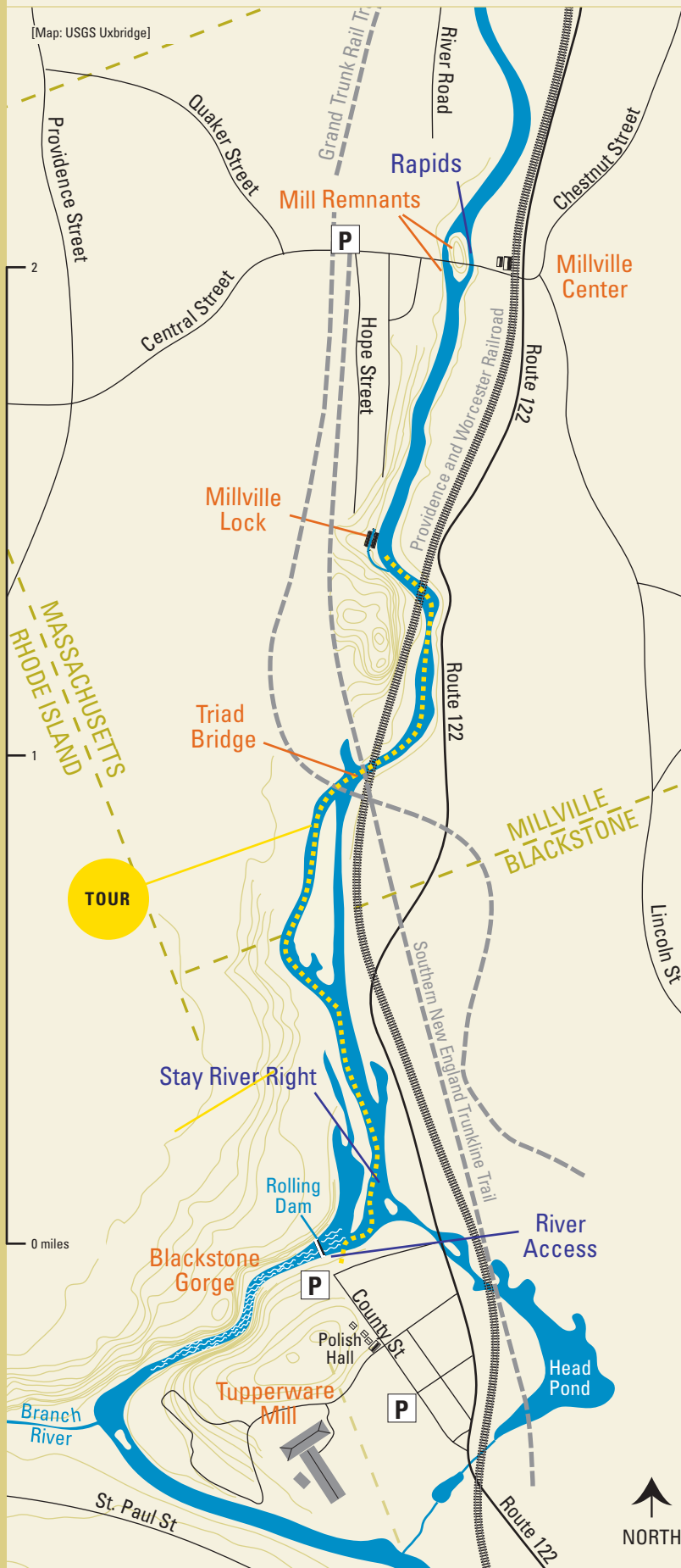


BLACKSTONE RIVER & CANAL GUIDE

Blackstone Gorge to Millville Lock – *Beginner Tours, Massachusetts*



Level Beginning
Start / End . . Blackstone Gorge / Blackstone, MA
River Miles . 3.5 miles round-trip
Time 1-2 hours
Description . Flatwater
Scenery . . . Rural, Forested, Canal Lock
Portages . . . None

A glimpse of the Valley's transportation history.

Follow signs off of Route 122 in Blackstone to the Blackstone Gorge on County Street in Blackstone. The put-in is a short walk from the parking area to just above the Rolling Dam (1886). The Rolling Dam is large and backs up a lot of water into a millpond that was used to power the Blackstone Manufacturing Company (1904) and currently provides waterpower for hydroelectricity. The river is wide here and paddlers are more susceptible to dealing with wind as an element, pushing the canoe or making you work really hard to get to your destination. This trip is not advised in high water. Check the water level before planning this trip – if there is a lot of water spilling over Rolling Dam do not attempt to put-in and paddle up-river.

About one mile up river you pass under the “Triad Bridge” where three railroad lines were to cross at a point forming a three-tiered bridge. While the top most decking was never completed, two abutments tower above the river below. At about 1½ miles (after the second P&W Railroad Bridge) look carefully on the left bank for the Millville Lock (1828) at the end of Hope Street. For the best view of the lock, pull out on river left and walk the 10 yards from the river bank to the lock. This is the best preserved lock on the Blackstone Canal.

You can continue to paddle up stream to Central Street in Millville, just below the rapids that flow on your right under the bridge. Just before the Central Street bridge is a 2 acre island that serves as a bridge support and divides the river. The island was the site of a succession of mills – a grist mill (1732), a sawmill (1753), and the first woolen mill (1814) in the Blackstone Valley, among others. The remains of the Stone Mill (1825), which burned in 1874, is the most visible part of the factory complex which grew up on the west bank of the river.

After exploring Millville, return to the Blackstone Gorge by paddling back downriver. A short distance above the Rolling Dam stay river right. The left channel provides water to power the Tupperware hydro plant. The river is flat and wide back to the take-out just above Rolling Mill Dam at the entrance to the Blackstone Gorge at the end of County Street. Take out where you began on river left being cautious of the dam.

For more information on this part of the Blackstone River, pick up a *Blackstone Canal Walking Tour*, or *Millville, MA Walking Tour brochure* at a Visitor Center.

Associated River Tours: *Stanley Woolen Mill to the Blackstone Gorge* and *Plummer's Landing to River Bend Farm*.

Directions to Blackstone Gorge

From Route 146 North:

- Take the Forestdale/Slatersville Rts. 5 & 102 exit.
- Turn RIGHT onto School Street and go a short distance to next stop.
- Turn RIGHT onto Great Road/146A.

From Route 146 South

- Take Forestdale/Slatersville/Routes 5 & 102 Exit.
- Turn LEFT onto Great Road/146A.

From Great Road/146A

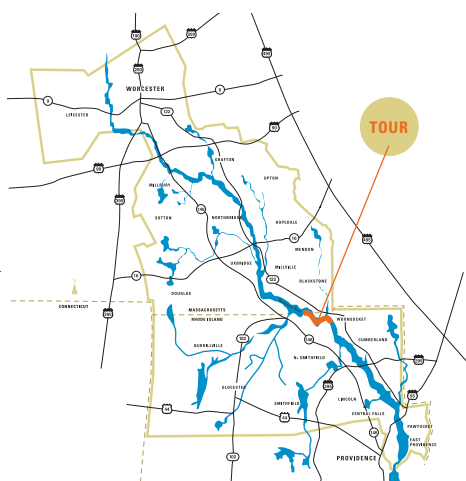
- Go about 1/2 mile to traffic light.
- Turn LEFT at traffic light onto St. Paul Street.
- Continue about 1.5 miles and go under 2 railroad overpasses.
- Continue straight past Blackstone Town Offices on right to stop at traffic light intersection with Main Street.
- Turn LEFT onto Main Street.
- Continue about 1 mile to County Street on LEFT. (Rust Colored Corridor sign marks the turn for the Blackstone Gorge)
- Follow County Street several blocks to the parking area on the left just before the end of the street at the Rolling Dam Overlook area.

THE BLACKSTONE RIVER VALLEY GENERAL INFORMATION

Water in the Blackstone River drops 450 feet in its 46 mile journey from Worcester, MA to Pawtucket, RI, and eventually empties into the Narragansett Bay in Providence. It runs through urban areas, historic mill villages, past farmland and through forests, inviting paddlers to explore the physical remnants of its heritage including canal locks and mill structures. Dropping an average of ten feet per mile, it is interwoven with canal segments and flows over 18 dams.

While noted for its industrial heritage, the river also offers many great recreational opportunities for flat water and quick water paddling.

The industrial history of the Blackstone Valley can be attributed to the power of the Blackstone River. While in most places the river is narrow and shallow, the power of its water flow should never be taken for granted. During times of heavy rain or major snow melt, the water level of the river will rise quickly, significantly increasing its speed and presenting new obstacles for paddlers. In high water, strainers or sweepers are common along the banks of the Blackstone and require the paddler's full attention. All levels of paddlers need to respect the power of the river and be aware that the water flow can fluctuate wildly over a short period of time, quickly creating challenging conditions. **Please wear a Personal Flotation Device (PFD) at all times when paddling the Blackstone River.** Paddlers should check the water level, weather, and river conditions prior to every trip. For more information on this see the "Contacts" section. Enjoy discovering why the Blackstone River was once called "America's Hardest Working River."



Blackstone River Tours

The Water Trail Tours are divided into different paddling skill levels and provide information to river users to help plan their trip on the Blackstone River. Tour information will allow you to determine the skill level required, the approximate amount of time needed to complete the trip, location of dams and other obstacles requiring portages, the location of facilities, and some information about the various natural and historic features. References in the text of the tours to "river right" and "river left" refer to the paddler's orientation facing downriver.

Portages

Portages are listed at the beginning of each tour. Required portages, such as dams, rapids and canal/river loops are noted on the map and in the accompanying text. Be aware: there are currently no warnings of approaching dams, and they are not always obvious from upstream. There are currently 18 dams along the River and most tours involve a portage.

Be prepared for a "wet portage". Rubber soled shoes that can get wet are a must for any paddling trip on the Blackstone River. Getting in and out of your boat in water and mud is part of every trip.

Assume that all land bordering the river is private property. Therefore, please be courteous and show respect for these lands. Portage quickly; do not loiter. Help foster a spirit of cooperation between riverfront landowners and recreational paddlers.

Trip Times

Many variables influence the amount of time required to paddle a mile of river. Water conditions exert the greatest influence, while wind, weather and the paddler's approach – athletic or leisurely – will all have an influence on the travel time. Most paddlers can expect to paddle approximately three miles per hour on a typical late spring day with minimal wind. Additional time is needed for portaging.

Contacts

For current water levels on the Blackstone River, go to the website: <http://waterdata.usgs.gov/ma/nwis/current/?type=flow>

At the Northbridge, MA gauge, any reading above 5 feet should be considered high water. At the Woonsocket, RI gauge, any reading above 2500 cfs should be considered high water.

For more about paddling the Blackstone River

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One Depot Square, Woonsocket, RI 02895,
401.762-0250
www.nps.gov/blac/home.htm
www.zaptheblackstone.org

Blackstone River and Canal Heritage State Park
508.278.7604, www.mass.gov/dcr/parks/central/blst.htm

Great Canadian Canoe Co.
508.865-0010 or 800.98-CANOE, www.greatcanadian.com

Wild Bird Gardens, 508.234.0111, www.wildbirdgardens.com

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BLACKSTONE RIVER VALLEY

National Heritage Corridor Commission

