

# PADDLING



When it comes to lake kayaking, canoeing, and paddle boarding, locals know that Payette Lake plays second fiddle to the North Fork of the Payette River. This lazy stretch of river was made for meandering. Flanked by soaring pine trees and lush wetlands, it is not uncommon to see deer, eagles, fox, or even the occasional moose on the bank.



## PRO TIP:

MANY RECREATION AREAS ARE OUT OF CELL RANGE. DOWNLOAD MAPS, DIRECTIONS AND GUIDES BEFORE SETTING OUT ON YOUR ADVENTURE!

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## THE MEANDERS

### UPPER NORTH FORK OF THE PAYETTE RIVER

Payette Lake is a scenic show-stopper. This deep alpine lake right in the heart of downtown McCall is perfect for summer boating, sailing, jet skiing, and swimming. When it comes to kayaking, canoeing, and paddle boarding, however, locals know that Payette Lake plays second fiddle to the North Fork of the Payette River.

This lazy stretch of river was made for meandering. Flanked by soaring pine trees and lush wetlands, it is not uncommon to see deer, eagles, fox, or even the occasional moose on the bank. Beneath the surface, schools of fish dart back and forth under your paddles in the crystal clear water.

Gliding down the river, the hustle and bustle of the day fades away. With only the scenic splendor to distract you, it is a perfect setting to catch up on some quality family time. Trust us; laughter just seems to sound better when it carries over the water! Aside from meeting a few fellow paddlers along the way, there is plenty of space to stretch out and enjoy the river.

We recommend launching at the North Beach boat ramp. If you need to rent equipment, Backwoods Adventures is on hand to help you with canoes, kayaks, and stand-up paddle boards (lifejackets included). In the heat of summer, the launch area can be a bit congested, so for the best experience, set out up river. The farther you go, the fewer people you will see. Remember to pack some snacks or a picnic lunch. There are lots of great beaches to stop at along the way!

#### PRO TIP:

Make a reservation for rental equipment in advance. Backwoods Adventures, Gravity Sports, Home Town Sports, and the McCall Sports Exchange all offer summer water rentals.

### PAYETTE LAKE: DUCK BAY TO DOWNTOWN

Payette Lake, Duck Bay to downtown: Sometimes you want to get away from the hustle and bustle, and sometimes, you want to be part of it. You can paddle this 4-mile stretch in either direction, but here's why you should consider north to south. You start at a boat launch in Ponderosa State Park's placid Duck Bay, a scenic spot midway up the peninsula that makes up most of the park. You don't have to go all the way to Duck Bay because there are several access spots so you can tailor your float to your time and energy.

After starting in Duck Bay, you paddle along the park's timbered shoreline, which is lightly developed, mostly with paved paths and campsites.

If it's a weekend or peak summer, don't expect perfectly smooth water. The lake is popular for powerboating and personal watercraft. There's a 300-foot, no-wake zone around the shoreline, but you may still encounter some rolling water.

As you progress, the shoreline gets more developed, with docks, homes, marinas, condos, etc. But take all that as a benefit. Want to stop for a beer or other cold beverage? Swing by Mile High Marina near Legacy Park, or paddle onto the sandy beach and walk to a downtown restaurant for lunch or dinner (or breakfast if you're one of those weird early risers). Most of all, just bask in the glory of a McCall summer day. It's an experience that never gets old.

### CITY OF CASCADE FLOAT

Sometimes, you don't want to overthink it, you want to enjoy a relaxing float on a river, and this section of the North Fork is a prime candidate. It's 2.5 miles from bridge to bridge with a gentle current carrying you along. There's a path along most of this route, which makes a bike shuttle a hassle-free option. There's also a commercial shuttle available during summer.

Start your float below the dam where the Idaho 55 bridge crosses the river on the north end of Cascade. You can take nearly any watercraft that's suitable for moving water, including inner tubes. Try not to miss the second bridge downstream (spoiler alert: you can't). That's the take-out.

So why would this short, mostly flat float strike your fancy? It's relaxing and casual. If you want to add a quick thrill, float through the waves at Kelly's Whitewater Park, which has a series of man-made rapids and waves that are easy to navigate, or avoid by portaging. Have fun splashing in the waves? Get out, hike upstream on the path and do them again. Heck, do it as many times as you want. Not like you have hours of floating ahead of you, more like minutes.

When you get to the take-out at the bridge, you're within walking distance of cold drinks, burgers and other summer staples. This is what a casual float is all about, maximizing the fun on a warm summer day while minimizing the logistics.

## PAYETTE RIVER BASIN WATER TRAILS

The Payette River Basin covers over 3,000 square miles and includes the Deadwood River, the South, Middle, and North Forks of the Payette River, the main Payette River, and tributaries, lakes and reservoirs.

What is a water trail? Water trails are boat routes suitable for canoes, rafts, paddleboards, kayaks, and motorized watercraft. Like pedestrian, equestrian and bicycle trails, water trails are recreational corridors between destinations.



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