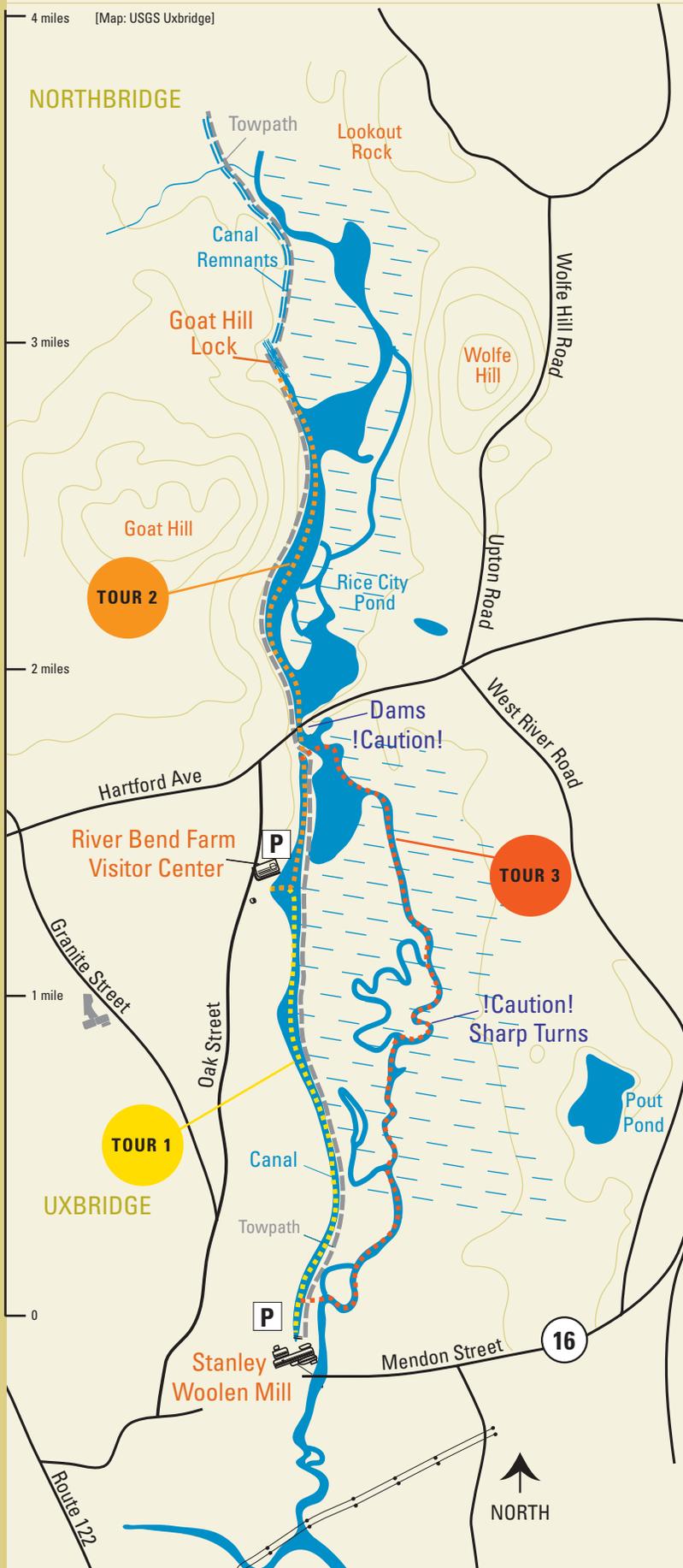


BLACKSTONE RIVER & CANAL GUIDE

River Bend Farm – Beginner and Intermediate Tours, Massachusetts



Tour 1 & 2

Level Beginner – Blackstone Canal to Stanley Woolen Mill or
Blackstone Canal to Rice City Pond and the Goat Hill Lock

Start / End . . River Bend Farm

Time Approx. 1 hour

Description. Flatwater

Portages . . . One portage on Tour 2

Put-in is at the River Bend Farm Visitor Center in the Blackstone River & Canal Heritage State Park in Uxbridge, MA. The watered section of the canal can be paddled in either direction, south to the Stanley Woolen Mill (Tour 1) or north towards Rice City Pond (Tour 2).

If you choose to head south, it is a leisurely paddle in the Blackstone Canal down to the Stanley Woolen Mill and back. The canal towpath runs along the side of the canal. If you choose to proceed north, paddle up the canal a short distance, then portage north and proceed up the Blackstone Canal. Look for a small backwater section on your left that will lead to a preserved canal-era artifact: the Goat Hill Lock (1827). This is one of four remaining locks along the Blackstone River. From 1828 to 1848 a series of 48 canal locks helped boats ascend and descend the elevation changes between Worcester and Providence. Return by the same route.

Tour 3

Level Intermediate

Blackstone River to Canal Loop

Start / End . . River Bend Farm

Time Approx. 2 hours

Description. Flatwater and quickwater with possible obstacles

Portages . . . Two portages, canal to river and river to canal

For an intermediate tour, paddlers can head north up the canal from the Visitor Center, portage over to the River to paddle south and then portage back over to the Canal for a river/canal trail loop. This section of the Blackstone River can require more skillful paddling. With its many twists and turns, you must be able to maneuver around strainers and through S-curves. This section of the river can be difficult if the water is high. You can check at the spillway at Hartford Avenue (when you portage) – if the water is pouring over the spillway, the river is high and this section will be more difficult than in lower water. Paddle south in the River and look for the portage steps on river right to portage over to the canal at Stanley Woolen Mill (1853) and back up the canal to River Bend Farm.

For more information about this part of the Blackstone River, pick up a *Blackstone Canal Walking Tour brochure* at the River Bend Visitor Center.

Related River Tours: *River Bend Farm to Blackstone Gorge (Intermediate)*

Directions to River Bend Farm

Blackstone River and Canal Heritage State Park

Oak Street, Uxbridge, 508-278-7604

From Route 146 North or South:

- Take the exit for Route 16.
- From 146 North, turn RIGHT onto Rt. 16 East.
From 146 South, turn LEFT onto Rt. 16 East.
- Continue to the traffic light in Uxbridge Center
- Turn LEFT at light onto Main Street/Route 122 North.
- Continue over a mile to the next traffic light at Hartford Ave.
- Turn RIGHT onto Hartford Avenue.
- Continue straight through 4-way stop intersection at Granite St.
- As you're coming down the next hill, take a sharp RIGHT turn onto Oak Street at the Medical Center.
- Continue less than 1/4 mile to River Bend Farm Visitor Center on your left.

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

