

# Ozark Riverways

The timeless rhythm of moving water touches something deep in all of us. Venture no further than the water's edge and the big, steady flow of a river quietly exhilarates with its absorbing power. But float on the current and ride downstream in a canoe or John Boat, and suddenly the companionship with a new and watery world of excitement is yours.

Either way a wild river becomes an intimate friend. At day's end, you take it with you—all of it, the animals that scurried up the bank, the birds that flew overhead screaming alarms, the tiny wildflowers under thick canopies of trees, and even the solid bluffs that yield so slowly to the wear of time.

The Jacks Fork and the Current River remain nearly as wild as the day Indians lightly trod the Ozark trails. To be sure, encroachment by modern civilization has wrought its effect, but today there are no dams, and the scars of industrial lumbering are healing.

## RIVERSIDE ACTIVITIES

The major center of activity on the Jacks Fork River is at Alley Spring, and the major centers on the Current River (see other side) are at Akers, Pullite Spring, Round Spring, and Big Spring. Land vehicle campers should use specific sites at these locations. Available here and at park headquarters in Van Buren are current listings of programs and demonstrations.

Evening programs about the natural and cultural history of the Riverways are conducted throughout the summer.

Craft demonstrations are on boat-building, corn-milling, and making sorghum molasses. These skills were introduced by Scotch-Irish settlers between 1803 and 1830.

Tours of Round Spring Cavern are conducted by lantern light on a reservation basis. Tour size is limited to 10 persons because of the cave's fragile interior.

Hunting and fishing are permitted in accordance with Missouri laws and may be restricted in some areas. Specific regulations should be obtained from park headquarters.

Most historic buildings along the Riverways are in lengthy stages of stabilization and repair. For now, view them from the outside only to help protect these irreplaceable treasures.

Any Indian artifacts found in the area should be given to park rangers. The National Park Service is searching for evidence of early man's habitation here.

## FLOATING THE RIVER

Mild winters allow almost year-round use of the Riverways. The upper stretches of the rivers are often more fun to float during late winter and spring because in summer's low water, portages have to be made around exposed gravel bars.

Canoes and John Boats can be rented. Canoes are the time-tested means of conveyance on fast moving water. John Boats, some with motors, are long, flat-bottom boats that may be more suitable than canoes for fishing.

Usually, rented canoes are taken to the put-in point by the rental agency and then picked up with the floaters at a scheduled time and place. Use of private canoes involves parking vehicles at both ends of the planned trip, or arranging a shuttle system with an agency.

Proficiency as a river canoeist adds much to enjoyment and safety on the river. Learn to "read" the water ahead.

White water riffles mean that rocks lie dangerously close to the surface and you are about to enter a "chute." Here the safest course to follow is the smooth water shaped like a "V" pointing downstream. The water in the chutes runs faster. So if it looks too hazardous, step out and walk the canoe or boat through, or portage around.

Watch for rootwads! These are obstructions presented by exposed roots and trunks of fallen trees. Water rushes under and through them; they can be disastrous for any craft that gets caught in the way. Floaters using frail tubes and air mattresses should be especially wary of these traps, which are most common in the spring flooding season when trees lose their footing in the soggy banks. Ask a park ranger where rootwads have been spotted.

Learn to avoid obstructions by using the "draw" and "pry" strokes of the paddle. This way the craft is kept parallel with the current. The same applies in rough water, in which beginners often make the mistake of "barreling" through, stroking furiously and using the paddle as a rudder. With practice these turbulent passages come easier, and the thrill of confidence in white water will be yours.

Experienced floaters should consider trips of more than a day. For the floater-camper, there are gravel bars and walk-in campsites along the rivers. Please, choose a campsite that can't be seen from cabins or other structures along the river.

Books, pamphlets, extensive maps, and river guides to the Jacks Fork and Current Rivers are sold in the park. Beginners may want to attend special canoe demonstrations offered by park rangers.

**BUCK HOLLOW** Ozark National Scenic Riverways is at its wildest and scenic best on the Jacks Fork from the Mo. 17 bridge crossing to Alley Spring. The Jacks Fork can be floated year-round if you have learned to "read" the water currents and are prepared to sacrifice some aluminum from your canoe to the underlying rocks. But spring is the best time of year to float, for the water is up. There are only a few thin shoals where you will have to step out and lead your canoe; you can't portage. Buck Hollow is the favored access for a long, fast one-day float trip or a lazy, two-day trip to Alley Spring.

**1. BLUE SPRING** In the bare-rock cliff on the left is Hospital Cave where at various times during the Civil War both Northern and Southern soldiers were given care. Just downstream, Blue Spring flows from a cave through rocks strewn at the base of the cliff.

**2. BAPTIZING HOLE**/The old road that wound back and forth across fords in the river for many kilometers seemed to pause at this wide level bank and invite the community to basket dinners and camping recreation. Church groups often gathered for services at Baptizing Hole.

**3. MUCK 40 HOLE**/Here's the place where Ozarkers tell the story of John "Muck" Reece. It seems Reece and some friends were fishing one night with gigs for yellow suckers by the light from pine knots burning on clay mud in the middle of their John Boat. As he struck for a fish, Muck lost his footing and fell overboard. When he finally came up sputtering, he claimed he had sunk for 40 "foot." His friends teased him about it for years.

**4. JAM UP CAVE**/Following the path about half way up the bluff you will find the entrance to this long cave. From here you can see a falls and pool inside the cave.

**5. MEETING HOUSE CAVE**/The Civil War broke out just when it could be said that newcomers from the east had fairly settled the Ozark Mountain region. Farms were neglected and homesteads destroyed as guerrilla bands marauded through the region from 1862 to 1865. When it was over, a large part of the population had scattered. According to legend, this cave was used as a hideout by both sides during the war.

**6. EBB AND FLOW SPRING**/The spring on the left is attractive during "flow," but may be only a trickle during "ebb." The intervals are very irregular and not well understood, except that they probably bear some relation to local precipitation and its effect on the water table below ground. What's your theory?

**RYMERS** Access here is off county highway M at the site of an old resort.

**7. BUNKER HILL RANCH**/No access—please respect the private property rights of the Missouri State Teachers Association.

**8. CHALK BLUFF**/This long, high bluff comes into view at the beginning of a sharp left bend in the river after you pass Still House Hollow. Chalky limestone and dolomite, which make up most of the other river bluffs, are the most resistant forms of limestone, but for different reasons. Dolomite is hard enough to withstand erosion, while the chalk is so soft and porous that water immediately penetrates through it with hardly any erosive effect.

**9. LEATHERWOOD CREEK**/This is just one place along the river where you can pause and see a wide variety of Ozark flora. Species characteristic of the Appalachians far to the east grow on the cool bluffs and ridges. Southern plant varieties are found in the low marshes and near potholes. Even the plants of the arid West have their place in the Ozark woods, a botanical mix at the temperate center of the continent.

**10. BEE BLUFF** Homes of honey bees can sometimes be seen in the holes high in Bee Bluff's uneven face.

**BAY CREEK** Now you pick up the access road (from Mo. 106) that follows the north bank of the river. Campsites continue down to Bay Creek.

**11. FISH TRAP HOLE**/Ozark Mountain streams are among the best in Missouri for fishing. Smallmouth and large-mouth bass, rock bass, and walleye are some of the 93 known species of fish that swim the Jacks Fork and the Current Rivers. Any of the fishing holes far too numerous to count might yield proof of the Ozark's reputation. A favorite spot is here in the deepening river after a sharp right turn through Grandma Walks.

Just after the bridge, get out and walk the alley way up the spring.

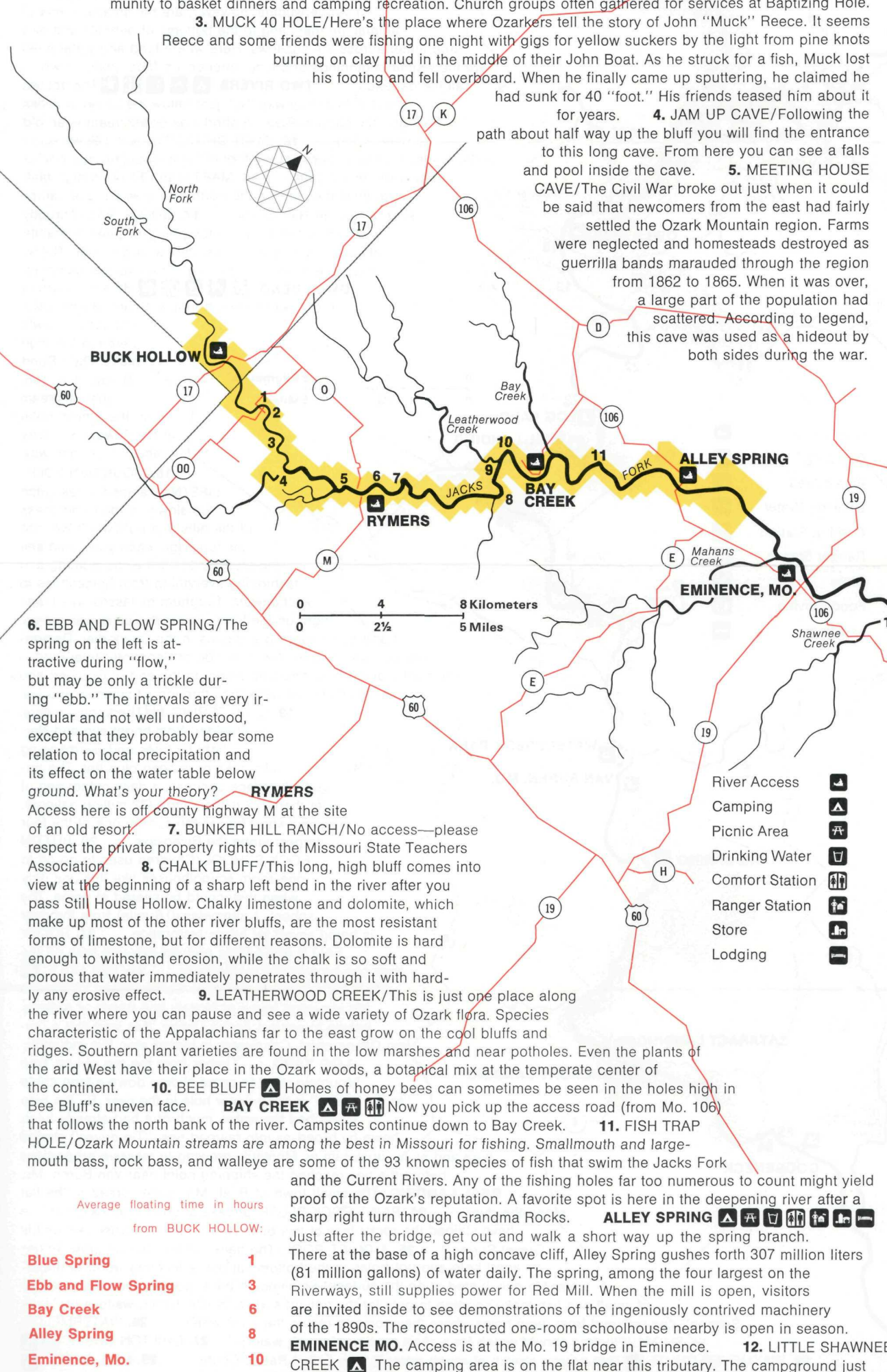
There at the base of a high concave cliff, Alley Spring gushes forth 307 million liters (81 million gallons) of water daily. The spring, among the four largest on the Riverways, still supplies power for Red Mill. When the mill is open, visitors are invited inside to see demonstrations of the ingeniously contrived machinery of the 1890s. The reconstructed one-room schoolhouse nearby is open in season.

**EMINENCE MO.** Access is at the Mo. 19 schoolhouse nearby. **12. LITTLE SHAWNEE CREEK** The camping area is on the flat near this tributary. The campground just upstream on the same side is private; please respect property rights of landowners.

## THE MAPS

Use the descriptions accompanying the maps to plan your activities along the riverbanks or to choose the river section you want to float. Note the symbols for put-in and take-out points and other facilities.

**We're Joining the Metric World** The National Park Service is introducing metric measurements in its publications to help Americans become acquainted with the metric system and to make interpretation more meaningful for park visitors from other nations.



Average floating time in hours from BUCK HOLLOW:

Blue Spring	1
Ebb and Flow Spring	3
Bay Creek	6
Alley Spring	8
Eminence, Mo.	10
Two Rivers	13

**OZARK NATIONAL SCENIC RIVERWAYS**  
The park is in Missouri, within an easy day's drive of two large metropolitan centers—282 kilometers (175 miles) south of St. Louis, and 402 kilometers (250 miles) southeast of Kansas City, Mo. The park consists of 216 kilometers (134 miles) of the Current River and the Jacks Fork, its tributary, through Shannon, Carter, Texas, and Dent Counties. A strip of land in public ownership along both banks preserves the scenic river backdrop and has helped to protect many important historic structures.

**A CHECKLIST FOR SAFETY**  
Lifejackets or boat cushions should be carried for each person in the boat or canoe. Non-swimmers and


- weak swimmers should wear life-jackets at all times.
- Pick campsites well above river level. Flash flood warnings will be issued when possible.
- Extinguish campfires before leaving; fire is the great peril here.
- A lifeline or "trailer" should be attached to all tubes and air mattresses.
- Know what to expect before launching. Talk to a park ranger about river conditions and hazards.
- Carry first-aid kits and matches in waterproof containers; protect bill-folds, and other valuables.
- Stay out of caves until you check with a park ranger. The darkness in-

side conceals mud pools, dropoffs, and harmful fungi.




The park, established on August 27, 1964, is administered by the National Park Service, U.S. Department of the Interior. The superintendent's address is Van Buren, MO 63965.

As the Nation's principal conservation agency, the Department of the Interior has responsibility for most of our nationally owned public lands and natural resources. This includes fostering the wisest use of our land and water resources, protecting our fish and wildlife, preserving the environmental and cultural values of our national parks and historical places, and providing for the enjoyment of life through outdoor recreation. The Department assesses our energy and mineral resources and works to assure that their development is in the best interests of all our people. The Department also has a major responsibility for American Indian reservation communities and for people who live in Island Territories under U.S. administration.

**National Park Service**  
**U.S. DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR**






**1. MONTAUK STATE PARK**    Montauk Springs and Pigeon Creek flow together to form the headwaters of the Current River. Canoe launching is not allowed in the State park.

**INMAN HOLLOW** / The fastest section of the Current River is from here to Welch Spring. Newcomers to the Ozarks in the early 19th century brought animal hides to this point for processing into leather. The hides were soaked in a "tan-vat" filled with tannic acid derived from tree bark. Then they were submerged in the deep river basin here, still known as Tan Vat Hole.






**2. THE "S" TURN** / Just before Cedargrove, the canoeist has to fight through a series of turns and swirls in a river of white water. Look back upriver; aren't you amazed you made it? **CEDARGROVE**    In the early days, people mingled about the gristmill exchanging news as they waited for the miller to grind their "turn" of grain into meal. Other services sprang up near the mill and that's how Cedargrove, one of the earliest villages in this part of the Ozarks,

got its start. Then, roads built on the ridge tops drew traffic away from the hollows and bottomlands, and most small river communities like Cedargrove were abandoned by the mid 20th century. All boats have to be portaged around the low-water bridge at Cedargrove.






**3. WELCH SPRING** / Thomas Welch, the first pioneer to settle here, built a general store and a gristmill beside this spring. Much later an Illinois doctor built a two-story sanatorium for asthma sufferers on the bluff above Welch Cave. Cool mineral airs wafted up into the rooms from a tunnel connected to the cave. The results of "the cure" are not known, but plans to turn the town into a health resort never materialized.

**AKERS**      This access point at the Akers ferry crossing is a favorite with floaters. If starting a float trip, read the SAFETY checklist (other side) and check with the ranger for river conditions.






**4. CAVE SPRING** / Floaters are halfway between Akers and Pulltite. The cave is big enough to paddle a canoe inside for about 30 meters (100 feet). **5. ROCK HOUSE CAVE** / Right below the cave, the river is very deep and filled with fish. Try dropping a line in Big Solution Hole. **6. TROUBLE-SOME HOLLOW** / The narrow gauge logging trains crossed Sheney Bridge from the bottomland on the right to the mouth of Troublesome Hollow. The rails were fastened to bedrock in the river. Bushwackers troubled the settlers in this hollow long enough to give it its name.

**PULLTITE**      The spring and cabin are just downstream from Pulltite campground. In the old days, farmers drove their wagon teams down the steep west bank to get to the mill near the spring. Drawing a fresh load of meal back uphill, the horses stretched their harnesses to the snapping point. It was a "tight pull." The average daily spring flow is 144 million liters (38 million gallons). Just downriver is Fire Hydrant spring. **7. BOYDS CREEK** / Floaters should be careful maneuvering through the old railway bridge pilings across the river at Boyds Creek. The West Eminence lumber mills were once among the largest in the Ozarks.






**8. MERRITT ROCK CAVE** / Merritt Rock, or Little Gem, Cave is at the base of the upstream end of a long bluff. Inside is an ebb and flow spring. CAUTION—check with a ranger before going inside the cave. Read the SAFETY checklist (other side). Straight ahead downriver on a high hill is the Shannondale fire tower.






**9. WAGON TRACE** / After passing Sinking Creek, a major tributary from the east, floaters should watch the opposite bank for signs of the old wagon trace. It appears as a level, tree-shaded lane along the river. The early hill people often traveled this road to towns and mills up and down the river. Beginning at the Current River headwaters near Montauk Springs, the road switched back and forth across the stream all the way to Round Spring. A heavy overgrowth has obliterated most of it. **ROUND SPRING AND CAVE**      The waters of Round Spring rise into a deep, blue basin, then pass beneath a low natural bridge. The flow disgorges an average of 98 million liters (26 million gallons) daily. The cave, a short way up the valley, is representative of many throughout the Ozarks. Guided tours by lantern light take about 2 hours. **10. WHITE OAK FOREST** / Unusually thick stands of aged burr oaks grow along both sides of the river. These broadly branched trees, characterized by whitish bark, somehow escaped the lumberman's ax. Most trees along the Riverways represent second and third growth mixtures of two forest types—oak and hickory, and oak and pine.

**11. THE CHANGING RIVER** / The river meanders, carving a new course across a wider floodplain. The banks are deeply eroded, and "old man's beard," a greenish gray lichen, hangs from redcedar trees on the cliffs near the mouth of Big Creek. **12. BEE BLUFF** / Here the durable qualities of dolomite rock show up in a 60-meter (200-foot) bluff. Eminence dolomite appears frequently along the Current and Jacks Fork Rivers, but you won't find it in other areas of the country.




**JERKTAIL LANDING**      At just the right moment, mule-skippers cried "jerk tails" and the mules strained extra hard to pull heavy loads of copper and iron ore across the river and up the slick riverbanks. The wagons were loaded at mines on the east side of the river.





**13. TWIN ROCKS** / A swelling and deepening river sweeps past these huge boulders that long ago broke loose from the bluff overhead. Deep potholes in the river bottom provide security for many fish. **14. WILDLIFE MANAGEMENT TRACT** / This open field is cultivated to provide food and cover for wildlife living near the river and in the surrounding hills. Rodents, song birds, birds of prey, and small fur-bearers thrive in "edge" habitats created near small fields. Ultimately more important to the vigor of riverine wildlife, however, are the smaller forms of animal life that cling to the bottoms of pebbles and dart and flutter across the shallows. Here where land and water meet are the visible beginnings of a long, interlocked food chain on which all life depends.







**TWO RIVERS**      The access point is from highway "V," just below the union of Jacks Fork and the Current River. A short way downstream is an old ferry crossing. **15. COOT CHUTE** / The water flows faster in the chute, a narrow course at the foot of Coot Mountain, but novice floaters still find it safe. **16. MARTIN BLUFF** / This high bluff parallels the river on the north all the way to the campsites at Goose Bay Creek. **17. GOOSE BAY** / Abruptly diverted left by an outcropping of pinkish granite (rhyolite), the river slows into a large pool. Below Blair Creek on the right is good gravel bar camping.









**OWLS BEND**      Here the Current River sweeps south in a wide arc. Battered owls and screech owls perch in the high bluffs. Owls Bend Bridge, Mo. 106, is just upstream from the access point at the Powder Mill ferry landing and the old highway.




**18. MOUNTAIN FOLK-LIFE** / Newfangled ideas catch on slowly in the remoteness of the hills and hollows. It was not too long ago when you could see the blacksmith hard at work fitting and fashioning everything from horseshoes to kitchenware. Sorghum molasses was made right on the farms where the cane was grown. It and cornbread were staples in the Ozark diet. Demonstrations are held on the west side of Booming Shoal Ford—sorghum making from mid-September to the end of October; and blacksmithing on weekends throughout summer and fall.




**19. BLUE SPRING**   The spring waters, shielded from bright sun and sky-light by trees and overhanging cliffs, take on a deep blue tint. The unruffled surface conceals a daily outpouring of more than 272 million liters (72 million gallons). Follow a short trail to the spring, one of the four largest along the Riverways. **20. BUTTIN ROCK SCHOOL** / Children used to go off to one-room schoolhouses like this one only when they could be spared at home. The school, 1 kilometer (0.6 mile) from the river is being saved for future restoration. **21. ROCKY FALLS AREA** / This popular day-use area off the river can be reached by highway. **22. ANT HOLE**  **23. CARDAREVA BLUFF** / The Current River Valley was the ancestral home of loosely knit bands of Indians. Known to settlers as the Osage, it is said that a certain Osage chief, Cardareva, is buried atop this mountain.

**LOG YARD** Timber from the top of Log Yard Mountain used to come sliding down a long chute to the "yard," a deep-water hole in the river. By the time it reached the water, much of it had already been hewn by broad-ax into railroad ties. "Tie drives" started here and as far upstream as Montauk, growing to massive proportions before the ties reached the shipping point near Van Buren, Mo. **BEAL LANDING** / The small town of Beal, Mo., once spread in the flat along the river. **24. PAINT ROCK BLUFF** / Streaks of color from oxidized iron have lent the bluff its name. At the foot of the bluff is Gravel Spring. **25. A QUIET POOL** / The banks of the Current grow further apart here and pot-holes in the bottom support a teeming world of underwater life only hinted at on the surface. Smallmouth bass, goggle eye, and a variety of small pan fish make sporting targets for the patient angler. In late winter, walleye or "Jack Salmon" can be lured from deep holes where they come to rest in the quiet water. **26. WATERMELON SHOAL** / Floaters should watch for a short section of rough water. **27. CHILTON CREEK**   **28. WAYMEYER CHUTE**  This narrow stretch of rough water is also called Rabbit Chute. **29. MILL CREEK**  **30. EASY STREET** / Despite the fast, choppy water, the "tie-rafters" named this stretch for the brief rest they could take while the river ran straight. The men rode rafts made up of thousands of floating railroad ties lashed together so they could be controlled as they floated downstream with the current. Heard no more on the river are the whoops of these hearty men as they passed the word back to the tail end, "Snub-er-down!" If the rafts were not snubbed to slow them before a sharp turn or eddy in the river, the front end would plunge underwater and begin breaking up under the weight of the tie rafts rushing down from behind. The result was a log jam that could take days to untangle. "Tie-rafting" was no easy occupation.

**WATERCRESS PARK**      Opposite the U.S. Forest Service campground is the place loggers called Tie Broom Stretch. Cables were strung across the river to stop the floating railroad ties, which were hauled out and loaded on railroad cars. **VAN BUREN, MO.**  U.S. 60 BRIDGE

**BIG SPRING**         No other spring in the Ozarks can match Big Spring's flow of nearly 1 billion liters (about 277 million gallons) a day. Here a vast network of underground streams discharge their cool, crystal-clear load at a single outlet.

**31. COLEMAN FAILURE CHUTE**  **CATARACT LANDING**  **HICKORY LANDING**  **32. CAVE SPRING** / This cold water spring, where old-timers operated a whisky still, is about 1.6 kilometers (1 mile) up the branch. **33. PANTHER SPRING** / The spring issues from a cave near the river's edge. Fishing in the rough water is excellent.

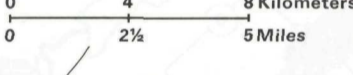
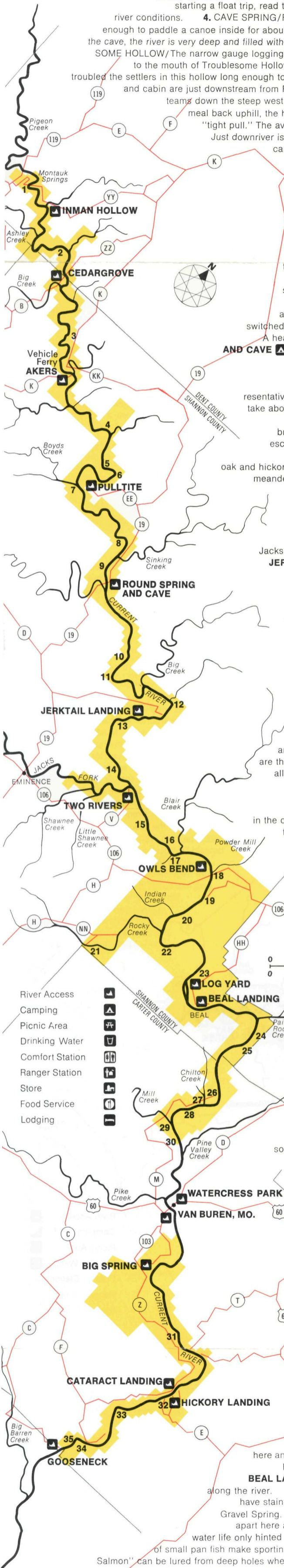
**34. KELLEY BLUFF** / Below the bluff, an early settler named Kelley ran a trading post. **35. PHILLIPS BAY** / Good water from Twin Spring keeps the water temperature in the bay below normal. **GOOSENECK**    Those continuing downstream in the bay (24 miles) to Doniphan should plan on a floating time of 10-12 hours.

Average floating time in hours  
from INMAN HOLLOW:

Cedargrove	3
Akers	6
Pulltite	9
Round Spring	12
Jerktail Landing	17
Two Rivers	19

Average floating time in hours  
from TWO RIVERS:

Owls Bend	2½
Beal Landing	6
Paint Rock Bluff	7
Van Buren, Mo.	12
Big Spring	13½
Cataract Landing	17
Gooseneck	19



- River Access 
- Camping 
- Picnic Area 
- Drinking Water 
- Comfort Station 
- Ranger Station 
- Store 
- Food Service 
- Lodging 