

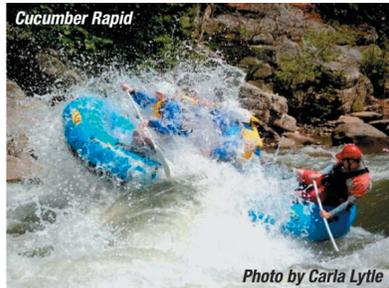


Youghiogheny River Water Trail

Southern Section
Confluence to South Connellsville

Map & Guide

Water trails are recreational waterways on a lake, river, or ocean between specific points, containing access points and day-use and/or camping sites for the boating public. Water trails emphasize low-impact use and promote stewardship of the resources. Explore this unique Pennsylvania water trail.



Cucumber Rapid

Photo by Carla Lytle

For your safety and enjoyment:

- Always wear a life jacket — they're required in Ohiopyle State Park
- Obtain proper instruction in boating skills
- Know fishing and boating regulations
- Be prepared for river hazards
- Carry proper equipment



A LEGENDARY RIVER

The Youghiogheny River is legendary. The Yough flows through Pennsylvania's deepest river gorge, an area of such phenomenal beauty and resources that it has been designated an Important Bird Area, a Biological Diversity Area and Landscape Conservation Area.

When George Washington, the icon of American presidents, reached the Great Falls at Ohiopyle in his canoe in 1754, he abandoned his search for a water route to the Forks of the Ohio, an area so strategically important that it sparked the French & Indian War.

The Falls, about 20 feet high and 150 feet wide, cascade over tough Pottsville sandstone in the heart of the 20,000-acre Ohiopyle State Park — one of the most noted state parks in the Eastern United States, attracting 1.5 million visitors a year. The Yough is world-renowned for its whitewater, drawing 100,000 boaters a year for the thrill of rapids that can be run all summer thanks to releases from Youghiogheny River Lake.

The southern Yough is a major angling destination. Trout are stocked year-round below the Yough Lake tailrace and elsewhere. The gorge is open for fishing year-round. Expect more smallmouth bass further down the gorge, plus some walleye, perch, bluegill and crappies.

YOUGHIOGHENY WATER TRAIL

The Youghiogheny River, known as the Yough or "Yawk," is unusual in that it flows north for 132 miles, including 74 miles in Pennsylvania. It flows from Maryland and West Virginia to the Monongahela River in McKeesport, south of Pittsburgh. Youghiogheny means "stream flowing in a contrary direction" or "in a roundabout course," likely referring to the "U" turn the river makes around Ferncliff Peninsula.

The southern section of the Yough in Pennsylvania flows north for 39 miles — 11 miles in Youghiogheny River Lake, an Army Corps of Engineers flood-control dam that augments flow for boating and the environment, and 28 miles that flow free through Ohiopyle to South Connellsville, where a hazardous dam must be avoided. The Middle Yough above Ohiopyle has Class I and II rapids, a few of which hit Class III in high flows. It drops 11 feet per mile. The Lower Yough below Ohiopyle is famous for Class III and IV whitewater with an average gradient of 25 feet per mile.

The northern Yough remains largely undeveloped but loses its wildness as it continues 46 miles, falling a more modest 5.5 feet per mile from Connellsville to West Newton and a mere 1 foot per mile as it approaches the Monongahela, which flows to the Ohio and Mississippi Rivers and the Gulf of Mexico.

The entire water trail is rarely too low to navigate because of releases from Yough Dam.

STEWARDSHIP

Help care for the land, water and cultural resources along the Youghiogheny River by respecting wildlife, nature and other recreationists. It is important to wash footwear, boats and vehicles to minimize the spread of invasive species from one place to another. "Leave No Trace," a national outdoor ethics program, provides some guidelines to minimize your impact. For more information, visit www.Lnt.org.

Leave no trace for camping and day use:

1. Plan and prepare
2. Travel and camp on durable surfaces
3. Dispose of waste properly
4. Leave what you find
5. Minimize campfires
6. Respect wildlife
7. Be considerate of other visitors

RESPECT THE PRIVACY & RIGHTS OF LANDOWNERS

Please respect the privacy and rights of landowners along this trail by obtaining permission before entering any privately owned land. Unless you are otherwise certain, assume the land is private property. In any case, avoid loud noises and boisterous behavior. Remember: sound carries across water more clearly than on land. Use the same courtesy you would want. A friendly wave or quiet greeting is always welcome.



Photo by Brad Clemenson

PENNSYLVANIA BOATING REGULATIONS

- Life jackets must be worn by all boaters within Ohiopyle State Park. No power boats are allowed in the State Park. Elsewhere, the following regulations apply.
- One wearable, Coast Guard-approved personal flotation device (PFD or life jacket) in serviceable condition and of the appropriate size is required for each person in your boat. If your boat is 16 feet or longer, one throwable device (seat cushion or ring buoy) is required. Canoes and kayaks, regardless of length, are not required to carry a throwable device.
- Life jackets must be worn by all children 12 years and younger on all boats 20 feet or less in length while under way, and on all canoes and kayaks. Others are strongly encouraged to wear a life jacket at all times on the water outside of the park.
- All boats must display an anchor light (a white light visible 360 degrees) when at anchor between sunset and sunrise. Boats can use a lantern or clip-on battery-powered unit to meet this requirement.
- All powered boats must show running lights between sunset and sunrise. Between sunset and sunrise, unpowered boats must carry a white light (visible 360 degrees), installed or portable, ready to be displayed in time to avoid a collision.
- All motorboats are required to carry a sound-producing mechanical device audible for a half-mile. Athletic whistles meet this requirement.
- All motorboats must be registered regardless of where they launch.
- Unpowered boats (canoes, kayaks, rowboats, rafts) using Pennsylvania Fish & Boat Commission access areas must either be registered OR display a valid launch permit. Launch permits can be purchased on the web at www.fish.state.pa.us.
- Operating watercraft, including canoes, kayaks and rafts, under the influence of alcohol or drugs is illegal. The law is strongly enforced for user safety. For further information on boating regulations, contact the Pennsylvania Fish & Boat Commission at www.fish.state.pa.us.



PADDLING SAFETY TIPS

- **Wear your life jacket.** Some 80 percent of all recreational boating fatalities happen to people who are not wearing a life jacket.
- **Expect to get wet.** Even the best paddlers sometimes capsize or swamp their boats. Bring extra clothing in a waterproof bag.
- **Be prepared to swim.** If the water looks too hazardous too swim in, don't go paddling.
- **If you capsize,** hold on to your boat, unless it presents a life-threatening situation. If floating in current, position yourself on the upstream side of the capsized boat.
- **Scout ahead whenever possible.** Know the river. Avoid surprises.
- **Be prepared for the weather.** Get a forecast before you go. Sudden winds and rain are common and can turn a pleasant trip into a risky, unpleasant venture.
- **Wear wading shoes** or tennis shoes with wool, polypropylene, pile, or neoprene socks.
- **Never take your boat over a low-head dam.**
- **Portage** (carry) your boat around any section of water about which you feel uncertain.
- **Never boat alone.** Boating safety increases with numbers.
- **Keep painter lines** (ropes tied to the bow) and any other ropes coiled and secured.
- **Never tie a rope to yourself** or to another paddler, especially a child.
- **Kneel to increase your stability** before entering rougher water, like a rapid.
- **If you collide with an obstruction, lean toward it.** This will usually prevent your capsizing or flooding the boat.
- **File a float plan** with a reliable person indicating where you are going and when you will return. Remember to contact the person you have returned safely.



Photo by Brad Clemenson

ALONG THE WAY-YOUGHIOGHENY RIVER SOUTH

Mile 74 Youghiogheny River Lake, 1440 feet above sea level, is up to 130 feet deep. It has boat ramps and a public swimming area on its 2,800 acres. The reservoir is managed by the Army Corps of Engineers for flood control, but water is released during summer for low-flow augmentation and recreation. The lake also has three campgrounds, including one near the river.

Outfitters/Boat Rentals			
Mile	Outfitter	Telephone	Web Site
62	Laurel Highlands River Tours	800-472-3846	http://www.laurelhighlands.com
62	Ohiopyle Trading Post	888-OHIOPYLE	http://www.ohiopyletradingpost.com
62	White Water Adventures	880-WWA-RAFT	http://www.wwaraft.com
62	Wilderness Voyageurs	800-272-4141	http://www.wilderness-voyageurs.com
74	Riversport	800-216-6991	http://www.riversportonline.com

Mile 74-63 The Middle Yough runs 11 miles from the lake outflow to Ohiopyle, where all boats must get off the river before Ohiopyle Falls. Several rapids on the Middle Yough are typically Class I or II, denoting rapids with small waves and clear channels that are obvious without scouting, although some maneuvering would be required. At high flows, some rapids become Class III and should be avoided except by experienced boaters. See map for specific location and class of rapid.

Mile 73 Confluence grew as a rail-service and small manufacturing center and today is transitioning to a tourism economy. The area was the site of ancient Indian villages. The town was named Confluence in 1871 when the railroad arrived and it became a bustling center for lumbering and coal mining. The area is known as "the Turkeyfoot" because the Youghiogheny River meets the Casselman River and Laurel Hill Creek here, creating what from the air looks like a turkey's foot. The community has several restaurants and bed-and-breakfasts, as well as nearby campground just downriver.

Mile 72 Ramcat had logging and coal operations; now it's a popular put-in with a campground across the river.

Mile 71-65 Laurel Ridge reaches elevations exceeding 2,900 feet. The Yough carving down through the ridge forms the deepest gorge in Pennsylvania.

Mile 68 Middle Yough Beach is not an access area, just a popular spot for a break. Boaters can walk up a short trail to a clearing and picnic area adjacent to the Great Allegheny Passage.

Mile 66 Victoria: The large, flat area river-right is an oddity in this mountainous area — and right in the middle of the Laurel Ridge Gorge. The hamlet at Victoria once had about six farms and orchards.

Mile Rapid 63.2 Elephant Rock just beyond an overhanging tram is a large, slate-gray boulder that actually looks like an elephant. Stay right through this rapid but then quickly move to the left shore to take out.

Mile 63 Middle Yough Take Out: All boaters must exit here to avoid the extremely dangerous Ohiopyle Falls just downstream. The ramp is located at the end of the parking lot just above the train station visitor center along Sheridan Street in downtown Ohiopyle.

Mile 63-62 Ohiopyle began as a logging community but grew dramatically in the railroad era, when people from Pittsburgh could take an easy train ride to the mountains and river to cool off and relax. The town had five hotels, but as cars replaced train service they went out of business. Information is available at the historic train station visitors center staffed by the Laurel Highlands Visitors Bureau. Ohiopyle Falls, sometimes called "the Great Falls at Ohiopyle," is among the most impressive falls in Pennsylvania and is located across Route 381 from town.

Mile 62.5-61 Ferncliff Peninsula is a National Natural Landmark because of the rare plants that thrive here. The Yough River flows north, so before construction of the Yough Reservoir, the river deposited seeds from the south along the banks here. The river takes a 180-degree meander here, and the depth of the surrounding ridges keeps the temperatures warmer here than in surrounding areas, enabling species more common to the south to prosper here. The Peninsula has a nice walking trail.

Mile 62.5-61 The Loop: Many kayakers come to Ohiopyle just to run "the loop" and spend hours playing in the seven rapids packed into the 1.4-miles around Ferncliff Peninsula, putting on at access 62 and taking out at access 61. They then either carry back to their car or back across the narrow neck of the peninsula to run the loop again.

Mile 62.5-55 The Lower Yough from Ohiopyle to Bruner Run is one of the most popular whitewater rivers in the East, attracting 100,000 boaters per year. This solid Class III-IV whitewater stream should be run only by experienced boaters or as part of a guided raft outing arranged through an Ohiopyle licensed outfitter. Over the years, many whitewater competitions and trials have been held on the Yough, such as the Whitewater Open Canoe

Downriver National Championships and the U.S. National Wildwater Team Trials in 2007. A permit and bus token are needed for access at Bruner Run in season (see Access section).

Mile 58 Bear Run-Fallingwater: The little stream coming out under the CSX Railroad mainline on river-right is Bear Run, and just upstream

is the most famous house museum in the country, Fallingwater, the Frank Lloyd Wright masterpiece that was built literally on top of a small waterfall in this stream.

Mile 57-46 Chestnut Ridge is the western-most mountain in the Allegheny Mountains geologic region and historic Bowest, just 0.2 mile above South Connellsville Dam, is the dividing line between the Allegheny Mountains and the Pittsburgh High Plateau.

Mile 55 Bruner Run is well known for its river access, but once had a sawmill supported by a 7-mile logging railroad, boarding house, store and several houses, as well as a cable bridge to the B&O Railroad station across the river at Stewarton.

Mile 55-47 Bruner Run-to-South Connellsville offers Class II-III whitewater and, with access problems, lots of birds and wildlife. See the access section for seasonal shuttling needed at Bruner Run, and the South Connellsville Rod & Gun Club take out is for members only.

Mile 51.5 Indian Creek on river-right drains 125 square miles. It has been heavily impacted by abandoned mine drainage; several restoration projects have dramatically improved the stream. A trail is proposed down the steep gorge to the river. Camp Carmel, a private religious-affiliated facility, is located across the river.

Mile 46 South Connellsville Dam is extremely hazardous. The only take-out is restricted to members of South Connellsville Rod & Gun Club (see access section). Options for a public access are being explored.

Mile 44 Connellsville: The city grew as a transportation hub where Braddock's Road crossed the native Americans' Catawba Trail. The city has four sites on the National Register of Historic Places and its downtown retains significant historic character. Yough River Park is a popular put-in and trailhead with basic food and WiFi for internet.

NATURAL RESOURCES

The adjacent mountains once were as tall as the Andes, taller than today's Rockies. Yet the Youghiogheny managed to slice down through them, creating what today is Pennsylvania's deepest river gorge.

The steep, forested ridges and tough Pottsville sandstone ledges and boulders strewn about the gorge make this one of the most beautiful sections of river anywhere. Yes... anywhere.

Ohiopyle State Park surrounding most of this corridor is one of the largest parks in Pennsylvania, including 28 miles of the Yough River corridor. The most striking natural feature is Ohiopyle Falls, but the park has four other waterfalls and trails with scenic overlooks of the Yough gorge through Laurel Ridge, which reaches 2,920 feet in the park.

Along the river there are rocky banks, steep hillsides covered with rhododendron and mountain laurel, mixed deciduous forest, and open meadows. Fox, deer, fishers, river otters, red-breasted mergansers, cedar waxwings, and other wildlife can occasionally be spotted from the river. And the fishing is extraordinary with trophy-sized trout, muskellunge, northern pike, walleye, bass and other panfish.

The corridor is widely noted for its biological diversity, which is significant for the eastern United States. Ferncliff Peninsula is a National Natural Landmark where the steeply carved valley remains warmer than surrounding areas, enabling 17 plants of special concern to survive here. In the Chestnut Ridge gorge below Ferncliff, more rare species survive, including species in ice-scour areas that survived because the ice removed competition. Bedrock shelves and boulders also provide habitat for threatened or endangered species such as rock grape, Carolina tassel-rue and large-flowered Marshallia. Invasive threats to native plants include Japanese knotweed, Japanese spirea, multiflora rose and garlic mustard.

Threatened or endangered animal species include the eastern woodrat and two bat species. The gorge and state park were designated as an Important Bird Area and an Important Mammal Area because many species use the large forest.

THROUGH THE CORRIDOR

The Great Allegheny Passage is a 132-mile hiking and biking trail from McKeesport, PA, to Cumberland, MD, where it connects to the C&O Canal Towpath for a 316-mile off-road route from near Pittsburgh to Washington, DC. An international attraction, this near-level rail-trail parallels the Yough River and other streams. Lodging and other services near the trail and river are listed at <http://www.gaptrail.org/> or <http://www.trailtowns.org/>.

Most of the Yough River corridor is located in Pennsylvania's scenic Laurel Highlands, where the Pennsylvania Department of Conservation & Natural Resources is supporting sustainable outdoor recreation, including development of this water trail. Laurel Highlands Visitors Bureau provides a wealth of information about the area at <http://www.laurelhighlands.org/>.



Courtesy Western Pennsylvania Conservancy