

# Illinois River

## Northeast Illinois

---

**Facts:** 273 miles, beginning at the merge of the Kankakee, Des Plaines, and DuPage rivers. It flows west through Morris, Ottawa and LaSalle, then curves south to run parallel with the Mississippi. It joins the Mississippi north of St. Louis. Numerous Illinois towns were built alongside it, and it's a major shipping channel.

**Fish and Wildlife:** Lots of Carp! Other fish include bluegill, catfish, rock bass, sauger and smallmouth bass. Mammals including deer, beaver, muskrat, coyote and fox. Birds include songbirds, owls, hawks, eagles, a variety of heron and waterfowl. The river is also home to reptiles, amphibians and a variety of invertebrates such as turtles, crayfish and dragonflies.

**Landscape:** The water trail passes by lots of farmland, but also some industrial areas. It passes through 2 state parks near LaSalle, then fills up many different lakes in a 50 mile stretch around Peoria.

### **Information:**

The Illinois River offers diverse paddling, highlighted by the 43-mile Greater Peoria Canoe & Kayak Trail and Starved Rock for scenic paddling.

The Illinois river typically is a bit of a slower moving river because of the many dams, it averages a 2mph current. It is a larger and deeper river than most in Illinois.

It is a major shipping channel, as barges will go up and down stream, typically loaded up with rocks and minerals. Speedboats can populate near towns in the summer. Because of this, it isn't the best river for recreational paddling, but it does offer some great trips.

Starved Rock is a popular place to paddle on the River. While there is a dam sitting right in the middle of the park, the upriver and downriver portions both have good views. You can launch from the park directly downriver of the dam, or launch at either Lone Point or downtown Ottawa. The river does not have much current here because of the dam, so going upriver is not an insurmountable task.

The Greater Peoria canoe and kayak trail runs 43 miles from Henry to Pekin and features 11 access stops, scenic backwaters, and urban views. This is a wide section of the river with many backwater areas. Keep in mind some backwater areas can become very shallow and not navigable, even in paddlecraft. The Peoria Lock & Dam is just south of Peoria and caution is needed.

**References:**

Illinois River Road: Peoria Area:

<https://www.illinoisriverroad.org/fishing-boating/>

Illinois Rivers Decision Support System:

<https://ilrdss.isws.illinois.edu/links/rivers.asp?ri=12>

PBS Illinois River Wildlife

<https://www.pbs.org/show/illinois-river/>

