On a map you will notice graceful loops, which begin in small radial turns and then grow in size as the river cools into giant loops that are actually ancient channels originally carved by the directional changes as you make your way down. In one section, the river channel loops around 20 miles to make 2 miles of southerly gain!

Two trails are on lakes that inhabit old channels of the Tensas that have been isolated by the changing nature of the river and are now charming still water pools ringed by deep forests drenched with the aroma of cypress/hardwood forests.

The visitor’s center at Tensas River National Wildlife Refuge should be your first stop before embarking on any water travel inside the refuge. Consult someone at the main desk for permits and information about current water conditions and landings.

When is the best time to paddle?
Spring and fall are the best seasons for outdoor activity in northeast Louisiana, but you can enjoy it anytime. You will want to avoid river travel here during hunting season. Consult an official Louisiana hunting calendar and the refuge brochure for permitting when you make your plans.

Appropriate Vessels:
Canoes, rafts, kayaks or stand-up paddles are ideal for the river trails and lakes. Choose a vessel you can pick up and maneuver with ease. Motorized boats are allowed on the Tensas River but are not practical during low water levels. On the refuge lakes, no motors over 10 hp are allowed.

Bad Weather:
Avoid open water paddling on a lake in thunderstorms or high winds. Be especially cautious with cold water conditions.

Precautions:
Carry plenty of water and sun protection. Bring maps and this guide packed in a waterproof container. Watch for spiders and snakes, as well asigators swimming themselves or swimming. Learn about the different poisonous plants, spiders and snakes, as well as gators sunning themselves or swimming. Keep an eye out for other reptiles, birds, and cypress knees underneath. Not far downstream a grove of cypress knees in low water.

The Tensas River creates a natural wonderland of big trees and spectacular wildlife through the middle of northeast Louisiana. The Tensas is legendary for its natural history of red wolves, Florida panthers, ivory-billed woodpeckers and Louisiana black bears. Unfortunately, out of that list, only the black bear remains.

The best way to experience the natural wonders of the Tensas River is by canoe, kayak or paddle. Paddlers will be humbled by giant cypress trees and thrilled with birding, downy, florea, frequent turtle and gator sightings and many signs of the Louisiana black bear. During winter, bald eagles may be sightings.

The Tensas River flows out of Lake Providence and meanders south before it descends into the expansive woods of the Tensas River National Wildlife Refuge.

The Tensas River National Wildlife Refuge is a project of the agritourism program at the LSU AgCenter.

Acknowledgements:
Explore Louisiana North.

More information is available at louisianapaddle.com http://www.louisianapaddle.com/
318-574-2664 • Fax: 318-574-1624
2312 Quebec Road, Tallulah, LA 71282

INDEX:
BBD – Right Bank Descending
LBD – Left Bank Descending

Northeast Louisiana: Outdoor Series is a project of the agritourism program at the LSU AgCenter. www.lsuagcenter.com/agritourism

Vessel GPS:  N32.318201, W91.382174

LBD – Left Bank Descending

The Tensas River flows out of Lake Providence and meanders south before it descends into the expansive woods of the Tensas River National Wildlife Refuge.

The Tensas River creates a natural wonderland of big trees and spectacular wildlife through the middle of northeast Louisiana. The Tensas is legendary for its natural history of red wolves, Florida panthers, ivory-billed woodpeckers and Louisiana black bears. Unfortunately, out of that list, only the black bear remains.

The best way to experience the natural wonders of the Tensas River is by canoe, kayak or paddle. Paddlers will be humbled by giant cypress trees and thrilled with birding, downy, florea, frequent turtle and gator sightings and many signs of the Louisiana black bear. During winter, bald eagles may be sightings.

The Tensas River flows out of Lake Providence and meanders south before it descends into the expansive woods of the Tensas River National Wildlife Refuge.

On a map you will notice graceful loops, which begin in small radial turns and then grow in size as the river cools into giant loops that are actually ancient channels originally carved by the directional changes as you make your way down. In one section, the river channel loops around 20 miles to make 2 miles of southerly gain!

Two trails are on lakes that inhabit old channels of the Tensas that have been isolated by the changing nature of the river and are now charming still water pools ringed by deep forests drenched with the aroma of cypress/hardwood forests.

The visitor’s center at Tensas River National Wildlife Refuge should be your first stop before embarking on any water travel inside the refuge. Consult someone at the main desk for permits and information about current water conditions and landings.

When is the best time to paddle?
Spring and fall are the best seasons for outdoor activity in northeast Louisiana, but you can enjoy it anytime. You will want to avoid river travel here during hunting season. Consult an official Louisiana hunting calendar and the refuge brochure for permitting when you make your plans.

Appropriate Vessels:
Canoes, rafts, kayaks or stand-up paddles are ideal for the river trails and lakes. Choose a vessel you can pick up and maneuver with ease. Motorized boats are allowed on the Tensas River but are not practical during low water levels. On the refuge lakes, no motors over 10 hp are allowed.

Bad Weather:
Avoid open water paddling on a lake in thunderstorms or high winds. Be especially cautious with cold water conditions.

Precautions:
Carry plenty of water and sun protection. Bring maps and this guide packed in a waterproof container. Watch for spiders and snakes, as well asgators swimming themselves or swimming. Learn about the different poisonous plants, spiders and snakes, as well as gators sunning themselves or swimming. Keep an eye out for other reptiles, birds, and cypress knees underneath. Not far downstream a grove of cypress knees in low water.

The Tensas River creates a natural wonderland of big trees and spectacular wildlife through the middle of northeast Louisiana. The Tensas is legendary for its natural history of red wolves, Florida panthers, ivory-billed woodpeckers and Louisiana black bears. Unfortunately, out of that list, only the black bear remains.

The best way to experience the natural wonders of the Tensas River is by canoe, kayak or paddle. Paddlers will be humbled by giant cypress trees and thrilled with birding, downy, florea, frequent turtle and gator sightings and many signs of the Louisiana black bear. During winter, bald eagles may be sightings.

The Tensas River flows out of Lake Providence and meanders south before it descends into the expansive woods of the Tensas River National Wildlife Refuge.

On a map you will notice graceful loops, which begin in small radial turns and then grow in size as the river cools into giant loops that are actually ancient channels originally carved by the directional changes as you make your way down. In one section, the river channel loops around 20 miles to make 2 miles of southerly gain!

Two trails are on lakes that inhabit old channels of the Tensas that have been isolated by the changing nature of the river and are now charming still water pools ringed by deep forests drenched with the aroma of cypress/hardwood forests.

The visitor’s center at Tensas River National Wildlife Refuge should be your first stop before embarking on any water travel inside the refuge. Consult someone at the main desk for permits and information about current water conditions and landings.
Africa Lake
(2.3 Mile Circumnavigation)
Google Map of Trail: http://goo.gl/maps/BBoc

Africa Lake Boat Launch
N32.349893, W91.388526

Africa Lake follows old channels of the Tensas River in the deepest woods of the Tensas River National Wildlife Refuge. The lake curves through canyons of tall trees growing along its steep, muddy banks.

A complete loop might require an hour of continuous paddling, although you certainly will want to spend more time enjoying the striking scenery, especially the gators and birds. Visit during October-December when the cypress needles turn brick red and stand out in striking contrast to green waters of the lake and blue skies.

Classic Cypress with Full Crown
N32.346825, W91.390153

Keep following Africa Lake west. You will pass a classic cypress tree with full crown, its branches draped with Spanish moss and reaching out in all directions. At normal lake levels, you can get close and perhaps make a landing at the base of this giant.

Africa Lake Picnic Area
N32.34482, W91.39049

You will soon notice a metal staircase on the east bank 500 yards from the boat launch. It's a great place for a picnic, but no bathrooms are available. Up the staircase there is an area perfect for resting and enjoying a picnic lunch or snack.

Rooty Cypress
N32.344595, W91.39372

Continuing west, you will come around the S-shaped bend of the lake. There's a giant bald cypress, towers upward and commands the eastern bank.

Cypress Twins
N32.344683, W91.393948

Just past “Rooty Cypress” more giant cypresses rise, the “Cypress Twins,” whose combined root base is wider than the length of a 16-foot canoe! Don’t be tempted to turn around just because you can see the end of the lake. If you do, you will miss the thickest and biggest stand of cypress.

End of the Lake, Cypress Cathedral
N32.340728, W91.398227

“Cypress Cathedral” towers upward from a shallow inlet that becomes an impassable bayou at lake’s end. Paddle in a short way for an unforgettable experience. You will feel like a visitor in a land of the giants.

Pecan Cave
N32.350988, W91.390698

Continue to the far northern end and look for the two caves of foliage. The west bank cave is created by a pecan tree, and on the east by a big cypress. Paddle into these caves for shade and the amazing views through the leaves.

Overhanging Red Oak
N32.350705, W91.390222

This is one last tree to note. It’s a giant red oak overhanging the lake from west bank. You can paddle under the large overhanging branches and look for wildlife.

Indian Lake
(2.95 Miles)
Google Map of Trail: http://goo.gl/maps/mboeD

Indian Lake Boat Launch
N32.289672, W91.45144

Put in at base of ramp and paddle south into the clear waters of Indian Lake. Follow outside edge for glimpses of animals and plants in the forest and possible alligator sightings. Egrets, herons and other wading birds commonly are seen flying over or fishing from the shoreline.

Halfway along its length, Indian Lake makes an elbow bend slightly south-southwest. Keep paddling to the far end of the lake where a small tributary enters behind a peninsula. Paddle a short way up this tributary or turn around and head back to the parking area. For a change of scenery, paddle down the opposite side.

Large Cypress Tree
N32.276925, W91.454555

A large cypress tree stands in the water at the elbow bend on the west bank. You can paddle up to its base and photograph the interesting array of fluted buttresses and sharp knees.

South End of Lake
W32.270078, N91.457552

Further Exploration Around Indian Lake:
Lick Bayou
N32.289743, W91.451323

Paddle under the bridge near the Indian Lake landing and follow the bayou upstream through a canyon of wild hibiscus, that gives way to a cypress and bottomland hardwood forest. Otters and beavers make their homes along the bank, and turtles and snakes often are seen.

Indian Bayou to Tensas River
N32.28947, W91.450067

Follow lake edge northeast into a striking inlet that narrows into a snaky bayou that leads down to the Tensas River. You will encounter snags, fallen tree obstructions and other obstacles along the way. Close encounters with spiders, snakes, gators and poison ivy also are possible. 1.5 miles total. For the adventurous only. Not passable during low lake levels.