

Shoal River Paddling Trail



Shoal River Trip Planning

Counties: Okaloosa

Nearest towns: Crestview

Trip length: 9.5 miles

Difficulty: Easy - Moderate

Skill level: Beginner - Intermediate

Mileage: Mile 0—US 90, Ray Barnes Public Boat Ramp
Mile 9.5—SR 85, Bill Duggan Jr. Park

Two access points on the original 27 miles of the Shoal River designated canoe trail are no longer available. It is no longer possible to access the river on SR 285 (also known as CR 1087) or the bridge on SR 393. As a result the designated trail section is now reduced to 9.5 river miles.

**The provided mileage data is approximate (rounded to the nearest 0.5 mi) and shouldn't be relied upon for navigation.

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Access Point 1 Put-in: US-90 Ray Barnes Public Boat Ramp

Nearest town to put-in: Crestview **Miles from put-in:** 4

Directions to put-in: From Crestview, take US-90 east 4 miles to the bridge over the Shoal River. The Ray Barnes boat ramp is on the north side of the road on the west side of the river.

Access Point 2 Take-out: SR-85 Bill Duggan Jr. Park

Directions to take-out: From Crestview, take SR-85 south 5 miles to the bridge over the Shoal River. The Bill Duggan Jr. Park and boat ramp is on the north side of the river on the east side of SR-85. The park entrance is at the corner of SR-85 and Live Oak Church Road.

Driving distance from put-in to take-out: 9

Topo maps (USGS quads): Crestview North, Crestview South

Gazeteer page: 28

Outfitters within 20 miles of trail: None

Shuttle service offered: N/A

USGS link (water level info):

http://waterdata.usgs.gov/usa/nwis/uv?site_no=02368500 (Near Mossy Head)

http://waterdata.usgs.gov/usa/nwis/uv?site_no=02369000 (Near Crestview)

Break / Lunch areas: There are several sandbars along upper extent of the river that could provide opportunities for rest breaks. Access to these sandbars could be limited depending on water levels. In addition, covered picnic facilities are available at the SR-85 take-out.

Camping options: None

Other lodging: Crestview offers many hotel options.

Food/Beverage restrictions: None

What to expect on the river:

Tidal influence: None

Pull-overs: Possible depending on water levels and recent storm activity.

Low branches: Branches overhanging the water in areas of fast current are possible. Watch for these during periods of high water.

Narrow water: Log jams are possible in some places during periods of high water. These could obstruct the river channel and force paddlers into narrow channels.

Shallow water: Not likely

Strong currents:

Rocks: None

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Houses: Very few

Shoals: None

Tight turns: Possible and more difficult during periods of high water.

Open water: None

Springs: None

Potable water sources: Water is available at the SR 85 access park.

Wildlife: Belted kingfisher, great blue heron, alligators, turtles, deer, wild turkey

Natural communities: Scrub, xeric hammock, floodplain forest

Portages: None

Swimming: Possible but not ideal

Motorboats: Possible

Expect at parking: US-90 Ray Barnes Park and Boat Ramp

- **Parking fee:** No
- **Bathrooms:** No
- **Hours of operation (gates close):** Sunrise - Sunset
- **Camping:** No
- **Camping fees:** N/A
- **Crowds:** No
- **Boat Ramp:** Yes
- **Potable water source:** Yes
- **Canoe/kayak launch:** No

Expect at parking: SR-85

- **Parking fee:** No
- **Bathrooms:** Yes
- **Hours of operation (gates close):** Sunrise - Sunset
- **Camping:** No
- **Camping fees:** No
- **Crowds:** No
- **Boat Ramp:** Yes
- **Potable water source:** Yes
- **Canoe/kayak launch:** Grassy beach next to the boat ramp.

Cultural and historical features along the trail:

None

As with many of the Western Panhandle rivers, the Shoal River changes dramatically with recent rain events. Paddlers are encouraged to check the stream levels ahead of time. During high water, the current may be very swift and paddling technically challenging due to log jams.