



Community Attractions

The Kansas River Water Trail winds through several communities, many with river access ramps. Plan your float trip and allow plenty of time to enjoy the unique history of these communities, eat a delectable meal in a local restaurant, and stay the night in a quaint bed and breakfast or upscale hotel!



Photo by Kansas Historical Society
First Territorial Capitol State Historic Site, Fort Riley



Flint Hills Discovery Center, Manhattan



Oz Museum, Wamego

Junction City J

Located in the "Heart of the Flint Hills" at the junction of the Republican and Smoky Hill rivers, this historic community was built adjacent to Fort Riley, the home of the 1st Infantry Division, a U.S. Army installation that dates back to the early 1850s. See the "Fort Riley Access" section on the other side for more information.



Visitors can walk in the footsteps of pioneer, political and military figures with a visit to the U.S. Cavalry Museum, Buffalo Soldier Museum, Custer House, State of Kansas Vietnam Veterans Memorial, First Territorial Capitol, Geary County Historical Museum and Civil War Arch in Junction City and Fort Riley.

Outdoor enthusiasts can play to their hearts' content at Milford Lake, the largest lake in the state and the "Fishing Capital of Kansas." Milford Lake offers a diversity of fish - bass, blue and channel catfish, walleye, wiper, crappie and white bass. With the lake's open water, boaters and Jet Skiers will find lots of room. One of the largest off-road ATV and motorcycle areas in the state is located on the west side of the lake.

Also nearby: Headwaters of the Kansas River, Geary County State Lake, Milford Nature Center and Fish Hatchery, Milford Wetlands, Gathering Ponds, C.L. Hoover Opera House.

Visitor information website:
JunctionCity.org

Manhattan F M

Tucked into the gorgeous Flint Hills region, Manhattan is a regional hub for shopping, the arts and entertainment. Known as 'The Little Apple', this town is home to Kansas State University and maintains a youthful vibe.

From university sporting events and international performance company tours, to outdoor recreation and a redeveloped downtown with fine dining and shopping, unique experiences abound.



Families can explore the Flint Hills Discovery Center, nationally accredited Sunset Zoo or the City Splash Park. If you're longing to connect with nature, visit treasures such as the Konza Prairie, Tuttle Creek State Park, Kansas River and countless other outdoor venues. If it's the arts you're after, take in a performance at McCain Auditorium or stop by the Marianna Kistler Beach Museum of Art, Manhattan Arts Center, or the Strecker-Nelson Art Gallery.

Tempt your taste buds with a mouthwatering steak or a locally crafted beer. Our unique dining offerings keep you coming back for more! Satisfy the kids (or the kid in you!) with one of the creamiest ice creams ever from Call Hall Dairy Bar located on the K-State campus.

Also nearby: Aggieville, Seth Childs Commons, Westloop, Downtown Manhattan and the Manhattan Town Center shopping areas; Tuttle Creek State Park with trails, wildlife and recreation areas.

Visitor information website:
VisitManhattanKS.org



Wamego W

Catch a glimpse of rural hometown Americana in Wamego. This community balances a progressive spirit with a peaceful, laid-back pace and offers visitors a rich blend of history, the arts and culture.

Wamego features beautifully restored homes and businesses, including the Ditto-Leach House and the Columbian Theatre, Museum and Art Center, a historically renovated 19th century opera house including the only remaining paintings and other artifacts from the 1893 World's Fair, Columbian Exposition. Also downtown is the Oz Museum, which houses one of the world's largest collections of Wizard of Oz artifacts, Oz Winery, Toto's Taco, and Yellow Brick Road.

Wamego City Park is home to the historic Schonhoff Dutch Mill, towering above the Wamego Historical Museum and Prairie Town Village. Park visitors can also enjoy peaceful family picnics, the swimming pool, fishing pond or ride the children's train. Thousands of tulip bulbs bloom into a blaze of glorious color each spring during the annual Wamego Tulip Festival.

Also nearby: Downtown shopping district, Beecher Bible and Rifle Church, Mt. Mitchell Heritage Prairie, Oregon Trail Nature Park.

Visitor information website:
EcoDevo.com

River Hazards

River Hazards marked with this symbol are dams, weirs and other potentially serious dangers for which paddlers must take special precautions. Here are the precise locations of the hazards and what you can do to avoid them. In some cases, you will need to portage, or remove your craft from the river and re-enter in another location.

Before you float, be sure to visit KSRiverTrail.com to check up-to-date hazard information and water levels.

Topeka:

Between **K** and **T**, avoid the Topeka Water Department dam. Remove your watercraft on the left bank. There is a portage trail between access ramps. At **T**, avoid dropped railroad bridges by passing under the existing bridges on the right bank of the river. Between **S** and **R**, avoid the Tecumseh Power Plant dam in low water. Portage on the left bank or in the middle of the river near a gravel bar. In high water, float over the dam with caution.

Lawrence:

Between **P** and **L**, avoid the Bowersock dam. Take out of the river at Riverfront Park one mile upstream from the dam. Portage to the Eighth Street access ramp two miles to the southeast.

Kansas City:

At **V**, avoid the WaterOne dam. Portage on the left bank and use the portage path to re-enter.



Kansas State Capitol, Topeka

Topeka K T S

As Kansas' capital city, Topeka is a metropolitan area rich in history, cultural events and a new thriving arts district.

The Kansas Museum of History tells the story of Kansas and brings visitors up close with a Cheyenne tipi, 1800s steam locomotive and 1950s diner. Old Prairie Town at Ward-Meade Historic Site overlooks the Oregon Trails ferry site across the Kansas River. Visitors also can stand in the places where history happened at the Kansas State Capitol or Brown v. Board of Education National Historic Site.

Families can enjoy a hands-on adventure at Kansas Children's Discovery Center, Combat Air Museum or Gage Park - home to the Topeka Zoo, Reinisch Rose Garden with more than 6,500 plants, and a 1908 Carousel with Wurlitzer organ. Arts enthusiasts can find a wealth of treasures in the North Topeka Arts District (NOTO).

Also nearby: Downtown Topeka Farmers Market (seasonal); Great Overland Station; Lake Shawnee Recreational Area; Ted Ensley Gardens; Native Stone Scenic Byway; Kaw River State Park, with trails, wildlife and recreation areas.

Visitor information website:
VisitTopeka.com

Lecompton R

Few other Kansas small towns are as steeped in state and national history as Lecompton. This community was the territorial capital of Kansas. The famous Lecompton Constitution, which would have admitted Kansas as a slave state, was drafted here as well. The constitution was rejected after intense national debate. This controversy contributed to the growing dispute that erupted into the Civil War.

Constitution Hall still stands and is open to visitors as a state historic site and national historic landmark. The Territorial Capital Museum is also open to visitors.

The Lecompton community celebrates its rich history and heritage with events throughout the year, such as the Bald Eagle Rendezvous and Territorial Days.

Also nearby: Perry Lake, with trails, wildlife and recreation areas (Perry).

Visitor information website:
LecomptonKansas.com

Lawrence L P

Nestled amidst the rolling hills in the northeast part of the state, Lawrence was ranked by the National Trust for Historic Preservation as one of the "Dozen Most Distinctive Destinations" in 2000. The community was founded in 1854 in an effort to keep the territory free from slavery, and became a hotbed of political controversy leading up to the Civil War.

This rich historic heritage lives on in Lawrence's downtown district - lined with century-old buildings, eclectic boutiques, tempting sidewalk cafes, curious antique shops, and a multitude of restaurants, art galleries and studios. Live music along the street often can be heard, from folk to jazz, rock to blues and everything in between.

Lawrence also is home to the University of Kansas and Haskell Indian Nations University. The scenic KU campus offers a treasure trove of things to see and do, including the Spencer Museum of Art, the KU Natural History Museum and the Lied Center of Kansas, a venue for award-winning arts from all corners of the globe.

Also nearby: Clinton Lake, with trails, wildlife and recreation areas; Riverfront Park; Liberty Hall movie theater and concert hall; Dole Institute of Politics; Eudora Community Museum (Eudora); Black Jack Battlefield (Baldwin).

Visitor information website:
VisitLawrence.com



Riverfront Plaza, Lawrence

Kansas City U A

Get ready for big-city fun and excitement with Midwest charm and values. Kansas City has something for everyone - shopping (including Cabela's) and dining on a grand scale at Village West and Legends Outlets Kansas City, heart-thumping excitement at Kansas Speedway, and places where history happened such as the Lewis and Clark Riverfront Park at Kaw Point and Grinter Place State Historic Site.

Experience the rich cultural diversity of this community through annual festivals such as Cinco de Mayo and the Wyandotte County Fair. The Renaissance Festival, rated among the Top 100 Events in North America, transports visitors to medieval England for seven weekends each fall.

Please your palate with endless options for one-of-a-kind dining, ethnic eateries, and mouth-watering barbecue, such as world-famous Arthur Bryant's.

Also nearby: Freedom's Frontier National Heritage Area; Frontier Military Historic Byway; Glacial Hills Scenic Byway; Moon Marble Company (Bonner Springs); Fort Leavenworth (Leavenworth); Mahaffie Stagecoach Stop & Farm Historic Site (Olathe).

Visitor information website:
VisitKansasCityKS.com

Kansas

RIVER WATER TRAIL MAP



The Kansas River Water Trail is a joint project of the National Park Service and Kansas Department of Wildlife, Parks & Tourism.

Visit our website:
KSRiverTrail.com
or scan the QR code with your smartphone.

[/TravelKS](https://www.facebook.com/TravelKS) [@TravelKS](https://twitter.com/TravelKS)



Photo by Craig Thompson

Welcome!

The Kansas River is one of the world's longest prairie rivers, providing countless recreational opportunities and wildlife habitat as well as drinking water, irrigation and electricity for many communities. The Kansas River Water Trail is a great opportunity to explore the unique beauty of eastern Kansas from a whole new perspective - from the river itself! Get up close and personal with the birds and other wildlife along the river, find peaceful solitude, or challenge yourself with some of the more adventurous parts of the river. We invite you to plan a trip along the Kansas River Water Trail to immerse yourself in the natural Kansas experience.

History

The Kansas River basin contains mostly sedimentary rock. In the western part of the basin, sand and gravel can be found, brought down from the Rocky Mountains. In the eastern end, a mixture of clay, sand, gravel and even large boulders can be found.

Long before European explorers knew of its existence, the Kansas River was used for transportation by native tribes living in the area, including the Kaw, or Kansa, for whom the river (and later the state) was named. The river begins just east of Junction City, aptly named because the town sits at the confluence of the Republican and Smoky Hill rivers. The river stretches 173 miles to the eastern edge of the state, where it flows into the Missouri River.

Today, the Kansas River is considered navigable for recreational purposes, but until recently, it was difficult for people to access the river. Historically, there were very few access ramps. Due to great partnerships, the Kansas River now has 19 public ramps where paddlers can access the river.

In 2012 the Kansas River Water Trail was designated as a National Water Trail, part of a growing network of water trails across the country. Learn more about the National Park Service's National Water Trails System at [nps.gov/watertrails](https://www.nps.gov/watertrails).

Did You Know?

The Lewis and Clark Expedition of 1804 camped briefly at Kaw Point (the confluence of the Kansas and Missouri rivers). This location developed into the Kansas City metropolitan area, where settlers and traders departed from the south ridge of the river on westward trails.

From 1854 through the early 1860s, steamboats could be found on the river. These steamers ferried passengers and goods from Kansas City to Lawrence, Topeka and sometimes as far west as Fort Riley.



Camping

Although most land adjacent to the river is privately owned and public access is prohibited, paddlers may set up camp on sandbars. There are also a few public camping areas near access points along the Kansas River Water Trail. Be aware that some of these sites are a bit of a hike from the river and may not have restrooms. Whether you're camping on a sandbar or in a camping area, the following tips will help you have a great night along the Kansas River:

- If possible, pull your boat from the water. Tie your boat to a tree on shore or a large log. If you're camping on a sandbar, run your line (rope) through the handles of all of your gear. If water rises suddenly during the night, your only concern will be taking down your tent and getting into your boat - not tracking down your gear as it floats away.
- If you're camping on a sandbar, set up well above the water line. Use long, metal tent stakes to pitch your tent. Shorter stakes may not hold in the sandy surface, and plastic stakes may break if you encounter rock.
- Store your food properly to keep away raccoons and other unwanted visitors.
- Take your waste with you and leave the campsite better than you found it.



Wildlife

The Kansas River and its banks and sandbars are home to hundreds of species of birds, mammals, amphibians, reptiles and fish.

Birds - River visitors are likely to spot a variety of ducks, geese and shorebirds along the Kansas River. The most spectacular sight for birders and non-birders alike are the bald eagles that live along the river. They build their nests in trees that line the riverbanks, fish in open water below Bowersock Dam (Lawrence) in the winter, and hunt ducks and geese on sandbars and wetlands along the river throughout the year. Other birds of interest include the great blue heron, green heron, great egret, barn swallow and cliff swallow.

Mammals - Look for coyote, red foxes, raccoons, bobcats and deer along the water's edge. River otters, beavers and mink also may be spotted on the banks.



Amphibians and Reptiles - The river is teeming with several species of frogs, toads, turtles and snakes. You're likely to spot snapping turtles, sliders, and smooth or spiny softshell turtles. Common snakes along or on the river include eastern hognose, eastern racer, northern water snake and the western rat snake. These snakes are nonvenomous, but paddlers venturing into areas along the riverbanks should be aware of copperheads, which are venomous.

Fish - The river offers exceptional fishing opportunities, not just in the sheer number of fish, but in the variety of species. Most Kansas River anglers are after catfish - channel cats, monster flatheads and blue catfish. Other fish you'll find in the river include longnose gar, shovelnose sturgeon, carp, buffalo and various minnow and sunfish species.

Some aquatic nuisance species such as Asian carp and zebra mussels are found in the Kansas River. Be aware that Asian carp can "jump" out of the water when agitated and can hit people on the river. Zebra mussels can damage boat equipment if not cleaned properly after use. To learn more, see "Aquatic Nuisance Species" under the kayak (at right).

Visit [ProtectKSWaters.org](https://www.protectkswaters.org) to learn more about Kansas fishing regulations.



Planning a Float Trip

River Safety and Etiquette

The Kansas River is a very big river, and a lot of factors - water levels, hazards, weather, paddler inexperience - can quickly turn an enjoyable float trip into an extremely dangerous situation. If you're new to paddling or have never floated on the Kansas River before, it is recommended that you travel with experienced paddlers or as part of an organized float trip. Friends of the Kaw plan group float trips from April through mid-October. Visit [KansasRiver.org](https://www.KansasRiver.org) for more information.

Don't plan to float more than you can handle; 10 miles makes for a good and relaxing all-day trip.

Hazards such as dams and weirs are marked on the map with a red icon (at right). Before your trip, examine the map to determine what portion of the river you'll be navigating and take these extreme hazards into account.



Getting to the River

There are several public access boat ramps along the Kansas River. Look for signs along the road with the National Water Trail logo to find access points.



Before You Float

Check the water levels and weather before you reach the water. Visit [KSRiverTrail.com](https://www.KSRiverTrail.com) to check the latest levels. Beginning paddlers should not be on the river when the water flow is above 5,000 cubic feet per second.

The weather in Kansas can change quickly. Be aware of forecasts calling for high winds or storms.

It is also a good idea to let a family member or friend know about your trip - where you plan to float and when you plan to return home.

What to Bring:

- personal flotation devices (PFDs), or life vests, are a must, and each paddler (and their pets) should have one
- extra ropes or lines
- bail bucket
- whistle or air horn to signal distress (whistles should be attached to PFDs)
- first aid kit
- dry change of clothes in cooler weather
- plenty of water and food
- flashlight, lantern or other light if you'll be out in low-light conditions
- sun protection - hats, sunscreen, long sleeves and pants
- map
- cell phone in waterproof bag (be aware that some areas along the river may not have cell signal coverage)
- [optional] camera or binoculars (in waterproof bags), animal and plant identification guides

Canoe and Kayak Safety

It is recommended that you always wear a life jacket and float with a minimum of two boats. Take at least one extra paddle in case you drop or break one. Put your equipment into a waterproof bag and tie it to one of the center beams in the



Stop Aquatic Hitchhikers
ProtectKSWaters.org

canoe so you don't lose your gear if the canoe tips. Keep an eye out for other boat traffic and maintain an appropriate distance. Also try to keep your canoe at right angles to big waves. Look out for hazards such as low branches, fallen trees, rocks and debris. If your boat tips over, don't panic. It will float, even if it is full of water, and you can wait until you get to shore to empty it. Stay with your canoe and paddle or push it toward the shore.

When you get to shallow water, flip the canoe with the help of your float partner and carefully climb back in.

River Navigational Signs

Along the river you'll see yellow signs like this one. These signs show the distance between access points. In the example shown here, it is 2 miles to the next access point at Manhattan. When you reach the Manhattan access point, you'll see a sign with just an "M."



Aquatic Nuisance Species (ANS)

Zebra mussels, Asian carp and other non-native species threaten the Kansas River and other waterways. Kansas has regulations in place to help slow the spread of these species. You can help by following these regulations and precautions:

- Use live bait only where you catch it.
- Do not transport live fish from the Kansas River or other ANS-designated waters.
- Dispose of unused bait on land or in an approved bait receptacle.
- Clean your boat after removing it from the water, being sure to remove vegetation, mud and zebra mussels; wash with water that is 140 F or hotter.
- Livewells and bilges must be drained and drain plugs removed before transport.
- If you cannot properly clean your boat, allow it to dry for five days before moving it to another body of water.

Visit [ProtectKSWaters.org](https://www.protectkswaters.org) for the latest information on ANS and how you can prevent the spread of these species.