ferry owners reportedly withheld landing rights from each other, culminating in “a shooting fray between crews” that, fortunately, resulted in no casualties.

Eola: The area at the foot of Eola Hills was once a town called Cincinnati, established in 1849 and a prospering little community by 1851. At one time it was mentioned as a possible site for the state capital. Eola Hills spread out to the north at the bend in the river, Joshua “Sheep” Shaw named it after the Ohio town he grew up in; Shaw and his family were the first immigrants to drive sheep over the “Road to Oregon” in 1844. The town was situated just downriver from Rickreall Creek.

Independence: Platted in the late 1840s by Edwin A. Thorpe, by 1853 Independence had its own post office. The 1861-62 flood wiped out the town, leading townspeople to plat a new town. For a time there was both an “Old Town” and “New Town”. The flood of 1890 also hit Independence hard, especially North Independence (Old Town), which was compelled to move. The old ferry landing is still visible on both sides of river.
Dayton: The town square, maintained as a park, commemorates Gen. Joel Palmer. He was the superintendent of Indian Affairs for the Oregon Territory who negotiated the 1854-55 treaties whereby Willamette Valley Indians ceded their lands over to the U.S. government. The park's focal point is the relocated blockhouse of Fort Yamhill.

Wheatland: The Wheatland community once had numerous shops, stores, mills, warehouses and two hotels. All except the last are gone now, replaced by an orchard.

Willamette Mission State Park: Methodist missionary Jason Lee established the first Methodist mission west of the Rockies here in 1834. Lee moved his mission to Salem (Chemeketa) in 1840.

NAVIGATION HAZARDS
55 Yamhill River: Narrow but navigable usually to Dayton; in high water to Lafayette. Treacherous after heavy rains.
56 Rock ledge: Along right bank for about 150 yards upriver from Yamhill River confluence.
57 Hydraulics, debris: Strong water hydraulics and log debris just upriver from Yamhill Landing at Candiani Bar.
21 Congested area: Multiple river uses in area; watch for other traffic near Willamette Mission State Park.

Maps are generally accurate, but do not display all navigational hazards, including impassable channels, in-water obstructions or rapids. Boaters beware: river conditions change frequently.
Newberg to Portland

No other section of the Willamette is more steeped in Oregon history than the lower river, which begins a 20-mile long eastward bend at Newberg, then presses northward once again at Canby for its final run to the Columbia. En route, it passes through a metropolitan area where the vast majority of Oregon’s population lives.

From Newberg to its confluence with the Columbia 50 river miles later, the Willamette is mostly placid and slow-moving. In this section, the river runs through a beautiful wooded gorge with narrow segments that make navigation challenging at points, especially around islands and rocky shoals.

At Oregon City, the riverbed is a basalt shelf that creates the impressive 41-foot Willamette Falls. Turbulent waters near the base of the falls are unsafe for small boats. Observe the boating and fishing from an overlook (yellow marker).

Below the falls, the river is often congested with commercial and recreational river traffic. Sometimes you'll see great blue heron, waterfowl, vegetation and wetlands along the way. The fishing, especially for salmon and sturgeon, is very popular.

RIVER MILEPOSTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Location</th>
<th>Milepost</th>
<th>Features</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Rodgers Landing (RM 28)</td>
<td></td>
<td>Has a boat ramp and tie-ups. Nearby is historic Butteville Landing (RM 43).</td>
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<tr>
<td>Boones Ferry Park (RM 27)</td>
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<td>Has a boat ramp and Wilsonville Memorial Trail (RM 38) offers a transition to up-river Molalla River State Park (RM 30-43), which has a large blue heron rookery. It is just upstream from the Canby Ferry. From here to Rock Island (RM 30), beware of narrow chutes and rocky reefs. Observe marker buoys and range boards.</td>
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<tr>
<td>West Linn's Willamette Park (RM 28)</td>
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<td>Is at the mouth of the Tualatin River.</td>
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To enter Willamette Falls Locks (RM 27) from a river, keep to the far left bank. The locks are open from 7 a.m. to 11 p.m. daily. Weekends are best due to the amount of commercial traffic—which has priority—during the week. Allow about an hour for passage each way. Below the Old Oregon City Bridge (RM 26), removed by the historic Oregon City steamboat landing in 1939. A series of public parks, islands and other access points, including Gwinn, Cedar and Hogg Islands, and Meldrum Bar, follow. Mary S. Young State Park (RM 24) no longer has a boat ramp. Roehr Park (RM 20) features a public boat dock connected to an outdoor amphitheater. Elk Rock Island (RM 19) is accessible by boat.

The Sellwood Bridge (RM 17) is the first of 10 vehicle bridges crossing the Willamette within Portland. Oaks Bottom (RM 16) and Ross Island (RM 15) represent important wildlife habitat. Just beyond the Ross Island Bridge is the Oregon Museum of Science and Industry (R) and the U.S.S. Blueback submarine. Riverplace (RM 13), which has a 24-hour public dock (reservations required), is within walking distance of downtown Portland. The 27-foot-high Portland Seawall (L) runs along much of Tom McCall Waterfront Park (RM 14-12). Beware of large commercial vessels in the Portland harbor. The Fremont Bridge (RM 11) and the majestic St. Johns Bridge (RM 6.1) follow. The spires of the St. Johns bridge rise to an imposing 418 feet, forming the northern river gateway to Portland.
Ash Island: Ash Island is used for farming. A private ferry is visible from the main (R) channel. Bass fishing is popular on left channel. Caution: The entrance to the left channel is hazardous because of water dam at channel entrance.

Butteville: A marker along the river denotes the location of an old landing founded in 1845 to compete with nearby Champoeg. The area between the Pudding River, which enters the Molalla River at Molalla River State Park, and the Willamette was originally settled by French-Canadian retirees from the Hudson’s Bay Company. Today, the area is sometimes called “French Prairie”.

Champoeg State Park: Pivotal site in the formation of the provisional government of Oregon in 1843. Champoeg was platted as a town in 1852, but a disastrous flood in 1861 virtually wiped it out. A flood in 1890 finished the job. Now a state park, Champoeg was the site of the last upriver steamboat visit—by the “Claire”—sponsored by the Veteran Steamboatmen’s Association in 1952.

Hess Creek Landing: One of the most important pioneer steamboat landing and shipping ports for wheat grown in the French Prairie area. Established in 1837, that is now the Salem-St. Paul road. Only vague traces remain of Fairfield, a

Newberg: one of the most important pioneer steamboat landing and shipping ports for wheat grown in the French Prairie area. Established in 1837, that is now the Salem-St. Paul road. Only vague traces remain of Fairfield, a
Multnomah Channel

Once plied by paddlewheel steamers churning toward Portland or St. Helens, Multnomah Channel is now a lazy byway marked by quiet houseboat moorages and a major wildlife sanctuary—a delightful getaway from the marine congestion that otherwise dominates the lower Willamette.

Multnomah Channel begins three miles upstream from the Willamette's main confluence with the Columbia. It traverses the west flank of Sauvie Island for 21 miles until it, too, connects with the Columbia River (at St. Helens).

Meriwether Lewis and William Clark, explorers for the young republic of the United States, noted the island during their 1804-06 expedition, calling it Wapato Island after the large beds of arrowhead, or wild potato, growing there. The Native American name for the plant is wapato. The island was once a center of trade for Native Americans stretching from the Willamette Valley to Idaho and Wyoming.

A French-Canadian employee of the Hudson's Bay Company, Laurent Sauve, for whom Sauvie Island is now named, established the first non-native settlement in 1838—a dairy. Soon after, little other than agricultural development occurred on the island. The channel is today a peaceful waterway featuring quiet moorages, lush vegetation, plentiful songbirds, and waterfowl.

RIVER MILEPOSTS

A series of moorages and marinas greets the boater between Multnomah Channel's confluence with the Willamette and the Sauvie Island Bridge (RM 20). Several moorages have boat ramps available to the public, usually for a small fee.

Pastoral Sauvie Island, on the right, is popular for bicycle trails, nature walks, swimming beaches, and its fruit and vegetable stands. Just inland is the historic Bybee-Howell House, a fine 1856 Classical Revival home on Sauvie Island; its grounds are ideal for picnics. Its fruit and vegetable stands. Just inland is the historic Bybee-Howell House, opened to the public during the summer.

The Sauvie Island Public Boat Ramp (RM 18) is just upstream from Wapato Access (RM 17-18), near one of the sites where Nathaniel Wyeth maintained an outpost called Ft. William from 1834-1836. At Wapato Access is Hadley's Landing (RM 17.5), a transient tie-up and trail. About halfway down the channel, the Sauvie Island Wildlife Management Area (RM 11-0) begins. It is a major wintering and resting area for more than 300,000 ducks and geese. The refuge also features swans, great blue herons, sandhill cranes, purple martins and bald eagles. Access is by road or by boat via the Gilbert River Boat Ramp (RM 6). Check rules on wildlife viewing restrictions during the hunting season and in the spring.

Several parks and a marina can be found at the channel's confluence with the Columbia. These include Sand Island Marine Park at St. Helens in the Columbia River, the historic Bybee-Howell House, and Columbia View Park. Scappoose Bay, a 6-mile-long backwater parallel to the channel, also contains a boat ramp and marina. Scappoose Bay Landing is a large state greenway parcel between the bay and Multnomah Channel.
Wapato Access, named for the wapato plant that was a staple food for Willamette Valley and Columbia Basin Indians, is a hikable greenway parcel.

Multnomah Channel is popular during the spring and winter for anglers seeking chinook salmon and steelhead. The spring chinook run in the Willamette—greatly aided by fish passage improvements at Willamette Falls and the 1960s cleanup of the river—has historically been the Willamette's largest salmon run.

Sturgeon Lake and other waters in Sauvie Island Wildlife Management area offer good panfish fishing. Bank fishing can be done from Oak Island along the southwestern shore of Sturgeon Lake. Footbridges along Pete's Slough, south of Big Mcary Lake, provide additional access for fishing and wildlife viewing.

Maps are generally accurate, but do not display all navigational hazards, including impassable channels, in-water obstructions or rapids. Boaters beware: river conditions change frequently.

For most current information: http://extension.oregonstate.edu/catalog

THIS PUBLICATION IS OUT OF DATE.
Wildlife viewing: The Sauvie Island Wildlife Management Area is an excellent place to enjoy bird watching and participate in other recreational activities. Check rules on viewing restrictions during the hunting season and spring. Picnicking and other day-use activities are allowed provided they do not conflict with fish and wildlife needs. Sites are not developed for these uses, drinking water is not available, and restrooms are primitive.

Users of the game management area must purchase and display an annual or daily parking permit while parked on state lands on Sauvie Island. Annual permits cost $10.50 and daily permits cost $3.00. Several local vendors near or on Sauvie Island sell permits. It should be remembered that the State of Oregon does not own all of the land on the north end of the island and none on the southern end. Care should be taken not to trespass on private property.

Maps are generally accurate, but do not display all navigational hazards, including impassable channels, in-water obstructions or rapids. Boaters beware: river conditions change frequently.

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Keeping Our River Clean

The Willamette River is considerably cleaner today than it was in the 1920s and 1930s, when the lower river was so poisonous that fish placed in it died within minutes. To deal with the problem, the State Sanitary Authority (now called the Department of Environmental Quality) was formed. By 1968, all major waste discharges were identified and controlled by state water quality permits. The river is now safe for swimming, boating, fishing and recreating.

Still, the Willamette does contain some pollutants. State regulation has greatly reduced the amount of industrial and municipal pollution entering the river, but the individual actions of citizens who use the river can have the greatest impact on keeping it clean. Here’s how you can help:

SANITARY DISCHARGES

Human waste is a significant public health concern. The cities of Corvallis and Portland both have combined storm and sanitary sewer systems. During rainy periods, untreated municipal sewage can flow into the river. At these times, avoid direct contact with the water—especially swimming or skiing. Fish in these areas should be thoroughly washed before eating.

The use of Coast Guard-approved marine sanitation devices aboard boats is required. Use pump-out facilities or potty stations to properly dispose of waste. Plan your trip to use upland or restroom facilities at most parks and many greenway parks along the river. Campsites where there are no toilets, but site waste should be carried out. If this is not possible, dig a hole at least 12 inches deep and away from the river and above the high water line—bury wastes. Do not urinate in or near the water. Preferably find a wash and area.

OIL AND FUEL SPILLS

It is illegal to discharge any fuel or oil into any of Oregon’s public waters. Check fuel tanks, hoses and valves before you untrailer your boat or leave your moorage. When refueling, shut off motors and electrical equipment, and don’t smoke. Take extra precautions when fueling at a dock. Take portable fuel tanks out of the boat and fill them on land. Wipe up any spills and wash the cloth in a safe manner.

HOUSEHOLD WASTES

Toxic materials can flow into the river when soaps, solvents, motor oil, anti-freeze and other household chemicals wash off of roofs, driveways and yards into storm drains. Thousands of small “spills” such as these have a total impact much greater than all industrial pollution combined.

SEDIMENT-EROSION

Motorboat wakes increase erosion of shorelines. When traveling near the river’s banks, reduce your speed. Higher speeds, especially in shallow waters—also can disturb bottom sediments which sometimes contain trapped toxic materials that can be released into the water column.

LITTERING

It is against the law to litter in state waters. Littering ace especially harmful. Items such as polystyrene cups, plastic bags, bait packages and monofilament line can kill birds, fish and marine mammals. When boating, camping or picnicking, please do your part—pack out whatever you pack in, and dispose of it properly, including food wastes.

ADOPT-A-RIVER PROGRAM

Take a personal role in maintaining the beauty of the Willamette River, or any river, lake or stream in Oregon. The Oregon Adopt-A-River program helps volunteers adopt and clean up their favorite stretch. The program is a cooperative effort between SOLV (Stop Oregon Litter and Vandalism), the Oregon State Marine Board, Oregon Parks and Recreation Department, and other state and federal agencies.

HOW TO REPORT POLLUTION

If you see pollution being released in the river or along its shores, report it to the Oregon Emergency Management system at 1-800-452-0311. (Effluent coming from pipes is already regulated and need not be reported.) Any oil, fuel or other contaminant leaking from boats, docks, oil drums, industrial sites or other sources should be reported immediately.

The city of Portland posts alerts along the river whenever its combined sewer and storm drains overflow into the river. For more information, call the River Alert Info Line, 823-2479. “Please Pump, Don’t Dump.” It is illegal to discharge any untreated sewage overboard from marine toilets into the river.

Use good outdoor ethics

In addition to handling human waste properly, observe good ethics at camping and picnicking spots. Only use dead and down driftwood for campfires. Use fire pans at all fires, and cover fire pits at undeveloped sites after use. Better yet—use camp stoves for cooking.

Adopt-A-River

This program provides free garbage bags, buttons, window decals, how-to handbook and resource guide. Call 800-322-3326 for information.

Take The Plunge! Adopt A River!

Above: Sampling water quality
Left: Riverbank cleanup

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Resources

EMERGENCY
All locations 9-1-1
Oregon Emergency Management System (pollution spills) 1-800-452-0311

TOWING SERVICES (PRIVATE)
Willamette River Services (Ch. 16) 1-503-244-2534
Rocky Pointe Marina (Ch. 16) 1-503-543-7003

SHERIFF'S MARINE PATROLS
Columbia County Sheriff's Office (St. Helens) 1-503-397-2511
Multnomah County Sheriff’s Office (Portland) 1-503-288-6788
Clackamas County Sheriff’s Office (Oregon City) 1-503-655-8650
Yamhill County Sheriff’s Office (McMinville) 1-503-472-9211
Polk County Sheriff’s Office (Dallas) 1-503-676-3956
Benton County Sheriff’s Office (Corvallis) 1-503-37-6838
Lane County Sheriff’s Office (Eugene) 1-503-68-100

CITY PARKS/BOAT RAMPS
City of St. Helens 1-503-397-6272
City of Portland 1-503-823-2229
City of Lake Oswego 1-503-636-1766
City of West Linn 1-503-367-4710
City of Gladstone 1-503-96-2225
City of Oregon City 1-503-397-2999
City of Wilsonville 1-503-682-1011
Regional Parks Agency (Salem) 1-503-588-6274
City of Independence 1-503-828-1111
City of Albany 1-503-96-3973
City of Corvallis 1-503-759-9493
City of Hillsboro 1-503-759-9493
City of Eugene 1-503-687-5252
City of Eugene Department of Outdoor Program/ River House 1-503-687-5329
Willamalane Park District (Springfield) 1-503-726-4335

COUNTY PARKS/BOAT RAMPS
Columbia County (St. Helens) 1-503-397-2353
Portland (St. Helens) 1-503-397-2353
Multnomah County (Salem Metro) 1-503-797-1850
Port of Portland 1-503-731-7527
North Clackamas Park District 1-503-794-8002
Clackamas County (Oregon City) 1-503-655-8521
Clackamas Water District (Clackamas) 1-503-656-0703
Yamhill County (McMinville) 1-503-434-7513
Marion County/Regional Parks Agency (Salem) 1-503-397-2999
Polk County (Dallas) 1-503-682-1011
Linn County (Albany) 1-503-967-3917
Benton County (Corvallis) 1-503-757-6871
Lane County (Eugene) 1-503-341-6940

FISHING
Oregon Bass and Panfish Club (Portland) 1-503-282-2852
Oregon Trout (Portland) 1-503-222-9091
Northwest Steelheaders (Milwaukie) 1-503-653-4176
Sport Fishing Information Line 1-800-336-BOAT
Willamette Falls Fish Count (Oregon City) 1-503-657-2059

MULTNOMAH COUNTY BRIDGES
Bridge operations and maintenance (Monday-Friday, 9 a.m. - 5 p.m.) 1-503-248-3757

NATIONAL WEATHER SERVICE
Oregon River Forecast (recorded) 1-503-295-0490

NON-PROFIT ORGANIZATIONS
Willamette River Services (Ch. 16) 1-503-244-2534
Rocky Pointe Marina (Ch. 16) 1-503-543-7003

THE RIVERS ARE OUR BROTHERS, THEY QUENCH OUR THIRST. THE RIVERS CARRY OUR CANOES AND FEED OUR CHILDREN. IF WE SELL YOU OUR LAND, YOU MUST REMEMBER AND TEACH YOUR CHILDREN THAT THE RIVERS ARE OUR BROTHERS AND YOURS, AND YOU MUST HENCEFORO GIVE THE RIVERS THE KINDNESS YOU WOULD OWE ANY BROTHER.

—Chief Seattle, Suquamish tribe

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WILLAMETTE RIVER RECREATION GUIDE

The Willamette River is a vital, multipurpose waterway that touches the lives of millions of people along its banks and throughout the Pacific Northwest. An important historical and cultural resource, the Willamette today still abounds with great natural beauty, abundant wildlife, and varied recreational opportunities.

This guide is designed to make it easy to visit and experience the river—whether by boat, bicycle, motor vehicle or on foot. With detailed maps, historical and wildlife information, and suggestions for excursions, the guide is a valuable tool for anyone interested in enjoying this important 200-mile river system and greenway.

A PUBLICATION OF:

Oregon State Marine Board
Oregon State Parks

May, 1995