



Paddling Guide to the Niobrara NSR

| Run | Miles/ Drop | Difficulty | Use Season | Notes/Access |
|--|----------------------------|---|--|---|
| Borman Bridge State Wildlife Management Area (WMA) to Cornell Bridge | 4.8 miles 10' ft./mile | Class I CAUTION! Cornell Dam is a dangerous obstacle! Keep away from it at all times. The water beneath the dam is a keeper-hydraulic! | Spring through Fall | The river is closed to boaters 1.4 miles below Borman Bridge. Boaters must paddle upstream to return or portage/tow boats back along the south bank of the Borman Bridge WMA to the put-in. |
| Cornell Bridge to Berry Bridge | 7.6 miles 6.6 ft./mile | Class I Fort Falls Rapid (Class I) is a swift, deep chute on river left; large submerged rocks, shallow rock shelf on right. Berry Falls is a popular attraction. | Generally floatable year-round | See Fort Falls (~40') on river right: 0.9 mile Nature Trail. Visitors may day hike into the Fort Niobrara Wilderness at Buffalo Bridge (scenic pine hills, prairie and cliffs). CAUTION: Bison and elk live here year-round. Note: special regulations exist on the Fort Niobrara Refuge; the possession of alcohol is prohibited. |
| Berry Bridge to Brewer Bridge | 6.8 miles 7.2 ft./mile | Class I One-Rock Rapid (Class 1) is down-stream from Smith Falls State Park. | Sometimes year-round floating — often ices-over in winter | View Smith Falls (63') the highest waterfall in Nebraska. Restrooms, drinking water, trash containers and picnic tables are located at Brewer Bridge. |
| Brewer Bridge to Rocky Ford | 7.8 miles 9.9 ft./mile | Class II Conner Rapids (Cl I); Fritzs Island Rapid (Cl II-); and The Chute - Fritzs Narrows (Cl I) provide a faster run on this section of the river. Some rock gardens provide boating fun for eddy turns and peel-outs. | Spring through Fall. The river usually ices over in winter and is unsafe to float. | Fritz's Island Rapid or Fritz's Ledge is usually runnable above 900 cfs, with a straight, 2' drop over ledge and a powerful current. Many waterfalls flow directly into the river along this beautiful stretch. CAUTION — Boaters should portage at Rocky Ford Rapid — portage trail is on the left. |
| Rocky Ford to Norden | 8.2 miles 9.1 ft./mile | Class IV Rocky Ford Rapid (Cl III); Egelhoffs Rapid (Cl II/III); below is Nature's Falls on river right; Egelhoffs Narrows: river cuts a deep channel through bedrock; Kuhres Rapid (Cl I); Norden Falls (Cl IV). This section has several short, steep drops with braided shallow sections & sand bars in between. | Spring through Fall. River ices over in winter. | Rocky Ford Rapid is not suitable for open boats but is popular among whitewater kayakers; left side is the better route. Egelhoff's Rapid (II or III-): long chute through bedrock w/ sharp drop and waves — strong eddy on right. Kuhre's Rapid (I) is a slight drop. DANGER! Norden Falls & Chute (IV) A 4' drop with a strong hydraulic; portage on left — swift deep chute (II) is below bridge. Private boaters must call The Nature Conservancy (402) 722-4440 for permission to take-out at Norden Bridge. |
| Norden Bridge To Meadville Campground | 10.8 miles 6.9 ft./mile | Class II+ Eagle Rapids (Class II/ III-) is 3 miles below Norden Bridge: ~ 1/4 mile long section with standing waves, rocks, turns and drop-offs; many sandbars downriver from here. | Spring to Early Summer; late Fall (River ices over in winter) | From Norden Bridge eastwards the river widens and becomes braided. Navigation is challenging due to numerous sandbars and shallower water. We recommend 600 cfs or above. In late summer and fall lower water levels channelize the route and may make choices clearer. |
| Meadville to Hwy 7 Bridge | 14.3 miles 8 ft./mile | Class I U.S. Hwy 183 bridge; abandoned McLain Bridge in mid-river & Long Pine Creek (river right) upstream of Hwy 7 are landmarks on this stretch. | Spring to Early Summer; late Fall (River ices over in winter) | River access & parking at Meadville Campground requires a day-use fee/person. Respect property rights -- riverbanks and sandbars are private lands. Take out on river left, downstream side of Hwy 7 river bridge (Graveled road access/ramp for boaters/anglers). |
| Hwy 7 to Hwy 137 Bridge | 15 miles 8 ft./mile | Class I Carns Bridge is a "half-way point" for floaters on this long stretch. | Spring to Early Summer; late Fall (River ices over in winter) | Takeout at Hwy 137 Bridge is on river left on the upstream side of the bridge (gravel access/parking lot with boat slide). Terminus of Niobrara NSR. |

