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Taylors Falls Canoe Rental located at -  
Interstate Park &  
William O'Brien State Park

call: 612-465-6315 or  
1-800-447-4958 for rental info

# Canoeing the St. Croix



A canoeist's guide to the natural & cultural resources of the St. Croix River.

Interstate Park  
to  
William O'Brien  
State Park


The St. Croix River is one of the cleanest and healthiest river systems in the United States. The St. Croix flows through some of the most scenic and undeveloped country in the Midwest, making it a favorite recreational river.

What makes the St. Croix healthier than other rivers? Congressional Acts of 1968 and 1972



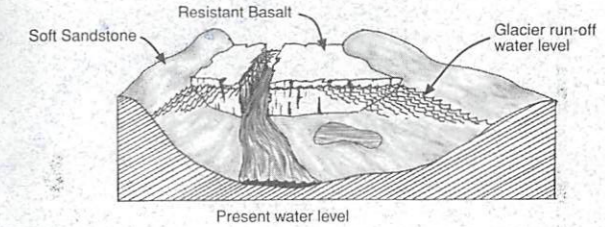
designated the St. Croix River a National Scenic Riverway. Steps were taken to reduce human impact on the river and its watershed. As a result, the St. Croix has become one of the most popular recreational rivers in the Midwest. The riverway is managed through the cooperative efforts of the National Park Service, Minnesota DNR and Wisconsin DNR.

**Why is the water brown?**



A natural substance, called tannic acid, is released from decaying pine and tamarack needles and colors the water brown.

The St. Croix is a small river in a big valley. Massive ice sheets melted during the end of the last ice age, carving a river 200 times bigger than today's St. Croix. In resistant basalt bedrock, the river narrows, running deep and fast between majestic cliffs. In softer, sea-deposited sandstone, the valley is wide with high bluffs.









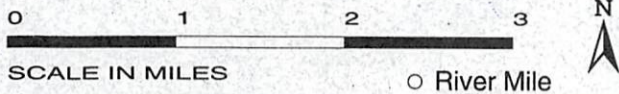
## Sloughs and Backwaters

Shallow side channels provide a rich habitat for wildlife. Thousands of birds migrate up and down the river every year using these backwaters for shelter and feeding. Explore these areas for signs of wildlife.



# CANOE GUIDE

- |   |  |
|---|--|
|  Boat access  |  Drinking Water (Summer Only) |
|  Canoe access |  Campsite                     |
|  Rest Area    |  Canoe Rental                 |



## A Blast from the past!

The island just past Interstate Park's campground is the result of a big mistake. The island was once part of the Minnesota hillside. In 1931, crews used explosives to remove sections of the hillside to make room for Highway 8. Legend has it that somebody goofed - using 22 tons of dynamite instead of two! The result - Blast Island.



## Rock Formations in the Dalles

**The Cross** - Composed of two flat overhanging slabs 15' above the water.

**Devil's Chair** - Rising 60' above the water, it resembles a giant straight back chair.

**Angle Rock** - This rock forms the sharp bend in the river.

**Old Man of the Dalles** - A profile of an old man's face.



Devil's Chair

Here the river narrows, and high basalt cliffs loom on either side. Steamboats maneuvered carefully through the narrows (look for the white "X" on the Wisconsin side - a navigational marker) while passengers exclaimed at the great beauty of this spot. Early American Indian canoeists also passed this way, leaving their mark in the form of pictographs.

Named Osceola Mills for the Seminole Chief of Florida, the "Mills" was dropped in 1877. The town prospered from mills powered by numerous springs.

**Cedar Bend**  
Two miles below Osceola the river takes a hard left turn. On the right side of the river is a tall cliff of sandstone, lighter colored and softer than the basalt cliffs at Interstate Park. Cedar Bend was cited in the 1837 Treaty as the dividing line between the Dakota and Ojibwe Indians.

## Railroad Swing Bridge

This steel bridge was built in 1887. The bridge was designed to swivel in the center to allow boats to pass. Before the advent of electricity, swing bridges were operated by pushing a large crank handle (or key) by hand.



Opening the bridge with a key.

**William O'Brien State Park**  
The white pines along the shore are a reminder of the vast pine forests which stood along the river. Pines were cut and floated down the river in the late 1800's in huge logging drives. The total lumber from trees cut in the St. Croix Valley would build over 1.5 million homes!

## WILLIAM O'BRIEN STATE PARK

Vehicle permit required

Division of Parks and Recreation



## COMMON SENSE FOR CANOEISTS

### Think about SAFETY:

1. Non-swimmers and children *always* wear life jackets.
2. **EVERYONE** wears them in winds, currents, flood, or cold-water conditions.
3. Remember in case of upset, your canoe will float, and will support you.
4. Falling into cold water can be fatal! Be extra cautious when water is cold!
5. Test for depth **BEFORE** you jump -- never dive in unknown waters.
6. Lightning is dangerous -- get to shore and avoid all trees.
7. Sunscreen is important, even on hazy days.

### Think about CONSERVATION:

1. Pack out everything, right down to cigarette butts.  
**DO NOT LITTER**
2. Use public toilets and campsite latrines! In remote wilderness, dig a six-inch hole, at least 100 feet from the water.
3. Treat wild animals and plants with respect. Never cut vegetation.
4. **LIMIT NOISE** to the circle of your own party; it carries far over the water.
5. Respect private property.