

Buffalo National River

Buffalo National River
Arkansas

National Park Service
U.S. Department of the Interior

Official Map and Guide



Canoeists float by towering bluffs of limestone and sandstone near

Pruitt on the upper Buffalo River. Carved from ancient seabeds, high

bluffs like these line many outer bends of the river.

Connie Toops

A River Nestled in the Arkansas Ozarks



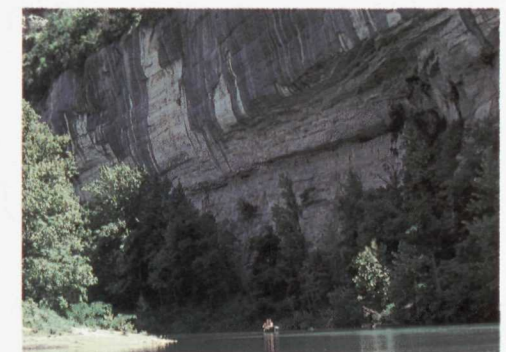
Matt Bradley



William A. Bake



Matt Bradley



The Buffalo River comes as a surprise. How did a river surrounded by the progress of civilization escape impoundment, impairment, and change? To preserve the Buffalo as a free-flowing stream, Congress designated it a national river in 1972. Floating the Buffalo can give you a feeling of the wildness once haunting this country. The Buffalo nestles in the Arkansas Ozarks, which are bounded on the north, east, and south by the Missouri, Mississippi, and Arkansas rivers. To the west lies prairie.

Originating high in the Boston Mountains, over its course the Buffalo drops steadily to its confluence with the White River. The gradient is steep and the water is faster along the upper river, leveling and slowing as the river runs its course. In some places, long quiet pools between rapids obscure its vertical travels. The land's wildness and isolation are dramatized by a side trip into any number of hollows flanking the river. One wonders if

some have been frequented since they served as guerrilla hideouts during the Civil War.

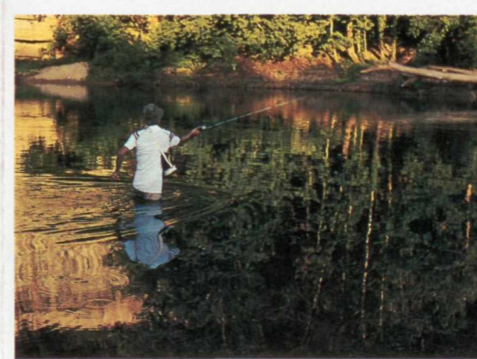
Many prehistoric and historic cultural sites are located throughout the park, some dating back more than 10,000 years. These range from bluff shelters once occupied by Archaic Indians to the cabins built by early settlers to existing homes of Ozark farmers still living in harmony with the land. Four areas, Boxley Valley, the Parker-Hickman Farmstead at Erbie, the Civilian Conservation Corps-built structures at Buffalo Point, and the Rush mining district, are listed on the National Register of Historic Places.

The meaning of the Buffalo River today is not difficult to discern. It is reflected in the faces of people accepting the river's recreational challenges. It rises in the spirits of people immersed in this landscape's beauty. It finds its measure among the families who celebrate, with periodic riv-

erside reunions, their multiple generations living in the area. Here are exhilaration and enthusiasm, relaxation and recreation. Here these merge with living tradition as thoroughly as the wild and free-running Buffalo River merges with its ancient Ozarks setting.



Hunting and Fishing the Buffalo



Connie Toops

Hunting An Arkansas hunting license is required and state and National Park Service regulations apply. Respect the rights of private property owners who have homes and livestock within the park boundary. Rangers at information stations can provide current information on seasons and regulations.

Hunting seasons Non-developed sections of the park are open to hunting under Arkansas Game and Fish Commission regulations. Hunting, in one form or another, may occur from early September until April and from mid-May to mid-June (squirrel only). Anyone going into the woods during hunting season should use caution and wear bright clothing. Hunter orange is recommended. This is especially important during gun deer season in November and during spring turkey season.

Fishing The Buffalo River is a favorite with anglers. Long pools provide excellent water for fishing. The Buffalo and its tributaries comprise one of the Nation's richest areas in total number of fish species. The biggest attraction here is the smallmouth bass. Anglers also go after largemouth and spotted bass, catfish, goggle-eye (rock bass), and a variety of other panfish.

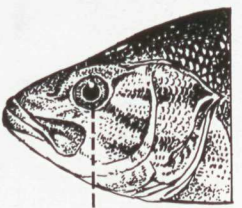
Float fishing Besides bank fishing, a favored traditional method on the Buffalo River is float fishing in the flat-bottomed johnboats. Float fishing is most common on the lower (eastern) half of the river. It may be restricted at times by low water during periods of drought.

Concessioners operate float fishing trips that may come complete with a hearty meal—fresh fish even—cooked on a gravel bar. For a list of these

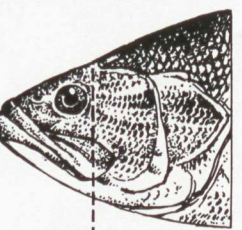
concessioners, write to the superintendent.

Fishing rules Fishing is governed by state and National Park Service regulations. An Arkansas fishing license is required.

Smallmouth and largemouth bass The smallmouth bass is so named because, in contrast to the largemouth, its upper jaw does not extend beyond the eyes (see diagrams). Although smallmouth bass up to 5 pounds are occasionally caught, most are in the 1- to 2-pound range. A smallmouth bass in the Buffalo reaches 6 to 7 inches in length by its second summer. It may take four years for the fish to attain the 10 inches that it must measure before you can add it to your stringer.



Smallmouth bass
Jaw to mid-point of pupil



Largemouth bass
Jaw past eye

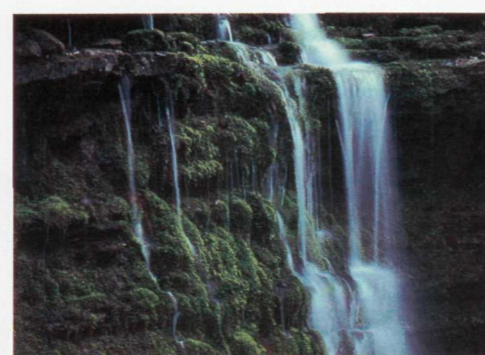
Illustrations by John Dawson

Scenic Landscape Formations

Buffalo River bluffs reach as high as 500 feet above the river. They are the Ozarks' highest. These stacks of ancient seabeds have been relentlessly sculpted by erosion. Their towering multi-colored cliffs sharply accent the surrounding wild mountain beauty. The park's geology, with its numerous caves, sinkholes, waterfalls, springs, and interesting rock formations, typifies the Arkansas Ozarks.



Matt Bradley



Tim Ernst/Southern Images

Nature Along the River

In the Ozarks, species of the Southwest, Northeast, and Southeast mix with Ice Age remnants now typical of the Arctic. Armadillos and roadrunners co-exist with lichens characteristic of arctic tundra. The park's range of elevation (from 375 to 2,385 feet), moisture, exposure, and soil types enhance this variety, which includes 1,500 plant species. The river boasts 59 species of clearwater fish. Whitetail deer, raccoon, opossum, bobcat, mink, and beaver are common. Bears are becoming so. Mountain lions are sometimes reported and elk were introduced recently.



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Enjoying the Park

Getting here Use U.S. 65 or Arkansas routes 7, 14, or 21 to get to the park. A commuter airline and buses serve nearby Harrison. Large airports, in Little Rock, Fayetteville, Ark., and Springfield, Mo., are 2- or 3-hour drives from the park. Reserve rental cars in advance. These central Ozark Mountains boast many scenic and recreation areas, many near the park.

Handicapped access Buffalo River country is

steep, rugged, and remote, but park management makes every effort to make the park and its programs accessible to all, including those with physical handicaps. An Accessibility Guide to programs and facilities is available at any ranger station or by writing to the superintendent. For the hearing impaired, there is a TDD-equipped telephone at park headquarters. The TDD number is (501) 741-2884.

Camping Fourteen campgrounds are open year round on a first-come, first-served basis. Fees are charged only at Buffalo Point. This largest and most developed campground offers water and electrical hookups, restrooms, showers, and trailer dump stations April through October. From November through March, services are limited to drinking water and vault toilets. Dates may vary from year to year depending on the weather. Buffalo Point

campground fills most evenings from Memorial Day to mid-August. Arrive before noon then to find a site. Daily fees are charged April through October. The camping limit is 14 days. Buffalo Point also offers group campsites and day-use pavilions that can be reserved by writing to the superintendent. Lost Valley, the only campground not on the river, is the most popular upriver campground. Its 15 walk-in sites have tables and fire grates. Drinking water

and vault toilets are provided. The rest of the park campgrounds, from Steel Creek downriver to Rush Landing, are excellent locations for beginning or ending float trips. All have toilets. Steel Creek, Kyles Landing, Erbie, Ozark, Tyler Bend, and Rush Landing have drinking water. The steep, winding roads to Steel Creek and Kyles Landing are not recommended for large trailers, buses, or motorhomes.

Accommodations A concessioner manages rental cabins at Buffalo Point. The restaurant there is open Memorial Day to Labor Day. It offers the only in-park food service. For reservations and information write: Buffalo Point Concessions, HCR #66, Box 388, Yellville, AR 72687, or call (501) 449-6206 between 9 a.m. and 5 p.m. Find additional food service and lodging in Harrison, Jasper, Marshall, Yellville, and other communities. Write to local chambers

of commerce for information about services.

Hiking Buffalo National River offers many wonderful hiking opportunities. Trail guides are available at any ranger station or by writing to the superintendent. Short, day-use trails are located at Lost Valley, Pruitt, and Buffalo Point and other locations. For the more adventurous, there are numerous trails leading into the Ponca and Lower Buffalo Wilderness Areas. Hikers

can also walk the traces of former roads, follow old foot paths that wind along the river, or simply hike crosscountry. Many old roads are shown on USGS topographic maps. River hiking often requires fording the river, a difficult task that should not be attempted during high water. Cross-country hiking is best in winter, when undergrowth is sparse and snakes, ticks, and chiggers are dormant.

Interpretive Programs Naturalist programs at Buffalo Point, Tyler Bend, Lost Valley, and other riverside locations in spring, summer, and fall include campfire programs, guided walks and hikes, canoe trips, and Ozark craft and folk music. Check at information stations for schedules.

For your safety The river is great for swimming, but never swim alone or during high water. There are no life-

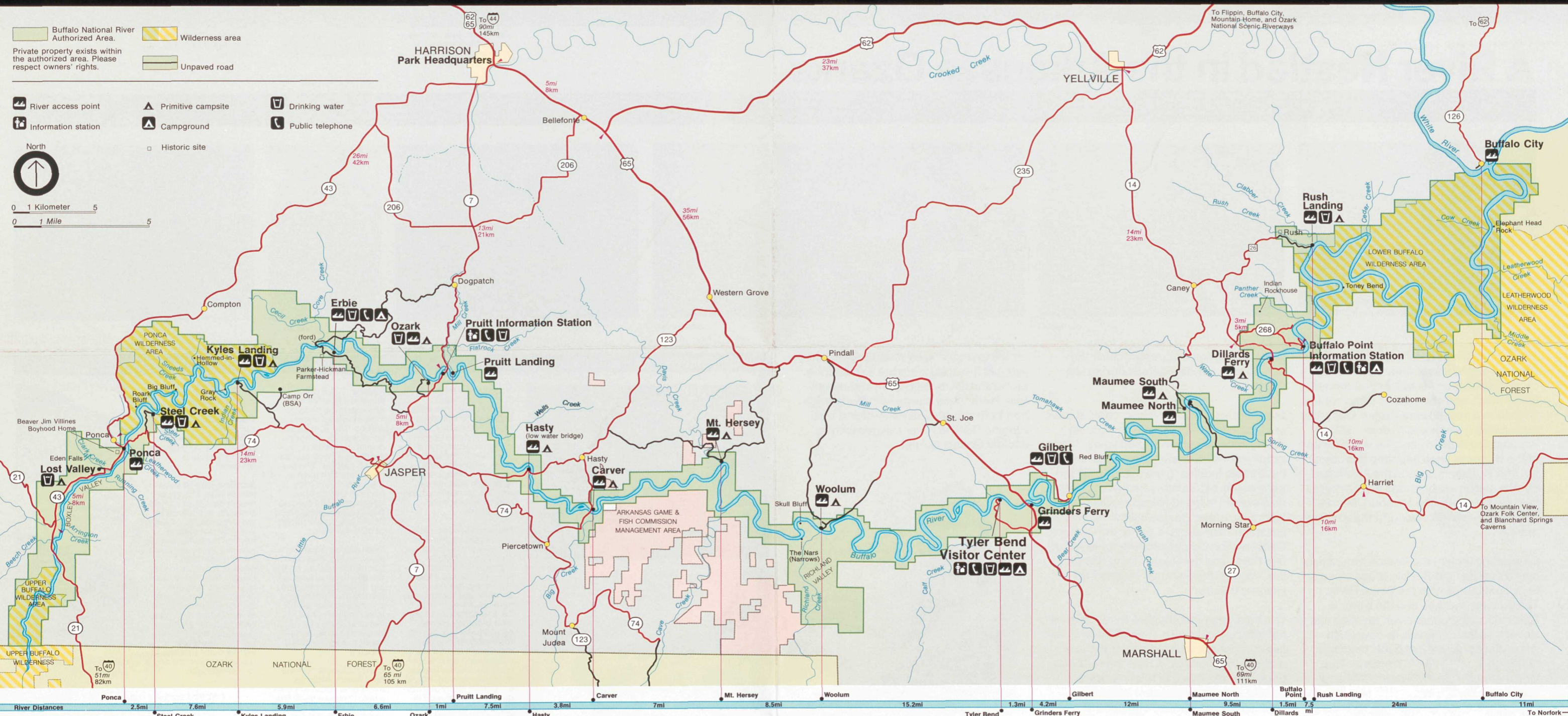
guarded swimming areas. Diving is extremely dangerous because unseen rocks lie below the surface. Climbing riverside cliffs, with their loose, crumbly, slippery-when-wet rocks, can be hazardous. A fall means certain injury, and getting you to safety and medical help is difficult, dangerous, and may take several hours. Common sense is your best protection against accidents. Make sure you and your children realize that you are in a natural area with

hazards unlike those at home. Be alert to the presence of poisonous snakes. All animals, plants, geologic features, and cultural sites and artifacts are protected by law here.

To learn more River guides, topographic maps, and books exploring the region's culture, natural history, and history are sold at information stations and at park headquarters in Harrison. These can enhance

your Buffalo River experience.

For information For more information about the park and your visit, write to: Superintendent, Buffalo National River, P.O. Box 1173, Harrison, AR 72602-1173, or call (501) 741-5443 or 449-4311.



Floating the Buffalo

Few experiences can compare to a float trip down the Buffalo. Clean waters, high bluffs, wooded hillsides, and myriad seasonal wildflowers conspire to turn staunch city lovers into nature enthusiasts. Inexperienced beginners can negotiate slow-moving river sections. Canoes may be rented at modest prices. Between Carver and Woolum, and below Rush, the river offers a near-wilderness experience. From Steel Creek to Carver and from Woolum to Maumees you traverse an outdoor environment with limited facilities. Only in the Buffalo Point area do you find a park setting with modern facilities. Choices for length of float trips also abound. You can make half-day floats; a 10-day, 120-mile expedition; or anything in between.

Before Setting Out Check with a ranger about river conditions before you set out. Canoeing experience is recommended for the stretch from Steel Creek to Pruitt. Offering the most exciting whitewater, this stretch is usually floatable in winter and spring only. Except during high water the river below Pruitt has relatively calm pools, periodic riffles, and only occasional fast water.



Matt Bradley



Tim Ernst/Southern Images



Neil Compton

River Access Point. Distances along river between access points are shown above. Average floating time at "good floating level" is about two miles per hour.

Concessioners Authorized concessioners rent canoes and offer related services. They provide everything you need for a trip—canoe, paddles, lifejackets—except personal gear and food. Heed their brief talks on canoe handling, which are designed to get you and their canoe safely down the river and through the rapids. Concessioners also provide shuttle services to and from your put-in and take-out points. Guided johnboat fishing trips are also avail-

able on the middle and lower river. On these trips, the concessioners provide all gear and the food. Write to the superintendent for a list of canoe and johnboat concessioners. **Water safety** Observe water safety regulations. An approved life jacket is required for all floaters. Wear it for your protection. Waterproof your gear, stow it low and balanced, and carry an extra paddle. If you capsize, stay on the upstream

side of the canoe to avoid being pinned between the canoe and a rock or tree. Never go on the river alone. No one should go on the river during periods of floodwater. Floodwaters pose extreme hazards even to experts. Always camp where you can move to higher ground when rain threatens. Pull your canoe well out of the water or you may wake up as a hiker. The river can rise quickly and quietly. See swimming and diving warnings above map.