# PEARL RIVER
## PADDLING TRAIL

# TRAIL DETAILS

## The Pearl River is a paddler's paradise.

This trail is entirely within the greater Jackson metropolitan area. It has a remote feel to it, in spite of one bridge crossing, distant traffic sounds, and occasional overflights. Luxurious white sandbars abound inviting picnicking and exploring.

# TRAIL DETAILS

**Length**: 10.4 miles

**Experience Level:** Easy day trip suitable for beginners in low to medium water. Not recommended for beginners in high water.

**Time:** 2–4 hours.

**Put In:** Ross Barnett Reservoir Spillway Boat Ramp, north side.

**Take Out**: LeFleur's Bluff State Park Ramp at Mayes Lake.

**Services**: Local services available. Entire trail is within greater Jackson metro area.

### GOOGLE MAP

For a detailed map of the river trail, visit http://goo.gl/maps/OMrBL

### RECOMMENDATIONS

- **Year-round:** Life jacket, extra paddle, water, food, cell phone in dry bag, rubber barn boots, spongers and bailers, extra rope, fire starter, first aid kid, emergency gear, camera, and rain gear.
- **Summer:** Hat, sunglasses, bug spray, sunscreen, and lightweight long sleeve shirt.
- **Winter:** Thermal layers, waterproof outerwear, and extra clothes in dry bag.

Land on the east side of the Pearl River – at stops 4, 5, 15, and 16 – is currently proposed to become an urban national wildlife refuge. For more information go to http://www.fws.gov/southeast/ProposedMSRefuge/

# WATER LEVEL & HAZARDS

For the current water level reading, check the Pearl River Gage (PRG) at Highway 80, http://waterdata.usgs.gov/ms/nwis/uv/?site_no=02486000.

Below is a general guide for paddlers.

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| < 5 ft | Very Low | Numerous shoals and steep, muddy banks |
| 5-10 ft | Low | Slow water |
| 10-20 ft | Medium | Best paddling |
| 25 ft | High | Bankfull |
| 25-30 ft | High to very high | Fast water, strainers, and dangerous snags |

Visit the website **www.mswatertrails.com** for more information on reading the river gages and river levels for the Pearl River.

## HAZARDS

- **Dangerous spillway!** Do not approach fast turbulent water exploding from underneath Ross Barnett Dam at put in.
- **Dangerous low-head dam!** Low-head dam 300 yards below take out. No way to avoid structure. Portage behind.
- Some possible shoals at low water.
- Watch for snags, strainers, and other swiftwater hazards at high water (>25 feet PRG Hwy 80).
- Beware of snakes, spiders, and alligators.
- Wear hunter orange during hunting season when exploring woods.

# WILDLIFE

Vast riparian bottomland forests and swamp wetlands border the river, which make it ideal for multitudes of animals, birds, fishes, and invertebrates. Two federally listed species can be found in the river, the Gulf sturgeon and the ringed map turtle. Use caution on high sandbars that support nesting habitat for the ringed map turtle. Do not disturb these turtles, even while basking, and avoid trampling their nesting areas during the summer nesting season.

*Ringed map turtle*

Photo by Dr. Robert Jones, Mississippi Museum of Natural Science

Extensive freshwater forested/shrub wetlands with seasonally flooded bottomland hardwoods and cypress swamps are perfect for observing wildlife and migratory birds. Predominately a Southern floodplain forest comprised of various ecological communities including cypress/tupelo sloughs, bottomland hardwood forest, mixed pine/oak forest, and pure loblolly pine timber stands.

Ross Barnett Reservoir
E County Line Rd
Tougaloo
Old Canton Rd
Brasher Creek
Mule Jail Lake
Pelahatchie Creek
55
Pearl River
Ridgewood Rd
Purple Creek
Hanging Moss Creek
Hogg Creek
25
Le Fleurs Bluff State Park
Lakeland Dr
Flowood Dr
Prairie Branch Creek
1
2
3
4
5
6
7
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Note:
RBD – right bank descending
LBD – left bank descending
Key
Boat ramp
Picnic spot
Warning

*Large sandbar along the river*

*Paddling the Pearl River*

1 **Ross Barnett Reservoir Spillway Boat Ramp – North Side Parking Lot**
**N32.396168, W90.006135**
WARNING! Paddlers beware! Dangerous spillway! Never approach the fast turbulent water exploding from underneath the Ross Barnett Dam. To do so would be foolhardy and might result in capsizing and drowning. After entering river, paddle downstream with the flow and you will be fine.

Park your vehicle and carry your canoe or kayak to any number of good put-in places along the shoreline. There is a narrow concrete ramp, but it is frequented by fishermen, especially on weekends.

2 **Mouth of Old Pelahatchie Creek – Mile 0**
**N32.393551, W90.065317**
Creek goes several hundred yards through bottomland hardwood forests below dam. Alternate launch from this side of river via Pelahatchie from parking lot. Pearl River Valley Water Supply District - public land LBD.

3 **Old Channel Lake & Wetlands – Mile 0.5**
**N32.391232, W90.071197**
Make landing RBD and follow narrow creek up to a blackwater lake. Excellent place to sneak up on unsuspecting wading birds. Further on is a lowland that was an old Pearl River channel. Pearl River Valley Water Supply District - public land LBD.

*Blackberry*

*Enjoying the scenery*

**4** **Mule Jail Lake – Mile 1.2, RBD**
**N32.391413, W90.080338**
During the Civil War, farmers gathered up their livestock and moved them to this spot in an oxbow and dug a river channel by hand to cut off access to the property, thus creating Mule Island. As the Union army moved through Jackson, the troops thought that the corridor was a part of the natural river and did not explore the island. Thus, the animals were spared the sword and many farmers were able to work their fields after the Union army departed. Private property – no access.

**5** **Brasher Creek – Mile 1.4, RBD**
**N32.391776, W90.084157**
This channelized creek may be explored depending on river level.

**6** **Cove and wetlands – Mile 3.4**
**N32.382861, W90.099607**
River makes a bend. Small creek enters RBD at the elbow. Explore the wetlands and lake-sized cove beyond at medium to high water levels (>15 feet). Good waterfowl viewing.

**7** **High sandbar – Mile 3.5, LBD**
**N32.380215, W90.099993**
One of the most beautiful sandbars along this stretch of the river. Snowy white sands sculpted into a high bluff topped with flowering vines and the forest behind. Dry sand up to bankfull (around 20 feet).

**8** **High sandbar – Mile 4.1, RBD**
**N32.373909, W90.098104**
Large sandbar with dry sand up to bankfull (~20 feet). Little sand at 20-24 feet, none at 25 feet.

**9** **River Lake – Mile 4.3**
**N32.375069, W90.102396**
Lake formed by old river channel.

*Bridge at Lakeland Dr.*

*Preparing to put in*

**10** **Water Intake Structure – Mile 4.5**
**N32.368544, W90.102954**
WARNING! Beware of getting trapped against pylons supporting this water intake structure. Strainers. Certain capsize. Be especially cautious during fast water (high water).

**11** **High Sandbar – Mile 5.0**
**N32.365499, W90.101538**
Large high sandbar with lots of texture and clumps of vegetation. Lots of sand up to 20 feet. Limited sand at 20-24 feet, and almost no sand at 25 feet.

**12** **Purple Creek – Mile 5.3**
**N32.367094, W90.105336**
Creek enters the river RBD. Paddle upstream for at least one of the two turns of its meandering course to view overhanging trees covered with resurrection ferns. Possible wildlife viewings.

**13** **Small Sandbar – Mile 5.4**
**N32.365536, W90.104971**
Goes completely under water at 20 feet.

**14** **Hanging Moss Creek (New Mouth) – Mile 5.8**
**N32.361295, W90.10437**
Creek enters the river through a narrow sandbar (visible > 20 feet) RBD. This creek drains a large portion of north Jackson.

**15** **Hanging Moss Creek (Old Mouth) – Mile 6.8**
**N32.351325, W90.111473**
Old creek mouth RBD is filling in but worth paddling up when water is high enough. Like many Pearl River tributaries, Hanging Moss was straightened out in the 1960s and made to enter the Pearl in a new location.

*Fishermen at the spillway*

*Prothonotary Warbler*

Photo by Mark Musselman/USFWS

**16** **Sandbar – Mile 7.5**
**N32.343712, W90.113082**
Last extensive sandbar before take-out. Goes under ~20 feet. Across from this sandbar LBD is Hogg Creek. Paddle up the creek to see scenic cypress sloughs and, in spring and summer, watch for the pretty Prothonotary Warbler.

**17** **Twin Lakes Creek – Mile 8.8**
**N32.333233, W90.129368**
Small creek enters river RBD between wooden bulwarks for floodwater. Drains Twin Lakes/ Eastover Drive area of Jackson.

**18** **Lakeland Dr. – Mile 8.9**
**N32.33015, W90.129519**
WARNING! Paddlers beware! Be cautious paddling in between concrete piers supporting Lakeland Drive, especially during high water (> 25 feet) when swiftwater conditions exist.

**19** **Prairie Branch Creek – Mile 9.8, LBD**
**N32.321864, W-90.138724**
Creek is worth paddling up to look for alligators, amphibians, and fish.

**20** **LeFleur's Bluff State Park Ramp – Mile 10.4**
**N32.325318, W-90.145795**
Concrete ramp RBD from parking area, at end of road in park. No overnight parking. Nearby picnicking and camping at Mayes Lake. Usage fees may apply.

**1/2 mile below take out**
WARNING! **Dangerous low-head dam!**
Pay extra attention at medium water. No way to avoid this obstruction. Entire river spills over dam and rolls into a revolving "keeper" from which even the strongest swimmer could not exit and no flotation device could keep you afloat. Long distance paddlers - cautiously pull into RBD above dam and portage around along the same side. Stay above water intake structure (City of Jackson) and portage behind.

*Flower in the sand*

# INFORMATION

Visit http://www.mswatertrails.com
Google map: http://goo.gl/maps/OMrBL

## RESOURCES

LeFleur's Bluff State Park
2140 Riverside Dr., Jackson, MS 39202
Phone: (601) 987-3923
www.mdwfp.com

For more information contact:
Mississippi's Lower Delta Partnership
401 Walnut Street, Rolling Fork, MS 39159
Phone: (662) 873-6261
www.lowerdelta.org

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