

Elkhorn River CANOE TRAIL



NEBRASKA GAME AND PARKS COMMISSION

PO Box 30370, Lincoln, NE 68503
402-471-0641 • www.outdoornebraska.org

GENERAL INFORMATION

The Elkhorn River originates in lush hay meadow land in the north-central counties of Holt and Rock and ends near Gretna at its confluence with the Platte River. Flows vary considerably along its entire length depending on snow melt, rainfall and irrigation demand. Normally, the best times to canoe are spring and fall. Spring rains can produce destructive flooding, causing more damage along the Elkhorn than any other river basin in Nebraska.

SECTION DESCRIBED

Upper Elkhorn River - Norfolk to U.S. 275 Bridge (north of Scribner) — 58 miles.

Lower Elkhorn River - U.S. 275 Bridge (north of Scribner) to Waterloo — 60 miles.

CHARACTERISTICS

The Elkhorn is a smooth flowing, meandering river and the channel varies from year to year. You will encounter numerous sandbars and areas too shallow to canoe during the summer. Some skill is needed for reading the flow of the water to reduce the amount of walking. River travelers might encounter snags, large limbs and logs which may partially block the river channel. Canoeists should exercise caution and stay clear of these obstructions; portage when necessary.

Water levels can change overnight because of storms, which may rapidly raise water levels. The lack of rainfall along with irrigation practices can cause water levels too low to canoe.

ACCESS SITES AND POINTS OF INTEREST

UPPER ELKHORN RIVER

Start south of **Norfolk at TaHaZouka Park**, which is located on the east side of U.S. 81. The launch site is on the southeast corner of the park. Camping, restrooms and showers are available in this park. Fees vary according to services used. From Norfolk to **Wood Duck Wildlife Management Area (WMA)** is 11 river miles (4-5 hours). Only primitive camping is available. There are no restroom facilities and no open fires are allowed. There is parking and river access. From Wood Duck WMA to **Stanton** is 5 river miles (2 hours). There is river access near the fairgrounds in Stanton; you may need to portage a hundred yards to the river and the ramp may be muddy and difficult to use. Maskenthine Lake and Recreation Area, about 5 miles north of Stanton, has camping facilities available. Fees vary according to the services used.

Stanton to the **Nebraska 15 Bridge**, (south of Pilger), is 9 river miles (3-4 hours). The launch area is on the northeast, or downstream side of the bridge. Follow the trail road located north of the bridge on the east side of the road. Park behind the safety fence. On the southeast, or downstream side of the bridge is the **Red Fox Wildlife Management Area (WMA)**, with parking

and primitive camping available. No open fires are allowed. Red Fox WMA to **Black Island Wildlife Management Area (WMA)** is 3 river miles (1+ hours). This WMA is on the north, or left hand side of the river, and has access to the river after about a 300 foot portage. Road access to Black Island WMA is by a connecting county road east from the town of Pilger to U.S. 275 northwest of Wisner. Primitive camping and parking are available. **No** open fires are allowed.

Black Island WMA to **Wisner River Park** is 5 miles (2-3 hours). The park offers good river access, camping, potable water and restroom facilities. Fees vary. The park extends along the river and river access is available using a small concrete ramp or using the riverbank on the quarter mile stretch of river access bordering the park. From Wisner to the **Nebraska 32 bridge at West Point**, is 16 river miles (6-7 hours).

The river may be accessed on the southwest or upstream side of the bridge, with parking available behind the safety fence. Camping and restroom facilities are available on the east side of the river at the **West Point Riverside Park**. West Point to **U.S. 275 bridge, north of Scribner** is 9 river miles (4 hours). Access to the river is on the southwest or upstream corner of the bridge which is directly north of the **Powder Horn Wildlife Management Area (WMA)**, where parking is available. Parking along the highway is not recommended. Safely carrying canoes and gear to the WMA is not difficult. **Upper Elkhorn canoe trip ends.**

STARTING THE LOWER ELKHORN CANOE TRIP

Dead Timber State Recreation Area (SRA) and camping is 3 miles north from the Powder Horn WMA parking lot. There is no river access from this site. Begin at the **U.S. 275 bridge** north of Scribner. The trip to the **Scribner Riverview Park** is 5 river miles (2 hours). River access is on the southwest or upstream side of bridge. **Scribner** to the bridge, north of **Hooper** is 8 river miles (3-4 hours). Access is on the southeast or downstream side of the bridge but is not recommended because of the proximity to the public roadway. Use this site as a drop-off area because there is no parking. Hooper to the **County Road Bridge east of Winslow** is 7.5 river miles (3 hours). Canoe access is on the northwest or upstream side of the bridge. Limited parking is available along this road. **Note:** This could be a good spot to end a day trip from Hooper or to start a day trip to Arlington.

Winslow's east county road bridge to the **Nebraska Highway 91 bridge east of Nickerson**, is 7 river miles (2-3 hours). Access at this bridge is possible on the northeast or left side but it is difficult. Nebraska 91 bridge to the **second primitive campsite** near Arlington is 10 river miles (3-5 hours), and is located on the east or left-hand side of the river. Three miles downstream is the U.S. 30 Bridge.

From the second primitive campsite to the **U.S. 30 Bridge, west of Arlington** is 3 river miles (1 hour). Access the river is on the northeast or upstream, left side of the bridge. There is a large parking area; however, there is rock riprap between the parking area and the river. U.S. 30 bridge west of Arlington to **Elkhorn Crossing Recreation Area (3 miles south of Nebraska 36)** is 11 river miles (4-5 hours). This is an access area located on the west or right side of the river and offers camping, a boat ramp, picnic facilities and restrooms.

From Elkhorn Crossing Recreation Area to the **Maple Street Bridge in Waterloo** is 9 river miles (3-4 hours). There is a good launch area on the southeast or downstream left side of the bridge. Access to this area is from the east-bound lane only. Vehicles can be parked off the highway. Exercise extreme caution whenever using river access along a public roadway. **Trip ends.**

SCENERY

Along the river corridor you will canoe past a hilly area with moderate to steep slopes and rounded ridge crests composed of glacial till mantled with loess. Along the river, there are open woodlands and dense forested areas interspersed with farmland in the cleared lowlands. Cottonwood and willow trees dominate the woodlands. Shrubs include black currant, false indigo, red osier, rough-leaved dogwoods and others. Wildlife thrives in this setting.

COMMUNITY AND AREA INFORMATION:

Madison County Visitors Bureau (Norfolk)
(402) 371-2932
Dead Timber State Recreation Area
(402) 664-3597
Schramm Park State Recreation Area
(402) 332-3901
Platte River State Park (402) 234-2217
Louisville State Recreation Area (402) 234-6855

Madison County Sheriff (Norfolk) (402) 370-3573
Stanton County Sheriff (Stanton) (402) 439-2212
Cuming County Sheriff (West Point)
(402) 372-6019
Dodge County Sheriff (Fremont) (402) 727-2700
Washington County Sheriff (Blair) (402) 426-6866
Douglas County Sheriff (Omaha) (402) 444-6641
Sarpy County Sheriff (Papillion) (402) 583-4111

MEDICAL ASSISTANCE:

Faith Regional Health Services
(Norfolk-Hospital) (402) 371-4880
St. Francis Memorial Hospital (West Point)
(402) 721-2404
Fremont Area Medical Center (Fremont-Hospital)
(402) 721-1610

**Dial 911 to reach emergency
personnel in the area.**

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