

Three Rivers Water Trail

Map & Guide

A Water Trail Developed by Friends of the Riverfront





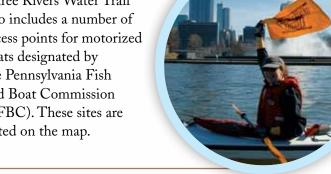


If nature were to design a great American city to be seen from a water trail, it would be Pittsburgh.

The rivers that surround Pittsburgh on three sides are large, yet have a human scale, and Pittsburgh is architecturally grand, yet easily comprehended. The Three Rivers Water Trail, developed by Friends of the Riverfront, contains access points among the seventy-three municipalities within Allegheny County and also has regular access to the popular land trail bordering all three rivers – The Three Rivers Heritage Trail, also developed by Friends of the Riverfront. From the water trail canoeists and kayakers can reach the SouthSide Works, the trendy Lawrenceville shopping district, the wide riverfront promenade on the North Shore with its baseball and football stadiums, downtown Pittsburgh, museums, shopping, and even experience fireworks from the river on a summer night! The Pittsburgh region's many historic bridges are enjoyed best from the rivers, and the surrounding hills offer a quiet and almost remote setting for paddlers, even as they float by a busy urban center and into the countryside.

Beginning in the 1990s, Friends of the Riverfront took on the task of partnering with municipal and private entities to create public access points for non-motorized boats. These water trail landings are seen from the river by red paddle-shaped signs, each indicating the distance from the Pittsburgh Point. Experienced and novice paddlers can design longer and more diverse river trips for themselves as they become more familiar with the rivers. A number of water trail landings, adjacent to amenities and points of interest, contain racks for stowing

your craft, interpretive signage, and available parking. The Three Rivers Water Trail also includes a number of access points for motorized boats designated by the Pennsylvania Fish and Boat Commission (PFBC). These sites are noted on the map.



The Pittsburgh Region's Rivers

The Allegheny, Monongahela and Ohio Rivers have a unique confluence in Pittsburgh. The Allegheny River from upstate New York ends here, as does the Monongahela from the mountains of West Virginia. But the Ohio River begins here. At times, observers can see a marked difference in the color of the water from the rivers, as the Monongahela mixes with the Allegheny downstream of the Point. The Ohio drains westward into the Mississippi a thousand miles away, and then travels southward to reach New Orleans and the Gulf of Mexico.

The Allegheny River is a young river formed from the last Ice Age some 10,000 years ago, and its waters tend to be faster and colder than those of the slower moving Monongahela, an ancient, wider river from a million years ago. The Ohio River, called the beautiful river (la belle riviere) by French explorers, was the start of the watery road west for countless immigrants and settlers in the nineteenth century.

Pittsburgh's rivers change with the seasons. They can freeze in the winter, then flood with snowmelt in the spring thaw. A century ago the rivers could fall so low in summer droughts that navigation was impossible. To assure a constant water level on these working rivers, the Army Corps of Engineers constructed locks and dams which divide the river into a series of "pools." The Emsworth pool - also called the Pittsburgh pool - extends twenty-four total miles, from the Emsworth Dam on the Ohio, six miles below the Pittsburgh point; to seven miles up the Allegheny to the Highland Park Lock and Dam; and eleven miles up the Monongahela to the Braddock Lock and Dam.

The commercial "slackwater navigation" enabled by the locks and dams was essential in the expansion of Pittsburgh from an important center of iron and steel-making, to a critical supplier of materiel for World Wars. Barges laden with coal, sand, gravel and other heavy materials still ply these stabilized, reliable waters twenty-four hours a day.

An Urban Adventure by Water

Paddlers enjoy a different world than do people on powered boats. Even in the city, paddling provides intimate contact with the environment, moments of peaceful isolation, and serene views of natural beauty and wildlife. Most paddlers stay reasonably close to shore to enjoy the ambience, and to avoid the wakes of occasional power boats and barges which usually cruise the middle of the rivers.

Rowing as a sport has a long history in Pittsburgh, beginning in the 1880s. Paddling was popular until heavy industry sealed off the riverfronts, and the rivers themselves became polluted. With the decline of heavy industry by the 1970s, the rivers began to regenerate and public access was renewed along now empty shores. Competitive rowing became popular with many area high schools, colleges, and clubs and Pittsburgh's rivers experienced an increase in recreational boating.

Today, our riverfronts are literally alive with activity. The rivers have hosted national bass tournaments and large events such as the Pittsburgh Triathlon & Adventure Race, also sponsored by Friends of the Riverfront. In 2010 this event with its 1.5 k swimming race or 2 mile paddle was judged the third-best urban triathlon in the world by Triathlete Magazine.



The Three Rivers Water Trail was named a National Recreation Trail by the US Department of the Interior in June 2010.

WHAT IS A WATER TRAIL?

Water trails are recreational waterways on lakes, rivers or oceans between specific points, containing access points and day-use and camping sites for the boating public. Water trails emphasize low-impact use and promote resource stewardship. Explore this unique Pennsylvania water trail.

FOR YOUR SAFETY AND ENIOYMENT:

- Always wear a life jacket.
- Obtain proper instruction in boating skills.
- · Carry proper equipment.



PENNSYLVANIA BOATING REGULATIONS



• A U.S. Coast Guard-approved wearable personal flotation device (PFD or life jacket) is required for each person on board. In addition, one throwable device (seat cushion or ring buoy) is required on boats 16 feet in length or longer. Canoes and kayaks, regardless of length, are not required to carry a throwable device. • Life jackets must be the appropriate size for the person intended and must be in good, serviceable condition

- Life jackets must be worn by all children 12 years old and younger on all boats 20 feet or less in length while under way, and on all canoes and kayaks. Others are strongly encouraged to wear a PFD at all times
- All boats must display an anchor light (a white light visible 360 degrees) when at anchor between sunset and sunrise. Boats can use a lantern or clip-on battery-powered unit to meet this requirement.
- Unpowered boats must carry a white light, either hand-held or installed, to be displayed in time to avoid a collision between sunset and sunrise and during restricted visibility.
- All powered boats must show running lights between sunset and sunrise. All boats are required to carry a sound-producing device. Athletic whistles meet this requirement.
- All motorboats must be registered, regardless of where they launch. • Unpowered boats (canoes, kayaks, rowboats) using Pennsylvania Fish & Boat Commission or State Park or Forest access areas must either be registered OR display a valid launch permit. Launch permits can be purchased through the Commission's website at www.fishandboat.com (Click the "Outdoor Shop" icon.) or at many state park offices
- Operating watercraft, including canoes and kayaks, under the influence of alcohol or drugs is illegal. This law is strongly enforced for user safety. For further information on boating regulations, contact the Pennsylvania Fish & Boat Commission at www.fishandboat.com

PADDLING THE WATER TRAIL:

SAFETY TIPS

Paddle the Three Rivers Water Trail at your own risk. Be sure to take appropriate safety precautions and pay attention to the natural conditions of the rivers.

- Never boat alone. Boating safety increases with numbers.
- Scout ahead whenever possible. Know the river and avoid surprises.
- Wear your life jacket. Some eighty percent of all recreational boating fatalities happen to people who are not wearing a life jacket.
- File a float plan with a reliable person. Decide on the best places for getting started, and consider how far you must carry a boat to your vehicle. • Be prepared for the weather. Get a forecast before you go. Sudden
- winds and rain are common and can turn a pleasant trip into a risky, unpleasant venture.
- Check the river conditions before you launch. River levels and currents can rapidly change with recent rainfall.
- Wear appropriate clothing and footwear. Expect to get wet. • Be prepared to swim. If the water looks too hazardous
- to swim in, don't go paddling.

ON THE WAY

- Keep ropes coiled and secured.
- Never tie a rope to yourself or to another paddler, especially a child.
- Anticipate wakes of passing motor boats. • Watch out for commercial traffic. Although barges are large
- and slow, they can sneak up on inattentive paddlers. • Paddle near to shore, away from the navigational channel.
- If you collide with an obstruction, lean toward it. This will usually prevent the current from capsizing or flooding the boat.
- Stay clear of strainers, such as moored barges, docks and downed trees, these can trap a person underwater.
- If you capsize, hold onto your boat, unless it presents a life-threatening situation. If floating in current, position yourself on the upstream side of the capsized boat.

LOCKING THROUGH

- Locking through is recommended for experienced paddlers only! • When heading downriver, the dam is difficult to see. Stay alert and keep track of your location (be visible and cognizant of others). Cross over to the correct side of the river that the lock is located on as much as one mile before you arrive and hug the shoreline. Keep an eye out for
- may be taken out of the river depending on time of year and river flow). • Let the Lock Master know you are there by ringing the bell located at the end of the storm wall, calling them on the phone or VHF radio channel 13 or by sounding one long blast from a boat whistle followed by one short blast. Advance communication is advised. Check schedule for hours.

the "DANGER DAM" signs and the white and orange pillar buoys (they

- Approach the lock and be aware of the following signals: Red means stand clear and do not enter, Yellow means approach lock under full control and Green means proceed to enter lock directly. The Lock Master may also signal via air horn: one long blast means enter landward lock, two long blasts means enter riverward lock, one short blast means leave landward lock and two short blasts means leave riverward lock.
- Carry aboard at least seventy-five feet of mooring line to secure your small craft safely to the lock wall. The Lock Master reserves the right to deny permission to pass through due to inadequate line. To proceed, give one end of the line to the Lock Master. He will place around the mooring hook above. Feed the rope through your hand going up/down with the water level while holding the other end securely.
- After being let up/down, wait for the Lock Master to give you an OK before proceeding. Leave at a slow and consistent speed staying close yet visible beside the storm wall. Do not stop until you are well away from the pull of the dam's current and other boat traffic.

TAKING OUT

- Each Three Rivers Water Trail Landing contains directional red paddle signs that orient paddlers from both land and water. Amenities such as ramps, interpretive signs and canoe/kayak racks are also a part of each location. Remember to properly secure your craft before setting out on
- Find places where easy exits are possible. Exits along high banks or railings can be difficult.
- Respect private property and take out only at approved locations. Emergency exits from the water may be necessary because of weather or water conditions; in this case private access points may be considered.

FISHING OPPORTUNITIES

The Allegheny, Monongahela and Ohio rivers near Pittsburgh offer a tremendous variety of quality fishing opportunities throughout the year. Fishing requires prominent display of appropriate license, and the waters are regularly patrolled. Please visit www.fishandboat.com for fishing license and additional information.

FRIENDS of the RIVERFRONT

Friends of the Riverfront, founded in 1991, is dedicated to the development, expansion, promotion, and stewardship of the Three Rivers Water Trail and Three Rivers Heritage Trail in the Pittsburgh region. This guide is provided so that everyone can enjoy the natural amenities that make the Pittsburgh region a great place to live, work, and play.

Hikers and bikers can explore the interactive Three Rivers Heritage Trail map by going to www.friendsoftheriverfront.org. To request a paper copy, call 412.488.0212.

STEWARDSHIP

Friends of the Riverfront works with a wealth of dedicated volunteers every year to improve and maintain our riverfronts. Please help care for this land, water and cultural resource along the Three Rivers Water Trail by respecting private property, wildlife, and other enthusiasts. "Leave No Trace," a national outdoor ethics program, provides guidelines to minimize your impact by following these simple concepts. For information on "Leave No Trace." visit www.lnt.org.

- ✓ Plan and be prepared.
- ✓ Dispose of waste properly.
- ✓ Leave what you find.
- ✓ Respect wildlife ✓ Be considerate of others.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES Emergency Contacts All areas dial 911

Pittsburgh River Rescue 412.323.7260

VHF Channel 16

U.S. Coast Guard 800.253.7465

Three Rivers Water Trail Manager Friends of the Riverfront

33 Terminal Way, Pittsburgh, PA 15219 412.488.0212 www.friendsoftheriverfront.org

Weather & River Conditions

Weather Forecasts 412.262.2170 www.weather.gov VHF 162.55 MHz (Weather Channel 1)

412.262.5290 www.erh.noaa.gov/ohrfc **U.S. Army Corps of Engineers**

River Conditions

www.lrp.usace.army.mil

Outfitters & Kayak Liveries

Kayak Pittsburgh 412.969.9090 www.kayakpittsburgh.org

412.488.9410 www.rei.com

Exkursion Outfitters 412.821.0206 www.exkursion.com

Rowing Clubs

Three Rivers Rowing 412.231.8772 www.threeriversrowing.org

Steel City Rowing 412.828.5565 www.steelcityrowing.org

Guided Kayak Trips Venture Outdoors

www.ventureoutdoors.org **Tourist Promotion**

Visit Pittsburgh

412.281.7711

www.visitpittsburgh.com



RED PADDLE MARKERS

Red paddle signs at each Three Rivers Water Trail access help guide you from land and water.











