

Roanoke River Paddle Trail – Overnight Trip Planning

Trip Planning – Suggested Gear

Paddling gear:

- Canoe or kayak, John boats can make it to most platforms and some accommodate larger boats
- Extra paddle
- PFD
- Rope to tie boat to platform or nearby tree and to secure items in your boat

Camping gear:

- Free-standing tent (some platforms have screen porches, but a shelter of some sort is recommended)
- Sleeping bag and pad
- Camp stove (no open fires allowed at most sites), pots and pans, dishes
- Biodegradable soap for dishwashing
- Drinking water (consider bringing at least 2-3 L per person per day). Filtering the river water is not recommended.
- Camping chairs (please do not string hammocks from platform supports)
- Lantern, flashlight, and/or headlamp
- Sunscreen and insect repellent
- Trash bag – please remove all trash when you depart the platform
- Waterproof dry bags, 5 gallon buckets with lids, or sealable bins are good for gear transport
- First aid kit and cell phone for emergency use, as many sites are remote. Cell phone service may not be available at all locations.
- Portable toilet or bucket, used with kitty litter or disposable “wag bags”. An inexpensive option is a 5-gallon bucket, wag bags, and a foam pool noodle (cut to length, for comfort).

Recommended clothing:

- Pay attention to the weather and pack layers that are appropriate for conditions
- Non-cotton clothing will dry faster and keep you warmer if you get wet
- Lightweight long sleeve shirts and long pants can help in buggy seasons
- Sandals, water shoes, or rubber boots (depending on season/weather)
- Rain coat and pants and/or poncho

Trip Planning – River Levels

Platforms are designed to remain above high water, even during flood stages. However, travel is not recommended when the [USGS river gauge at Williamston](#) is above about 10 feet or [release from the Roanoke Rapids Dam](#) exceeds 18,000 cfs.

Typically, you should try to avoid paddling upstream on the Roanoke River proper, as the current (and winds, if in the wrong direction) can make that challenging. The water is flowing, but there are no rapids on the Lower Roanoke, so strong paddlers can paddle upstream when necessary, especially when river levels are below about 6 feet. Most of the smaller tributaries (including the Cashie River) and cuts can be paddled upstream. Pay attention to wind direction on wider stretches of water like Broad Creek and the lower Cashie River, as headwinds can make paddling very difficult!

Trip Planning – Suggested Itineraries

Two Day – One Night Trips

Owl Overnight: Out-and-Back to Barred Owl Roost

- Out-and-back from NC WRC Astoria Boat Ramp
- 4 miles in 2 days (can be lengthened to a 13 mile through-paddle)
- Easy to Moderate – if flow rates are high, the upstream paddle on the Roanoke River and Devil's Gut will make the trip somewhat more strenuous.
- After a short (less than ¼ mile) paddle upstream on the Roanoke River, enter Devil's Gut. Continue upstream for 1 mile until you reach the mouth of Lower Deadwater Creek. Enjoy the final 0.75 mile, paddling upstream on the creek between beautiful backswamps forested with tupelo gum trees. On Day 2, retrace your route to the boat ramp. Turn this trip into a longer through-paddle by putting in at Williamston, paddling 11 miles down the river and Devil's Gut to Barred Owl Roost, and finishing with the short 2 mile paddle from the platform to the NC WRC Astoria Boat Ramp.

Bear Country Overnight: Out-and-Back to Royal Fern

- Out-and-back from Conaby Creek NC WRC Boat Ramp
- 6 miles in 2 days
- Easy
- This easy paddle takes you 3 miles down Conaby Creek and then up into the wildlife-rich ghost forests near the edge of the Albemarle Sound. Consider bringing a bear canister for your food and toiletries.

Cruise the Cashie: Windsor to Lost Boat to the Hwy 45 Boat Ramp

- Put-in at the Roanoke-Cashie River Center or WRC Boat Ramp in Windsor (1 mile shorter), take-out at the NC WRC Hwy 45 Bridge Boat Ramp
- 23 miles in 2 days
- Moderate – two 10+ mile days
- Float the lower Cashie all the way from Windsor to its mouth near the Albemarle Sound. On the first day, paddle 10-11 miles from Windsor to the Lost Boat Platform, but please tie your boat up so as not to lose it! On day 2, continue down the winding Cashie for about 11 miles to its confluence with the Roanoke. Follow the highway 45 bridge across the braided river to the NC WRC Highway 45 Bridge Boat Ramp. This trip can be shorted by putting in at Johnson Mill and/or taking out at Sans Souci.

Three Day – Two Night Trips

Broad Creek Paddle: Jamesville to Cow Creek to Cypress Cathedral or Three Sisters to Jamesville

- Loop from Astoria Boat Ramp, Jamesville, NC
- 17 miles in 3 days
- Moderate to Strenuous – Pay attention to winds and river level. With high westerly winds and/or strong flow, the paddles upstream on Broad Creek and Cut Cypress Creek can be challenging.
- Float downstream on the Roanoke for about 7.5 miles to the mouth of Broad Creek. From there, it's a short ½ mile paddle upstream to the Cow Creek Platform, tucked into the swampy river's edge. On Day 2, continue up Broad Creek to Cypress Cathedral or Three Sisters, a short 2.5 miles; the rest of the day is yours to explore the multiple tributaries and swamps of Broad Creek's headwaters. On Day 3, paddle back downstream about 1 mile and watch for the small signs (and increased flow) from Cut Cypress Creek. The two mile paddle up Cut Cypress Creek can be challenging if water flow is high, but once you reach the Roanoke, enjoy a float downstream for 4 miles back to the Astoria Boat Ramp. This paddle can be done in 2 longer days and 1 night by omitting the stop at Cow Creek.

Around the Devil's Gut: Williamston to Conine to Barred Owl Roost to Jamesville

- Put-in at the NC WRC Boat Ramp in Williamston, take-out at the NC WRC Astoria Boat Ramp in Jamesville, NC
- 19 miles in 3 days
- Moderate
- On Day 1, paddle about 6 miles down the mighty Roanoke to the Conine Platform on river right, passing the entrance to Devil's Gut along the way. If want to paddle further on Day 1, cross the river and explore the twists and turns of Conine Creek. On Day 2, continue downstream on the Roanoke for 10 miles to the downstream end of Devil's Gut, where you will turn and follow the Gut upstream for a mile to Lower Deadwater Creek. (You can see the take out from the confluence of the Roanoke and the Gut, so if you're running low on food, water, or sunny weather, give up a day early!) Enjoy the final ¾ mile through beautiful water tupelo forest to the Barred Owl Roost platform. On Day 3, explore the swamps around the platform before ending your trip with a short 2 mile paddle back down Upper Deadwater Creek and the end of Devil's Gut to the NC WRC Astoria Boat Ramp.
- If river levels are below about 6 feet, consider this option for Day 2: paddle upstream on the Roanoke from the Conine Platform to the upper end of Devil's Gut, then down the Gut to Upper Deadwater Creek and Barred Owl Roost. This paddle is slightly shorter and more scenic than staying on the Roanoke River.

Longer Trips

Run the River: Williamston to Conine to Cypress Cathedral to Bear Run to Hwy 45 Bridge

- Put-in at the NC WRC Boat Ramp in Williamston, take-out at the NC WRC Hwy 45 Bridge Boat Ramp
- 27 miles in 4 days
- Moderate

- The Lower Roanoke River is home to the largest intact bottomland forest in the mid-Atlantic. Explore this wild and protected land as you run the river from Williamston nearly all the way to the Albemarle Sound. On Day 1, paddle 6 miles from Williamston to the Conine Platform, located across from the mouth of Conine Creek. On Day 2, continue downstream for 6.7 miles to the small entrance for Cut Cypress Creek on river left (make sure you pay attention and don't miss your turn, or you're in for a long paddle). Wind 2 miles through forested land to Broad Creek, where you will turn upstream for about 1 mile to Cypress Cathedral (or Three Sisters, either platform is a great choice for Night 2). On Day 3, explore the headwaters of Broad Creek before heading out. Then, travel 3 miles down Broad Creek back to the mighty Roanoke, where you'll float about 2 miles downstream to Bear Run on river right, across from the Thoroughfare that connects to the Cashie River. On Day 4, continue downstream. After about 2 miles, the river will split. You can either stay on the main channel of the Roanoke, or take the more winding Middle River, which will add about a ½ mile to your paddle. When you reach the Highway 45 bridge, follow it to river right and the NC WRC Hwy 45 Bridge Boat Ramp.

Brave the Backswamps: Williamston to Barred Owl Roost to Cypress Cathedral to Otter One to Royal Fern to Conaby Creek

- Put-in at the NC WRC Boat Ramp in Williamston, take-out at the NC WRC Conaby Creek Boat Ramp
- 50 miles in 5 (or 6) days
- Moderate to Strenuous
- Meander through swamps and creeks as you travel the interconnected waterways of the Roanoke River. The Lower Roanoke River is home to the largest intact bottomland forest in the mid-Atlantic, and this route will take you into its wild heart. On Day 1, paddle downstream from Williamston for 3 miles to the upper end of Devil's Gut. Head into the Gut and continue downstream for 7.5 miles, winding through remote swamp forest. Continue upstream on Lower Deadwater Creek for ¾ mile to the Barred Owl Roost Platform, where you'll sleep over the water in the midst of beautiful Tupelo Gum forest. On Day 2, paddle back to the Gut and continue for its final mile, where you'll re-meet the mighty Roanoke. Head downstream for nearly 8 miles on the Roanoke to the mouth of Broad Creek. Follow the creek upstream for 3 miles to either Cypress Cathedral or Three Sisters Platforms; be sure to look for the small signs that guide your way. On day 3, prepare for a long, 15-mile paddle (or add a day and stopover at Cow Creek or Bear Run)! Return the 3 miles down Broad Creek to the Roanoke and continue downstream for 2 more miles to the Thoroughfare, a 2 mile-long channel that connects the Roanoke to the Cashie River. When you reach the dark waters of the Cashie, head downstream (right) 4.4 miles to the mouth of a different Broad Creek (called Otter Creek on the paddling distance list to differentiate it from the other Broad Creek). A 3-mile paddle up Broad (or Otter) Creek will lead you to the Otter One platform, tucked into the swamp forest in the creek's headwaters. On Day 4, return 3 miles downstream to the Cashie River. Paddle 1.3 miles to the confluence of the Cashie and the Middle River (a fork of the Roanoke). Follow the Highway 45 bridge across the braided streams to the eastern bank. From there, continue about 1.5 miles downstream to the mouth of Conaby Creek, where you will turn upstream. At about 3.3 miles from the Highway 45 bridge, look for a small creek entering on the north side of Conaby Creek. Follow that small creek upstream for ½ mile to the Royal Fern platform. Consider bringing a bear canister or other

lockable storage for your night on this platform, as it's in the midst of bear country! On Day 5, finish your journey with a short 3-mile paddle upstream on Conaby Creek to the NRC Boat Ramp.

Two Rivers: Williamston to Conine to Barred Owl (to Cow Creek) to Cypress Cathedral to Lost Boat to Windsor

- Put-in at the NC WRC Boat Ramp in Williamston, take-out at the NC WRC Boat Ramp in Windsor or at the River Center in Windsor.
- 47-52 miles in 5 (or 6) days
- Moderate to Strenuous
- Travel both of the major riverways on the Roanoke River Paddle Trail! On Day 1, paddle downstream from Williamston for 6 miles to the Conine Platform. On Day 2, continue downstream on the Roanoke for 10 miles to the downstream end of Devil's Gut, where you will turn and follow the Gut upstream for a mile to Lower Deadwater Creek. Enjoy the final $\frac{3}{4}$ mile through beautiful water tupelo forest to the Barred Owl Roost platform. (Alternatively, if water is below about 6 feet on the Williamston gauge, paddle about 3 miles upstream from Conine to the upper end of Devil's Gut, then down the Gut to Upper Deadwater Creek and Barred Owl – this is a prettier paddle, but not recommended in high water.) On Day 3, paddle back to the Gut then downstream to re-meet the mighty Roanoke. Continue downstream for nearly 8 miles on the Roanoke to the mouth of Broad Creek. Follow the creek upstream for 3 miles to either Cypress Cathedral or Three Sisters Platforms; be sure to look for the small signs that guide your way. (Alternatively, if water is below about 6 feet, paddle upstream on the Roanoke from the end of Devil's Gut to Cut Cypress Creek, an upstream paddle of about 4 miles. Float the 1.7 miles down Cut Cypress Creek to its confluence with Broad Creek. From there, head upstream toward Cypress Cathedral or Three Sisters, watching for the small signs that guide your way. This cuts about 4.5 miles off your paddle for the day!) On Day 4, paddle the 3 miles down Broad Creek to the Roanoke and continue downstream for 2 more miles to the Thoroughfare, a 2 mile-long channel that connects the Roanoke to the Cashie River. When you reach the dark waters of the Cashie, head upstream for 5 miles to the Lost Boat platform, tucked into a small creek on the western side of the river. (If you want to add a day and give yourself a mid-trip break, consider adding a night and a stay at the Cow Creek platform, which is just 2.5 miles downstream from Cypress Cathedral and Three Sisters. The next day, you'll only have 9.5 miles to paddle to Lost Boat.) On Day 5 (or 6), continue 10 miles up the Cashie to the WRC boat ramp in Windsor, or add one more mile to reach the Roanoke-Cashie River Center.