

# 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



**H**ow 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 wilderness once embracing this country. The Buffalo is nestled in the Arkansas Ozarks, which are bounded on the north, east, and south by the Missouri, Mississippi, and Arkansas rivers, respectively. To the west lies open prairie.

Originating high in the Boston Mountains, the Buffalo drops steadily to its confluence with the White River. The gradient is steeper and water runs faster along the upper river, leveling and slowing as the river runs its course. In some places, long quiet pools between rapids disguise its vertical travels. The land's wildness and isolation are dramatized by a side trip into any number of hollows flanking the river. One can imagine that some have not been frequented since they served as guerrilla hideouts during the Civil War.

Many prehistoric and historic cultural sites are located in the park, some dating back more than 10,000 years. These sites range from terrace village sites, to bluff shelters once occupied by Archaic Indians, to cabins built by early settlers. In Boxley Valley, Ozark farmers still live in harmony with the land. Other areas, such as the Parker-Hickman Farmstead in Erbie, the Rush Mining District, the 1930s Collier Homestead at Tyler Bend, and the Civilian Conservation Corp structures at Buffalo Point, represent the progression of Buffalo River history. Trails in these areas lead the hiker back in time to an era when the natural and cultural world were one.

The meaning of the Buffalo River today is not difficult to discern. It is reflected in the faces of people enjoying 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 riverside 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



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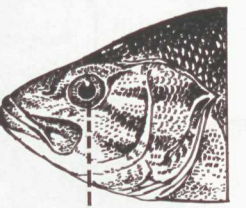
**Hunting** An Arkansas hunting license is required, and state and National Park Service regulations apply. Respect the rights of private property owners who have homes and livestock within the park boundary. Rangers can provide current information on seasons and regulations.

**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 espe-

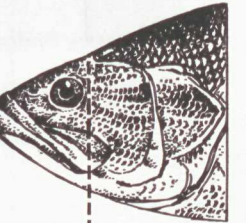
cially important during gun deer season in November and during spring turkey season.

**Fishing** The Buffalo River is a favorite with anglers. Long pools and shallow riffles provide excellent opportunities for fishing. The Buffalo and its tributaries comprise one of the Nation's richest areas in total number of fish species. Game fish of choice are the smallmouth, largemouth and spotted bass, catfish, Ozark bass, and a variety of panfish. Favored traditional methods of fishing are bank fishing and float fishing in flatbottomed johnboats. Float fishing is most common on the lower (eastern) half of the river. Fishing is governed by state and National Park Service regulations. An Arkansas fishing license is required. Catch and release of smallmouth bass is encouraged (with artificial lures, barbless hooks, and careful handling).

**Smallmouth and largemouth bass** The smallmouth 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 a length of 6 to 7 inches by its second summer. It may take four years or more for the fish to attain the legal size before you can add it to your stringer. Please inquire at park ranger stations for the current fishing regulations.



Smallmouth bass  
Jaw to mid-point of pupil



Largemouth bass  
Jaw past eye

Illustrations by John Dawson

## Scenic Landscape Formations

The Ozark's highest river bluffs, some reaching as high as 440 feet, consist of sandstone, limestone, and dolomite. Towering over the Buffalo National River, these multi-colored cliffs, have been sculpted over the centuries by erosion. Today they sharply accent the Buffalo and its surrounding wild mountain beauty. The park's geology, with its numerous caves, cliffs, sinkholes, waterfalls, springs, and interesting rock formations, typifies the Arkansas Ozarks.



Matt Bradley



Tim Ernst/Southern Images

## Nature Along the River

Plant and animal species of the Southwest, Northeast, and Southeast co-exist in the Ozarks. Armadillos, roadrunners, and tarantulas live with lichens characteristic of arctic tundra. Differences in elevation (from 375 to 2,385 feet), moisture, exposure, and soil types, allow more than 1,500 plant species to live here. The river boasts 64 species of clearwater fish. Whitetail deer, raccoon, opossum, bobcat, mink, bear, and beaver are common. Elk populations have slowly increased since their introduction to this area in 1981, and sightings are common on the upper river.



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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. Little Rock and Fayetteville, Ark., and Springfield, Mo., are 2- or 3-hour drives from the park. These central Ozark Mountains boast many scenic and recreation areas near the park.

**Park Accessibility**  
Buffalo River country is steep, rugged, and remote, but park management makes every effort to make the park and its

programs accessible to all. The Tyler Bend Complex is completely accessible. An Accessibility Guide to programs and facilities is available at the visitor center or ranger stations or by writing to the park superintendent. There is a TDD-equipped telephone at park headquarters.

**Camping**  
Fourteen designated campgrounds are accessible by car and are open on a first-come, first-served basis. Tyler Bend and Buffalo Point offer restrooms, showers, and trailer dump stations; camping fees are charged at both locations from April through October. Buffalo Point has water and electrical hookups. Buffalo Point Campground fills most evenings from Memorial Day to mid-August. Arrive before

noon to find a site. From November through March, services at both locations are limited to drinking water and vault toilets. Dates may vary from year to year depending upon the weather. Camping is limited to 14 consecutive days. Tyler Bend and Buffalo Point offer group camping sites and day-use pavilions can be reserved. Campgrounds from Lost Valley to Rush are excellent locations for beginning or ending float trips. All have

toilets. The steep roads to Steel Creek and Kyles and winding roads to Mt. Hersey are not recommended for large trailers, buses, or motorhomes.

**Accommodations**  
Food service and lodging are available in Harrison, Jasper, Yellville, Marshall, and other communities near the park. Concessionaire-operated rental cabins and a restaurant are located within the park at Buffalo Point. For reservations and information write: Buffalo Point Concessions, HCR 66, Box 388, Yellville, AR 72687, or call (501) 449-6206. Write to local chambers of commerce for information about services.

**Hiking**  
Buffalo National River offers wonderful hiking opportunities. Trail guides are available at the visitor center and ranger stations or by writing to the park superintendent. Short, day-use trails are located

at Lost Valley, Pruitt, Tyler Bend, and Buffalo Point. For the more adventure-some, there are trails in the Ponca and Lower Buffalo Wilderness Areas. Hikers can also walk the traces of former roads, which are shown on USGS topographic maps. Hiking is best in winter when foliage is down and snakes, ticks, and chiggers are dormant. Anyone going into the woods during hunting season should use caution and wear bright clothing.

**Interpretive Programs**  
Naturalist programs at Buffalo Point, Tyler Bend, Pruitt, Ozark, and other locations in spring, summer, and fall include campfire programs, guided walks and hikes, guided canoe floats, and Ozark craft and folk music. Check at the visitor center and ranger stations for weekly schedules.

**To Learn More**  
River guides, topographic maps, and books exploring the region's natural and cultural history are sold at the visitor center, ranger stations, and at park headquarters in Harrison. They can enhance your Buffalo River experience.

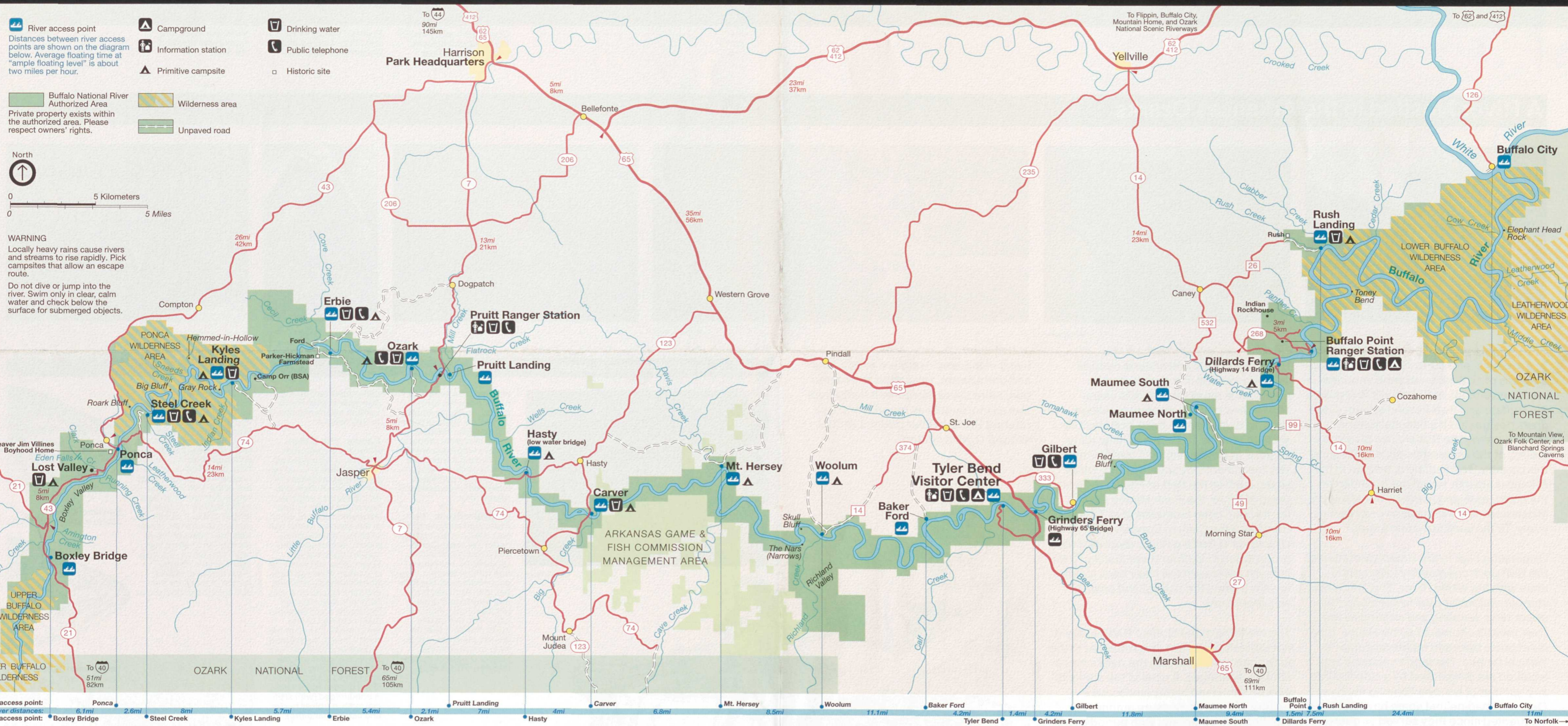
**For Your Safety**  
The river is great for swimming, but never swim alone or during high water. There are no life-guarded swimming areas.

**Diving is extremely dangerous because of unseen rocks and logs beneath the water's surface. Coast Guard approved life jackets are required for all boaters. Climbing riverside bluffs, with their loose and crumbly rocks, can be hazardous. A fall from a bluff means certain injury, and getting 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 this is a natural area with hazards unlike those at home. Watch out for poisonous snakes, ticks, and chiggers. All animals, plants, geologic features, and cultural sites and artifacts are protected by law.**

**Boil all water that is not from an approved source. Bury all human waste at least 100 feet from water. Carry out all garbage.**

For more information about the park and your visit, write: Buffalo National River, 402 N. Walnut, Suite 136, Harrison, AR 72601. Phone: 870-741-5443; TDD 870-741-2884. Find additional information at [www.nps.gov/buff](http://www.nps.gov/buff) on the Internet.



## Floating the Buffalo

Few experiences can compare to a float trip down the Buffalo. Clean waters, high bluffs, wooded hillsides, and a myriad of seasonal wildflowers conspire to turn staunch city lovers into nature enthusiasts. Inexperienced beginners can float slow-moving river sections, and canoes may be rented nearby. Between Carver and Woolum, and downstream of Rush, the river offers a near-wilderness experience. 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 section upriver of Pruitt. This stretch offers exciting whitewater and is usually floatable in winter and spring only. Visitation to the area between Ponca and Kyles is generally high, especially on weekends. 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

**Concessionaires**  
Authorized concessionaires rent canoes and offer shuttle services. They provide everything needed for a trip—canoe, paddles, life jackets—except personal gear and food. Heed their brief talks, which are designed to get you and their canoe safely through the rapids and down the river. Concessionaires can also provide shuttle services to and from river put-in and take-out points. Guided johnboat fishing trips are available on the

middle and lower river. On these trips, the concessionaires can provide all gear and food. For information, write to the park superintendent for a list of canoe and johnboat concessionaires.  
**River safety** Observe river warning signs and water safety regulations. A Coast Guard approved life jacket is required for all floaters. Wear it for your protection. Glass containers are not permitted on or near the river. Keep gear in water-

proof containers; stow it low and balanced in your canoe. If you capsize, stay on the upstream side of the canoe to avoid being pinned between the canoe and river obstacles. Stay off the river during floodwater. When rising water threatens, camp where you can move to higher ground and pull your canoe well out of the water. River rises of a foot or more per hour are common.