

# WHO WE ARE

Friends of the Rouge (FOTR) is a nonprofit 501(c)(3) organization that was founded in 1986 to raise awareness about the need to clean up the Rouge River.

## MISSION

To restore, protect, and enhance the Rouge River watershed through stewardship, education, and collaboration.

## VISION

We envision a future where a clean and vibrant Rouge River is the center of our community. Individual and community actions protect and improve the health of the Rouge River, assuring that its natural, economic, and recreational value enhances the quality of life in the Rouge River ecosystem.



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Fred A. and Barbara M.  
Erb Family Foundation

# THE LOWER ROUGE

The Rouge River, located in southeast Michigan, is an urban river with a long industrial history. As water quality improves in response to cleanup efforts, recreational paddling is now possible.

## WAYNE COUNTY PARKLAND



Most of the Water Trail goes through Wayne County parkland, from Canton through Wayne, Westland, Inkster, Dearborn Heights and Dearborn. then continues through Detroit, Allen Park, Melvindale and River Rouge.

# THE WATER TRAIL

Friends of the Rouge, Wayne County Parks, and community stakeholders are developing a 27-mile (43.45 km) water trail from Canton to the Detroit River along the Lower Branch and Main Stem of the Rouge River. The Lower Rouge River Water Trail connects people to the history and natural environment of a greatly restored Rouge River.

The Rouge River is a Michigan treasure worth exploring, and a variety of paddling experiences await. Forested upstream stretches are protected within Wayne County parkland. The lower industrial stretch highlights Detroit's history of industry featuring views of the Ford Rouge Plant and unique bridge crossings. At the confluence with the Detroit River, you will see Zug Island and the Gordie Howe International Bridge, now under construction.

The Rouge River is an URBAN RIVER so water quality and quantity can fluctuate. The water is generally safe for boating if there has been no heavy rain or snowmelt. Swimming is not recommended. Please check water levels and weather before heading out.



# SAFE PADDLING TIPS

**Check the Weather.** Weather on the Great Lakes can change quickly. High winds and accompanying waves can easily swamp small watercraft. Before heading out, be sure to check local marine weather conditions.

**Buddy Up.** Paddling alone is unwise. Even the most experienced paddler can run into trouble. Having a buddy along will increase safety.

**Have a plan.** Make a plan and give it to someone who is staying onshore. Be sure to include the names of the people in your party, time and location of departure, anticipated route and time you expect to get back. Don't forget to check-in once back so people know you have arrived home safely.

**Safety Gear is a Must!** Always wear a properly fitting U.S. Coast Guard - approved personal flotation device (life preserver). Wear protective footwear and clothing that can get wet. Expect to be in the water at some point on your trip. Pack personal gear in a waterproof bag, and secure it to your boat to avoid losing items if capsizing occurs. Bring at least two signaling devices, such as whistles, waterproof flashlights and cell phones in waterproof containers.

**Know the Limits.** Not all boats are created equal and not all paddlers should venture out onto the lower industrial section of the Rouge River (downstream of the confluence with the Main) and onto the Detroit River.

**Be Aware of Shipping Lanes.** Although freighters can appear to be large and lumbering, they move much quicker than expected and may not be able to see smaller watercraft. High wakes trailing behind fast-moving, motorized watercraft are equally dangerous, and collisions can be deadly.

**Improve Your Skills.** Consider taking a paddlers safety course. Many local outfitters and paddling groups offer classes. Look for classes to enhance your canoeing and kayaking skill level, or join a paddling club to maximize your enjoyment when on the water.

**Keep International Borders in Mind.** The Detroit River is shared between the U.S. and Canada. U.S. and Canadian vessels, including kayaks and canoes, can freely cross the international boundary to explore neighboring waters. However, landing — anchoring, wading or touching bottom with a paddle — is illegal unless you immediately report your arrival to Canadian Customs. Violation of international border crossing laws can result in severe penalties. Returning from Canadian soil also requires that you report to U.S. Customs.

# WHAT YOU SHOULD KNOW

Paddling provides an opportunity to see some of the most scenic areas of the watershed that are not easily accessible by foot or vehicle in addition to an opportunity to get up close and personal with the unique industrial heritage of the Rouge River. Paddlers should be aware that some stretches of the river are NOT for beginners and that freighters can be encountered on the lower stretch!

Water can run very fast and high, especially after a rain event. When the river runs high, it carries with it a lot of woody debris that can block passage and create dangerous hazards. Sections identified in the map are generally navigable, that woody debris is prevalent on the river and sections can be challenging.

This publication is provided only as a general guide. It is a graphic rendition of what paddlers might experience on the Rouge River. Do not rely on this guide as a navigational tool or to identify all hazards.

Remember that kayaking and canoeing have inherent risks and you are solely responsible for your own safety.

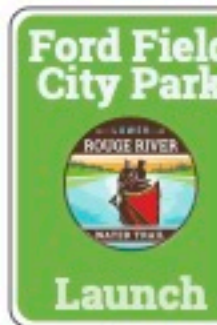


# RIVER TRIPS

## RIVER TRIP Melvindale to River Rouge

Beginning at the boat launch behind Kessey Fieldhouse in Melvindale and traversing through the industrial section of the lower Rouge River, this 5-8 mile trip take paddlers by the Ford Rouge Complex, under historic drawbridges, past Zug Island and into the Detroit River, with a takeout at Belanger Park in River Rouge. Approximately 15 minutes into the paddle, you will see the red buildings of the Basic Oxygen Furnace that signals the start of what was once the largest vertically integrated production facility in the world. Heading under the historic Dix Avenue bridge, you will paddle past Fordson Island with the option to duck into the original channel and paddle as far as a low bridge and back (recent high water levels now prevent passage). At Fort Street you will observe a new bridge and new park that commemorates the 1932 Ford Hunger March that will eventually include a

launch and fishing dock. About an hour into the trip you will pass under I-75 where the river once caught fire, pass Detroit's Forman Park, then pass the world's largest wastewater treatment plant on the left that hosts a huge breeding colony of seagulls in the spring. After passing under Jefferson Avenue you will reach the original channel with the option to take the long way around Zug Island (adds 2 miles). If you do, look for natural sulfur springs flowing off the east side of the island. Either way, be prepared for big water and more boat traffic when you reach the Detroit River. The Detroit skyline and the new Gordie Howe International Bridge comes into view behind you as you paddle downstream past a small but functioning lighthouse at Belanger Park in River Rouge where your trip ends. Here you can linger for a picnic while watching freighters and chat with people fishing from the river's edge.



## RIVER TRIP: In and around Ford Field City Park

Livery services are offered at this location by Motor City Canoe and Kayak Rental with several options for paddling. Beginners can practice in the Ford Field Park Pond. More advanced paddlers can take a ride upstream to the Dearborn Hills Golf Course for a 1-2 hour trip that ends at Ford Field. Under the tree canopy of the natural sections of the Rouge, you might see an amazing diversity of wildlife including native great blue heron, northern orioles, muskrat, beaver, turtles, deer, and wild turkeys. In the future you will be able to paddle downstream from Ford Field to Melvindale once logjams are opened.

## RIVER TRIP: Melvindale to Fair Lane Estate

Begin at the Melvindale launch and paddle upstream to the Fair Lane Estate Dam, turn around and float back down. The round trip takes about 3 hours and is best done early in the morning on still days to avoid fighting strong headwinds in the open channel. In 1971, the concrete channel was built to control to control flooding. Removing the natural meanders and riparian landscape created challenges for fish and other wildlife. Pass a restored oxbow and eventually you will see additional changes to address loss of habitat. Reaching the waterfall at the Henry Ford Estate is truly a reward on this paddling journey.

# RIVER COMMUNITIES

## CANTON

Rouge River Miles xx-xx  
www.canton-mi.org  
Come visit Canton's popular Lower Rouge Trail system which follows along the river from Canton Center Road to the I-275 Metro Trall. Trail visitors will pass through scenic woodlands and cross several bridges over the Lower Rouge River.

## WAYNE

Rouge River Miles xx-xx  
www.ci.wayne.mi.us  
Historic Wayne beams with small town personality and economic opportunity! With an up and coming downtown and a thriving industrial base, the City of Wayne highlights its energetic, enthusiastic, and genuine hospitality.

## WESTLAND

Rouge River Miles xx-xx  
www.cityofwestland.com  
Westland is known for having an abundance of parks. Dorsey-Venoy Park is located in the southern region of Westland. Residents along this corridor enjoy seeing deer, fox and hummingbirds all year long as well as access to the Lower Rouge River Water Trail.

## INKSTER

Rouge River Miles xx-xx  
http://www.cityofinkster.com  
The City of Inkster is a close knit community with a variety of recreational opportunities including our many parks, annual events including the Inkster Summer Music Fest, involved community groups, and a developing downtown area.

## DEARBORN HEIGHTS

Rouge River Miles xx-xx  
http://www.ci.dearborn-heights.mi.us  
Dearborn Heights is a bedroom community with many parks. A small section of the trail flows through Dearborn Heights, connecting the cities of Inkster and Dearborn.

## DEARBORN

Rouge River Miles xx-xx  
http://www.cityofdearborn.org  
Dearborn is a welcoming city with cultural diversity, restaurants with authentic cuisine, stage shows at its Performing Arts Center, free outdoor concerts, natural areas and The Henry Ford Museum/Greenfield Village.

## ALLEN PARK

Rouge River Miles xx-xx  
http://www.cityofallenpark.org  
Allen Park is home of the NFL's Detroit Lions Training Facility and the Uniroyal Giant Tire, the largest non-production tire scale model ever built and one of the world's largest roadside attractions.

## MELVINDALE

Rouge River Miles xx-xx  
http://www.melvindale.org  
The City slogan "The Little City with a BIG Heart" sheds light on the community as a great place to live, work, and do business, and still has that "small town" feel. A concrete boating access ramp located at Melvindale's Kessey Fieldhouse currently provides river access.

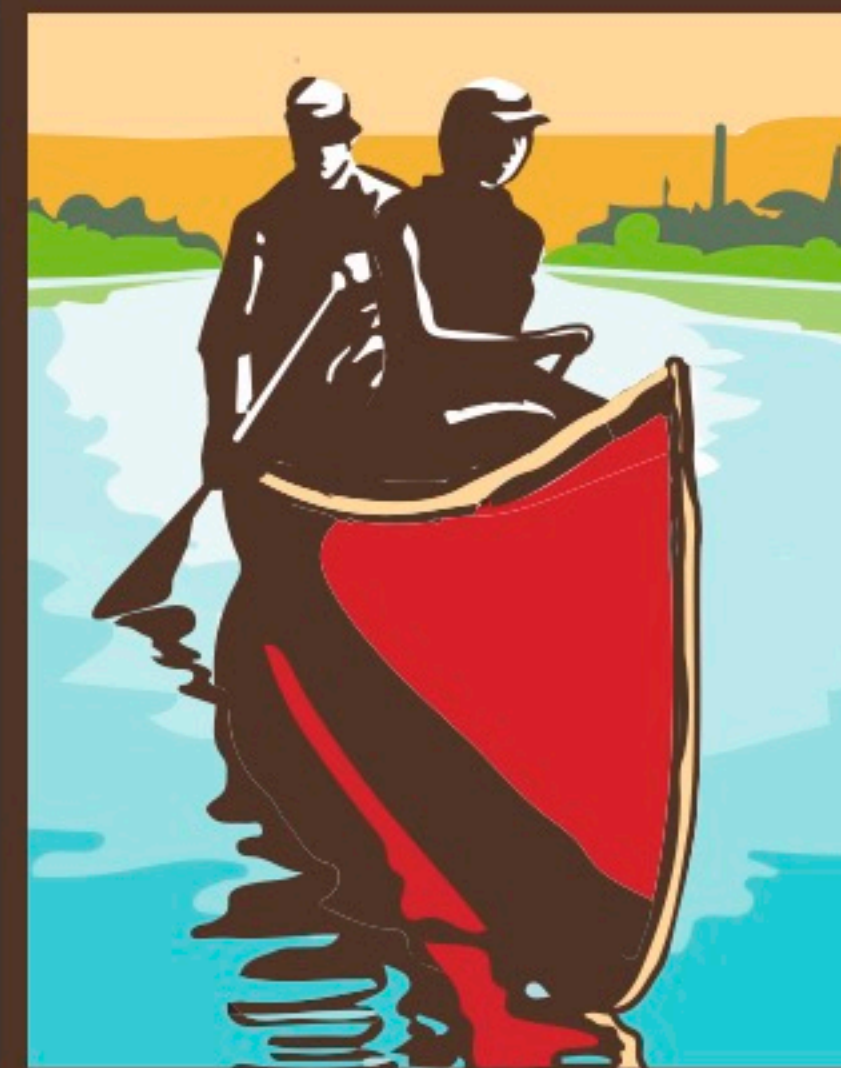
## DETROIT

Rouge River Miles xx-xx  
http://www.ci.detroit.mi.us  
Since the first non-indigenous settlers arrived, the Rouge River has been a working river. This is evident as the main stem of the Rouge River cuts through the far southwest edge of the City of Detroit. You will see landmarks of Detroit's History including Fordson Island, Fort Street Bridge Park, drawbridges and much more.

## RIVER ROUGE

Rouge River Miles xx-xx  
http://www.cityofriverrouge.com  
The City of River Rouge has played an integral part in Metro-Detroit's industrial legacy. You can travel around the iconic Zug Island, with its massive steel plant, where you will find some natural sulfur springs. Belanger Park is the city's largest park featuring a boat launch on the Detroit River.

# LOWER ROUGE RIVER



# WATER TRAIL

# PADDLER'S COMPANION



XXX RIVER TRIP (X miles - 0 hours)

XX RIVER TRIP (xx miles - xx hours)

XXX RIVER TRIP (X miles - 0 hours)

XX RIVER TRIP (xx miles - xx hours)

XXX RIVER TRIP (X miles - 0 hours)

XX RIVER TRIP (xx miles - xx hours)

### POINTS OF INTEREST

- A** VENOY-DORSEY RECREATION AREA
- B** INKSTER WETLANDS
- C** INKSTER RECREATION AREA
- D** THOMSON'S LANDING
- E** HENRY FORD ESTATE/FISH PASSAGEWAY
- F** CONFLUENCE OF MAIN & LOWER ROUGE RIVER
- G** GREENFIELD VILLAGE OXBOW
- H** HUBBELL-SOUTHFIELD CSO
- I** FORD ROUGE COMPLEX
- J** HISTORIC BASCULE BRIDGE
- K** FORDSON ISLAND
- L** FORMAN PARK
- M** DETROIT WASTEWATER TREATMENT PLANT
- N** HISTORIC JEFERSON AVE. BASCULE BRIDGE
- O** ZUG ISLAND CHANNEL
- P** NATURAL SUPHUR SPRINGS

### LEGEND

- Belanger Park — LAUNCH SITE
- WAYNE COUNTY PARK
- MUNICIPAL PARK
- POINT OF INTEREST
- PICNIC AREA
- NO ACCESS TO PARKING
- PARKING
- BOAT LOCKER
- RESTROOMS
- POINT OF INTEREST
- RESTAURANTS NEARBY
- ACCESS TO MEDIC
- DEVELOPED LAUNCH
- CARRY-IN LAUNCH
- UNDEVELOPED LAUNCH

