

Congaree River Blue Trail

A Map and Guide to the Scenic Congaree River



A Journey Down the Blue Trail

Gervais Street Bridge is the beginning of the Blue Trail. You can access the river under the bridge near the **West Columbia Amphitheater**.



Three Rivers Greenway is a popular network of forested trails, scenic river overlooks, and parks around the rivers that flow through Columbia. For a map of the Three Rivers Greenway go to www.riveralliance.org.



Granby Lock & Dam was built at the turn of the 20th century and provided navigation access to Columbia. Paddlers should avoid the dam and use the lock on river right.



Congaree Creek Heritage Preserve protects stands of rare Atlantic white cedar. The historic Cherokee Trail runs through the 610-acre preserve.

Welcome to the Congaree River Blue Trail

Dedicated on June 2, 2007, the 50 mile Congaree River Blue Trail starts near Columbia and offers paddlers an urban adventure with opportunities to learn about the historic significance of the area. Continuing downstream, paddlers cross the fall line and enter the Coastal Plain known for its countless sandbars, high bluffs, and extensive floodplains.

The highlight of the trail is the section along the Congaree National Park, a protected wilderness that is home to the largest tract of old growth bottomland hardwood forests in the U.S. The park boasts 90 tree species, roughly half the number found in Europe. Plans to expand this blue trail to include the Wateree River are underway.

Though in its initial phase, we hope the Congaree River Blue Trail will reconnect people to their river and inspire them to protect this treasure in their own backyard. The river not only provides recreational activities, it can enhance the local economy, community pride, and help foster the spirit of conservation in everyone. Learn how you can protect this and other hometown rivers by visiting <http://www.AmericanRivers.org>.



Safety

- Always wear a life jacket (PFD).
- Read safety information and park rules prior to your trip.
- Leave a float plan with family or friends.
- Plan your route based on your skill level.
- Bring water and safety equipment.
- Stay away from river hazards. Avoid the Granby Dam, south of the West Columbia Landing, and use the Cayce Lock on river right.
- Be aware of other boaters and carry a sound-producing signal device.
- Dress appropriately and be prepared for inclement weather. Even in temperatures as high as 50-60 degrees (F), wet and windy weather can still cause hypothermia. Avoid wearing cotton clothing.
- Water levels can change drastically due to the operation of upstream dams. Check conditions before your trip at <http://www.sceg.com/en/vry-community/lowen-saluda-river>.
- Carry a cellular telephone and emergency numbers.

Wildlife

The Congaree River is a vibrant corridor for wildlife and provides excellent opportunities to view common and not so common wildlife anywhere along the river. This includes deer, raccoons, snakes, wild pigs, turtles, and more. It is home to endangered species including the shortnose sturgeon, a fish that migrates from coastal waters to spawn in the Congaree near Columbia. Other migratory fish include striped bass, American shad, and blueback herring. Bald eagles often visit the river, especially near Columbia. The American swallowtail kite is a rare, but welcome sight near the Congaree National Park.



Camping

While sandbars and shorelines are popular places to camp along the trail, they can become inundated with little or no warning due to upstream hydropower operations. Carry your boat to higher ground and tie down. **CAMP AT YOUR OWN RISK!** Remember that it is illegal to camp above the high water mark on private property without permission.

Low Head Dam

The **Granby Dam** is a low head dam that is submerged due to gates often being closed. Avoid this dam on the right of the West Columbia Landing to give us the job on the trail right!

Leave No Trace

- Plan ahead and prepare.
 - Travel and camp on durable surfaces.
 - Dispose of waste properly.
 - Leave what you find.
 - Respect wildlife.
 - Minimize campfire impacts.
 - Respect private property and the privacy of others.
- For more information consult Leave No Trace (www.lnt.org).

Geology

The Congaree River flows through the fall line near Columbia where the land transitions from Piedmont to Coastal Plain. Upstream the river is rocky and straight, with abundant rapids; below the fall line the river bends gently back and forth along bluffs and floodplains of the Coastal Plain.



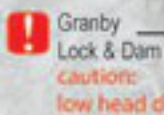
Disclaimer

While considerable effort has been made to provide accurate information, we take no responsibility for any errors or omissions. There is some risk involved in water paddling. The ultimate responsibility for safety lies solely with the individual.

Congaree River Blue Trail Partners



Three Rivers Greenway



Cayce Landing **caution: last chance to take out for 47 miles!**

Congaree Creek Heritage Preserve

I-77 Bridge

Mouth of Congaree Creek

Mouth of Gills Creek

Trail Mile 10

Trail Mile 15

Mouth of Mill Creek

Trail Mile 20

Legend

- Parking
- Canoe Access
- Restrooms
- Hiking



0 1 2 Miles
1 inch equals 0.5 miles



Congaree National Park
 Designated South Carolina's first national park in 2003, the Congaree National Park is home to 15,000 acres of wilderness and the largest tract of old growth bottomland hardwood forest in the U.S. Paddlers and hikers can enjoy over 20 miles of trails within the park as well as camping, fishing, bird watching and nature study. Guided walks and canoe trips are offered free of charge. Visit the Harry Hampton Visitor Center for a trail map and guide, camping and fishing regulations, free camping permit, and up to date information on trail and weather conditions or call (803) 776-4396 or visit www.nps.gov/cong.



An ancient double laurel oak tree can be found behind a blackberry field a few hundred yards from shore.

Laurel Oak Primitive Backcountry Campsite (campfires prohibited)

Cedar Creek Trail features 15 miles of pristine black water stream running through bottomland hardwood forest. For details visit www.nps.gov/cong.

Bald cypress trees can have a circumference 27 feet and extensive roots that rise in "knees" as high as 7 feet. Loblolly pines, rarely found in hardwood swamps, have stood here for 300 year and soar to a record breaking 169 feet.

Congaree Bluffs Heritage Preserve offers stunning treetop views of Congaree National Park from atop bluffs rising 150 feet above the river.

Devil's Elbow is one of the many oxbow lakes found along the Congaree. Devil's Elbow is private property so please enjoy from your boat only.

Bates Bridge Landing (Hwy 601) is the last stop on the blue trail. The next take out is 15 miles downstream at Low Falls Landing near Lake Marion.
LAST TRAIL TAKE OUT

601

To St. Matthews, Charleston, and Points South