

# Paddling Alabama



Whether you prefer the adrenalin-pumping thrill of white water paddling or the leisurely enjoyment of beautiful scenery and wildlife, you can find it all in Alabama. An amazing array of sights and experiences are found in our state. Read on for a review of some of the top paddling destinations in Alabama. While this is not a complete listing of Alabama waters, it is an overview of some of the top spots in the state.





# Alabama Paddling Destinations



**1 CAHABA RIVER** – The Cahaba River winds through Birmingham in the central portion of the state. The river is known for its beauty and incredible assortment of plants and fish. Rare and endangered plant species are abundant such as the Alabama croton, Mohr’s Barbara’s-buttons, Nevius’ stonecrop and the beautiful

Cahaba Lily all find a home here. Complementing the state’s variety of fish both rare and unusual include several varieties of darters (goldline, freckled and crystal), the Cahaba shiner and the Alabama sturgeon. Paddling the Cahaba is available to everyone. This is a Class II paddle with multiple access points along the course of the river.

**2 FLINT RIVER** – The Flint River in north central Alabama offers another Class I paddle for the novice that features plentiful scenery with gentle paddling. The paddle starts near the Tennessee border. Canoe rentals can be found in Huntsville, Ala., if you are unable to bring your own.

**3 BARTRAM CANOE TRAIL** – The Bartram canoe trail is located in the Mobile-Tensaw Delta in the southern tip of the state. This is a canoe trail similar to those found in the Everglades where there are sleeping platforms placed along the trail. The delta is the second largest in the nation and like the Cahaba River Valley offers an incredible variety of rare animal and plant species. Reservations are required to spend the night on one of the platforms. For more information visit [www.bartramcanoetrail.com](http://www.bartramcanoetrail.com).



**4 TOWN CREEK** – Moving over to the Sand Mountain area of northeast Alabama is Town Creek. The upper part of Town creek near the town of Geraldine has good water for the novice to intermediate paddler. The lower part of the creek is more technical with Class III waters in some areas.



**5 SHORT CREEK** – Short creek is home to one portion of the North Alabama White Water Paddling Festival events featuring a 20-foot waterfall at Short Creek Falls below the normal takeout point. Otherwise, this is a Class II-III water good for intermediate paddlers.

**6 WARRIOR RIVER** – A variety of moderate boating is found on the Warrior River north of Birmingham near Blountsville. Multiple areas good for beginner to intermediate paddlers explain the popularity of the river. Two main branches are the Mulberry and Locust Fork. The Mulberry is one of the more popular runs for beginning to intermediate paddlers featuring Class I-II waters. The Locust Fork is good water for low time paddlers featuring Class II waters as well.

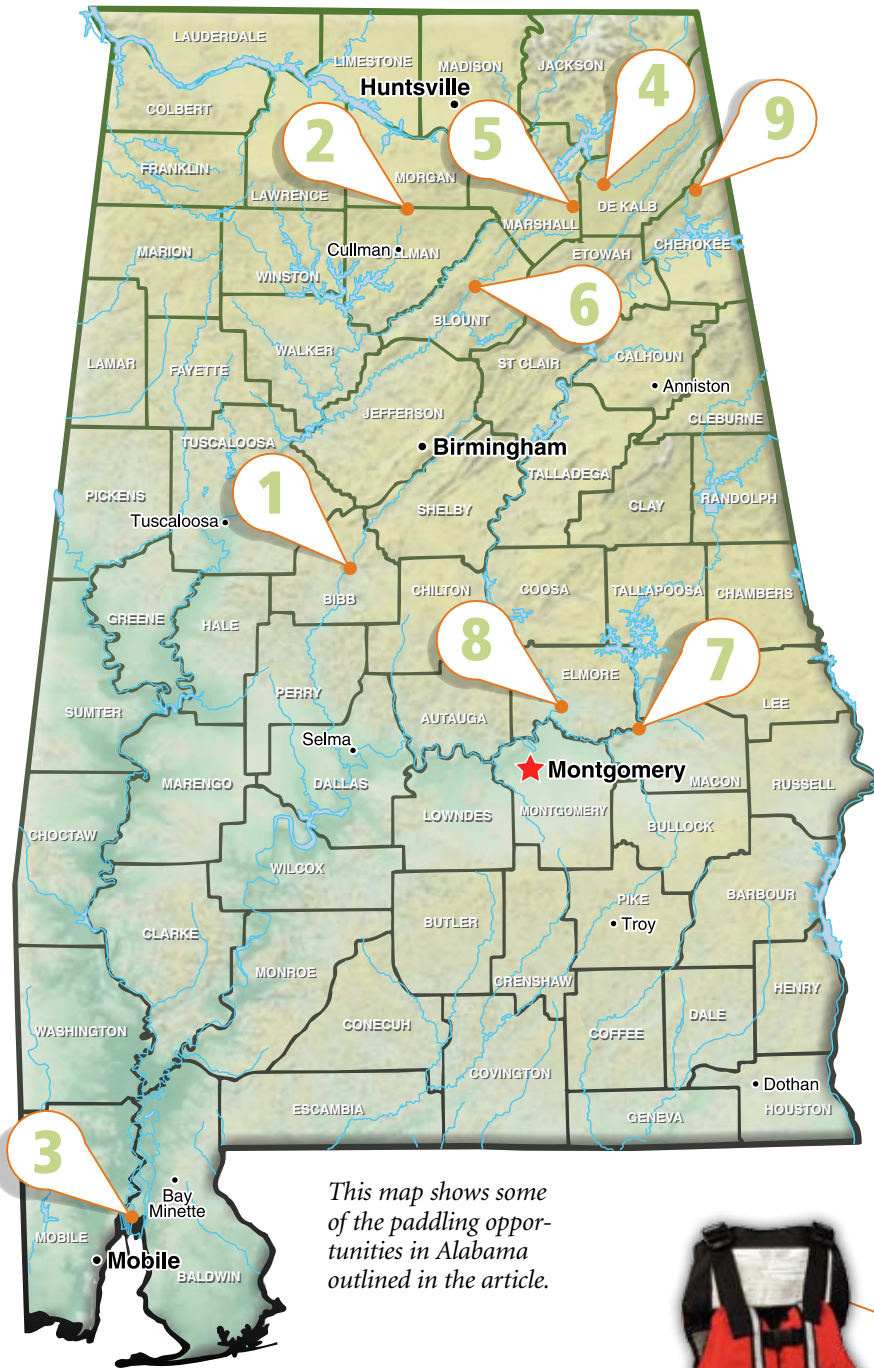
**7 TALLAPOOSA** – the Tallapoosa located southeast of Birmingham and just northeast of Montgomery is the tail water of the Thurlow Dam. The river ranges from Class II-IV. Because of the heavy flows and dangers associated with the run, it is not for beginners.

**8 COOSA RIVER** – The Coosa River is near the Tallapoosa and is another popular paddling venue. This is a Class I-II river with large portions of flat water to strengthen those arms.



**9 LITTLE RIVER** – The Little River, found in the Little River Canyon in the northeast part of the state, has some of the most challenging water in the Southeast. Expert runs (Class V) can be found here with runs named “Suicide” to cheer you on. If you are not up to the challenge of a Class V run then come anyway and enjoy the beautiful scenery of the largest canyon east of the Mississippi.


# Location Map



*This map shows some of the paddling opportunities in Alabama outlined in the article.*

## Summary

Not had enough paddling? The state has the Alabama Scenic River Trail, the longest single state water trail in the nation! The trail starts in the north-east corner of the state on the Georgia border and winds down to the gulf coast on Mobile Bay for a whopping 631 miles of waterways! Learn more at [www.alabamascenicrivertrail.com](http://www.alabamascenicrivertrail.com).

Alabama has a tremendous variety of paddling adventures for the outdoor minded. These adventures range from leisurely nature floats to white knuckle, white water thrill fests. Come visit the many opportunities available on the beautiful waters of Alabama. 



## PADDLING SAFETY

**Whitewater paddling** – and all water sports for that matter – are inherently dangerous. Serious injury or death can occur especially with whitewater sports. Therefore, if you are interested in pursuing white water paddling you must get instruction both on and off the river to participate safely in the sport.

Check with your local canoe club for instructors, but organized classes can be hard to find. The Birmingham Canoe Club offers beginning and intermediate classes for kayakers and canoeists with trips to local rivers. Formal beginner classes are also offered at Jacksonville State University and information on these classes is available by contacting [rmorrison@jsucc.jsu.edu](mailto:rmorrison@jsucc.jsu.edu).

## SAFETY TIPS

- Never paddle alone. Ideally go with two other boaters. This way if you get hurt one can stay with you while the other goes for help.
- Always wear a Coast Guard approved life jacket. A sign at Dale Hollow Lake lists the number of deaths from drowning there. Guess how many were wearing a life jacket? Zero.
- White water paddlers should always wear a helmet. You only have one brain so take care of it.
- If you are paddling new waters, check in with local paddlers for advice on potential dangers and sensitive land use issues at the site.



PFD AND HELMET PROVIDED BY SOUTHERN TRAILS.