


East River Trail

11.7 to 13.8 miles



This is the smallest of the five Blueways trails. It naturally divides itself into two pieces - a lower river trail and an upper river trail. The dividing line is at Williams Wharf, which is on a peninsula jutting into the river from the east.

The river is about ½ mile wide at its mouth, and it gradually narrows as one travels north. The entire river is about 5 miles in length, its major branch, Put In Creek, not included. Put In Creek is 1 ½ miles long.

The lower portion of the River is wide and open to the south and the prevailing southwesterly breezes. Wave action can be substantial if it's blowing hard. The upper river is somewhat protected by the neck of land on which stands Williams Wharf Landing, but is still exposed.


The shores of the whole river are filled with small bays, coves, and creeks. Allow extra time to explore these for they are a large part of your reward for paddling, unless you just want to get from here to there quickly.

There are only two launch sites on this trail, but they are both fine ones. Town Point Landing is relatively new and has excellent launch facilities. Its modern launch ramp can handle trailered boats of almost any size. Williams Wharf, an historic steamboat landing, has been converted into a center for hand and wind-powered craft. Powerboats may not launch here. It features a large floating dock and lots of parking - great for paddlers. It is also the closest point for crossing over to the western shore, and a

good put-in for exploring both the upper and lower East River.

For this trail we will depart from our normal practice of giving the paddling guide in first one, and then the reverse direction. Since there are only two launch sites, both near each other and both centrally located, your trips will be round trips. The text is written so that it works equally well in both directions.

It is important that you read the Guide sections “Notes of Caution” and “Using the Guide” before using this trail guide.



Section 1: Lower East River: east and west shore circuit - 6.1 to 7.7 miles

This section extends from the mouth of the river at Mobjack Bay to Williams Wharf. Take time to explore the many creeks and coves. Some feel like gateways to the past, some like housing developments, some like nature preserves, with most being a mix of these. There are also some gracious homes and estates that can be seen from the water.

The lower East River is best thought of as a lake with two shores - it is short and wide, running south into Mobjack Bay. From Williams Wharf to the mouth of the East River is about 3 miles. The section lends itself to a round trip from either of the river's launch sites down one side of the river and

back up the other. This calls for crossing the river near its mouth for your return trip. Of course, you can choose to cross over at any point if you want to make a shorter circuit. In good weather crossing is no problem. In not so good weather, assess the situation carefully. Check the direction of the wind since you might be on the sheltered shore and, even if you make the other side with no problem, you may have a hard paddle on your return trip. Always err on the side of safety.

If you choose, you can make a one-way trip from Williams Wharf to Davis Creek Landing on the New Point Comfort Trail, or the reverse. The trip is over 6 miles long, and a little wind can make it quite grueling, especially for less experienced paddlers.

The lower East River, particularly its east shore, can feel like open waters with the winds blowing off the Bay frequently putting up white caps. Its western shore and the many little creeks on both sides offer more shelter.

Launch Points:

- #15 - Williams Wharf Landing
- #16 - Town Point Public Landing

Section 2: Williams Wharf to the head of Put In Creek - 2.2 miles

This section of the river gets some lee from Williams Wharf, but it is generally exposed. Directly opposite Williams Wharf is Miles Creek with an assortment of private homes. In a cove just north of Miles Creek is Zimmerman Marine, which usually sports an interesting collection of yachts being serviced. Above Zimmerman's is Long Point and the mouth of Put In Creek.

Put In Creek heads off in a northeasterly direction. Both of its shores have fine homes and small coves. The head of the creek is at Mathews Courthouse which, unfortunately, is also the site of the sewage treatment plant. Up to that point, however, this sheltered body of water is very pleasant. There are some schemes to remove the sewage treatment plant and dredge the creek, but that is for the future.

Launch Points:

- #15 - Williams Wharf Landing
- #16 - Town Point Public Landing

Section 3: Long Point to the headwaters of East River - 2.7 to 3 miles

Several small but navigable coves exit along the western shore of the river above Long Point. On the eastern side, in addition to small coves, is Woodas Creek, about ½ mile long. Proceeding up the river, most coves are on the western shore. The upper river is generally more sheltered from the wind.

Launch Points:

- #15 - Williams Wharf Landing
- #16 - Town Point Public Landing

Tidbits:

- One *nautical mile* is 6,076 ft, while a *statute mile* (the kind we normally use) is 5,280 feet.
- The distances in this Guide are given in statute miles.
- Speeds over the water are usually measured in *knots* - a knot being 1 nautical mile per hour.
- Canoes can cruise at about 2 knots; fast kayaks can cruise at 3-4 knots.