

Minnesota River – Ortonville to Granite Falls



Difficulty:

Easy

Paddling Season:

Year-round

Caution:

Several Class I Rapids (easy rapids with small waves and few obstructions) and numerous dams to portage around. Consult map for more information.

Part of the Lac qui Parle Wildlife Management Area is closed to the public from September 20 to December 1, including Lac qui Parle from the State Highway 40 bridge to the dam (river mile 284). No canoeing or kayaking is allowed on the river during this time.

Maps:

<http://www.dnr.state.mn.us/watertrails/minnesotariver/two.html>

CURE also has these maps available in their offices in Montevideo and Granite Falls.

Current River Level:

[-Minnesota River Basin List](#)

[-Ortonville](#)

[-Lac qui Parle](#)

[-Montevideo](#)

[-Granite Falls](#)

[-River Level Map](#)

Basic Facts:

The Minnesota River is 332 miles long. It starts at Big Stone Lake in Ortonville and flows to the Mississippi River near Fort Snelling in St. Paul. Sections of the Minnesota River are protected by the Wild & Scenic Rivers Act. It was carved by Glacial River Warren, which flowed from Glacial Lake Agassiz, in a cataclysmic event 11,700 years ago. Today, it is a peaceful river with a diverse landscape.

Landscape:

This section of the Minnesota River begins with a dense forest of cottonwood, elm, and maple. As one descends downstream, the terrain becomes more shallow and weedy as Marsh Lake approaches. Here, willow trees tower above the river, offering a safe-haven form any species of birds. [This](#) has a great summary of the area's geology.

Wildlife:

Many species of birds dot this section of the Minnesota River including wood ducks, mallards, blue-winged teal, Canada geese, bitterns, herons, pheasants, gray partridge, and more. Large fish populations of mostly carp also call this area home, but walleye, smallmouth bass, and northern pike are also to be had. Keep in mind that mercury contamination may be found in these fish, so older, larger fish should be released. Smaller fish are more ideal for eating, and children and women of childbearing age should abide by the Minnesota Department of Health's guidelines.

History:

In the late 1600s, French fur traders named this newly-discovered river the Riviere St. Pierre. During the Dakota Conflict in 1862, war between the Dakota and the white man began. The Dakota released 269 prisoners that were taken during the fight at Camp Release near Montevideo.

State Parks:

- [Big Stone Lake](#)
- [Lac qui Parle](#)
- [Upper Sioux Agency](#)

Parks & Museums:

- For a list of area museums, please visit [Western Minnesota Prairie Waters](#).
- Lac qui Parle Mission
Established in 1835, this mission is the site in which the first Dakota dictionary, grammar book, and gospel were created. A chapel erected in the 1940s hosts historical artifacts and exhibits pertaining to the missionaries and Dakota people of the time. Open May 1 through Labor Day, 8am-8pm daily. Rates are free, but the owners ask to please call ahead for a field trip or other group reservations. 115 140th Ave. NW, Watson MN 56295; at the intersection of Co. Hwy. 13 & Co. Rd. 32, off US Hwy 59, 8 miles NM of Montevideo. 320-269-7636.
- Sabin S. Murdock House
The town of Murdock differs from most towns built along rail lines because the railroad company did not encourage its creation. Entrepreneur Sabin S. Murdock purchased 3,000 acres of land from the St. Paul and Pacific Railroad in 1876 and, with a partner, platted a town site eventually named for him. Although the railroad company refused to build a depot there, it agreed to build a platform on the condition that Murdock pay the salary of the railway agent stationed there. By 1879 a depot was finally built, presumably financed by Murdock. A businessman with many interests, Murdock also owned and operated his own farm, a grain elevator and a large stable. He may even have tried his hand at architecture, designing the Victorian house he shared with his wife, Mary. [Link](#) for more information.

-Amos Huggins Mission

The Amos Huggins Mission site is located in Lac qui Parle village. Amos Huggins was a missionary, teacher, and agent, commissioned by the government. His wife was school teacher Julia LaFrambol's. He developed a school to teach the Dakota more than just agrarian methods. A blacksmith shop was built and supplied the Dakota with provisions to plant their fields. He was killed by a hostile band of Dakota-Sioux from the Lower Agency in 1862. A small segment of the military road can be viewed from this site, south on the hill overlooking the Amos Huggins Mission Site. Location: 1/2 mile south of Lac qui Parle Village. From Madison, go east on Hwy 40., 6 miles; continue east 8 miles on Co. Rd. 20. Go across the bridge. The site is located on the east side of the bridge on the south side of the road.

Outfitters:

- Clean Up the River Environment (CURE). Holds many historical brochures, river maps, and has a lending library of canoes, kayaks, life jackets, and paddles for CURE Members.

117 S. 1st St., Montevideo, MN 56265.

- Mitlyng's Bait & Tackle

13045 1st St. West, Watson, MN 56295

320-269-5593. Canoe rental only.