

Paddling the Seaway Trail

By Pete Gaskin & Russ Mayne

The Seaway Trail offers some of the finest possibilities for canoeing and kayaking in the Northeast United States. The marshy inlet creeks of Lake Erie, Lake Ontario and the St. Lawrence River offer tremendous paddling opportunities. Fresh-water marsh lands are open water expanses with dense growth of aquatic plants such as cat-tails, grasses and sedges. In marsh pools, where the water is deeper, water lilies & pondweeds become established. These areas provide habitat for wildlife and attract recreational users, ranging from hunters, fishers and birders.

Trips described have been chosen for easy access, proximity to the Seaway Trail and quiet water paddling. If you have basic canoeing and kayaking skills, it should be easy to navigate these suggested routes.

Some of these waterways become choked with aquatic vegetation in the late summer, but by not dipping the paddle blade deeply and slowing the paddle rate, the rich diversity of organisms make the extra effort worthwhile.

Grab your life jackets, paddles, binoculars & field guides to discover secluded places to escape everyday stresses. For detailed directions to suggested locations, use a highway map or DeLorme Mapping Company's New York Atlas and Gazetteer.

Erie County, Pennsylvania

PRESQUE ISLE STATE PARK

Presque Isle State Park is a seven mile long peninsula projecting into Lake Erie. The park offers many places for paddling in sheltered water and on calm days, on the bay and lake. The lagoon area of the peninsula offers the best



Paddling at Four Mile Creek entrance to Lake Erie, photo by Doris Allen

nature experience. The entire area is a nature preserve with no motors permitted. These secluded areas have a rich and diverse flora & fauna and the only boat traffic will be other paddlers.

Two suggested boat launches for smaller crafts are Presque Isle Canoe and Boat Lagoon Launch and the Vista Boat Launch. The Vista Launch is small and unimproved and suitable only for car top boats and small trailered ones.

Directions: From Interstate 79 merge to Route 90 West to North State Route 832 to park entrance. From I-90, take Exit 18 to North on State Route 832 to the park entrance. Presque Isle State Park is right off the Seaway Trail Route 5 in Erie.

Chautauqua County, New York

CASSADAGA LAKES

There are three connected Cassadaga Lakes--the Upper, Middle and Lower. Lily Dale Assembly, a spiritualist community is located on the shore of Upper Cassadaga Lake. Lily Dale, during the summer season, welcomes visitors to various programs on spiritual phenomena.

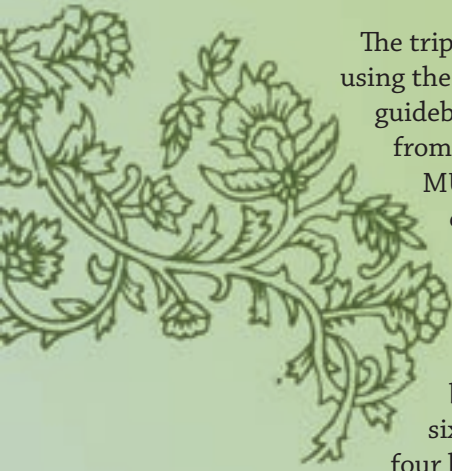
The launch is located on Middle Cassadaga Lake. The Middle Lake is the narrowest of the three lakes and exhibits both developed and undisturbed shorelines. The Lower Cassadaga Lake's shoreline is well-developed with cottages but is an irregular shoreline to explore. These lakes offer good paddling spring, summer and fall.

Directions: From NYS Thruway & Route 5 The Seaway Trail, take exit 59 at Dunkirk--go South on Route 60 for eight miles--turn right on Dale Drive at Lily Dale Lake sign. Drive past Lower and Middle Lake and cross a bridge connecting Upper and Middle Lakes. A parking area and boat access will be on left across the bridge.

Erie County - Buffalo, New York

BUFFALO RIVER URBAN CANOE TRAIL

The trail is a unique paddling adventure. It combines an outdoor experience and an opportunity to see sites of Buffalo that are not visible from any other location. Significant ecological sites, such as marshes and bird colonies, historical Iroquois locations and examples of earlier industrial locations are identified by number.



The trip is a self-guided experience, using the numbers found in printed guidebooks which can be obtained from Seaway Trail. All paddlers **MUST** wear life jackets. If you encounter a freighter, move to the shore away from a bend or bridge. These large vessels can create a large current wash from bow and stern. The trail is six miles long and takes about four hours to complete one way.

Directions: The upstream parting site is the DEC Harlem Road Access site, located on Harlem Road between Clinton Street and Mineral Springs Road. The downstream access point is the DEC Ohio Street Access site.



Grey Heron photo courtesy of T.I. Adventures LLC, French Creek, 1000 Islands



Buffalo River Urban Canoe Trail, photo by Doug Sitler

Niagara County, New York

TWELVE MILE CREEK EAST & WEST BRANCHES

These are two different and distinct creeks that come together at their terminus and are separated only by Wilson-Tuscarora State Park in Wilson, N.Y. along the Route 18 Seaway Trail corridor. The East branch may be accessed at the boat launch in the park where Tuscarora Bay-Wilson Harbor & the East branch come together. On the West side of the park is the car top launch that drops you into the West branch 200 yards from its terminus of Lake Ontario. Paddling either the East or West branch is a nice peaceful paddle in either direction with great fishing and wonderful wildlife. Paddling season is spring ice out into late fall. The Mile Named Creeks were so named for the distance from where the mighty Niagara River empties in to Lake Ontario to the west.

Orleans County, New York

OAK ORCHARD CREEK

Oak Orchard Creek flows north for approximately five miles from a dam at Lake Alice to Lake Ontario. It is popular with motor-boating anglers, but their speed is restricted and they tend to be polite and respectful to canoeists and kayakers. The creek is a quiet waterway with 50 foot-high cliffs. The stream has lots of bends to keep you interested about what lies ahead. Wild life such as turtles, Great Blue herons, Green herons, dragonflies, damselflies and various flowering plants near the shoreline are common. The creek passes under three adjacent road bridges which is an interesting experience. At the bridges, Marsh Creek provides a mile-long paddle to near its source.

Directions: From the Lake Ontario State Parkway, the Seaway Trail, take NYS Route 98 north and follow it to the mouth of Oak Orchard Creek at Point Breeze, NY. There are two state boat launches, one each side of the creek. No fee on weekdays, a modest fee on weekends.

Monroe County - Rochester, New York

BUCK POND

Buck Pond is located off Lake Ontario State Parkway near Rochester. Though near the sounds of civilization, the pond has few cottages on its shores and has a wild nature. The pond is not large, being less than one mile across. There are several channels entering the pond to explore. By mid-summer aquatic vegetation chokes the shallower channels but with a little effort you could paddle up the western inlet and under the Lake Ontario State Parkway. The least accessible region of the marsh is the eastern side from the boat launch to the south and southwest along Island Cottage Road.

Directions: From Rochester, go west on Lake Ontario State Parkway, the Seaway Trail, exit on Long Pond Road--go north and turn right on Edgemere Drive. Stay on

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www.seawaytrail.com

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Edgemere for 1.3 miles and just after crossing the outlet Channel to Lake Ontario, take a sharp right to the boat access.

Wayne County, New York **EAST BAY -MUDGE CREEK**

The Chimney Bluffs are a spectacular geological formation on the south shore of Lake Ontario. They can be viewed from the water by paddling out of East Bay, out of the lake through a beach opening on calm days. The bluffs are approximately a one mile distance from the beach opening. Several winding inlet streams enter East Bay. One such inlet is Mudge Creek. This is a good place to view wood ducks. These ducks like to nest off the ground, but are fond of foraging in wooded swamps, ponds and marshes. They rest in the hollow trees that are located along the creek. Usually large numbers of Canadian geese are seen in this waterway.

Directions: From Route 104, or the Seaway Trail take Lake Bluff Road north to where Route 414 goes off to the south. From here follow Lake Bluff Road for 3.5 miles where Lake Bluff Road curves to the left--continue straight on Garner Road approximately two miles & then it turns sharply to the left--continue straight onto East Bay Road. A small parking area and boat access will be reached on left before crossing over the creek.

Cayuga County, New York **THE POND AND STERLING VALLEY CREEK**

Sterling Valley Creek spreads out into a large marsh as it nears Lake Ontario. A portion of the marsh is known as the Pond and is a wonderful place to view wildlife, especially waterfowl. Waterfowl species include Canada geese, wood duck, ring-necked ducks and the ever-interesting, often mistaken for a duck, Coot. The noisy Coot swims with its head bobbing and has broad pads on its toes that enable it to swim like a duck.

The creek above the Pond meanders for several miles. Paddle back to the launch site.

Directions: The launch site is located past the Fair Haven Beach Park entrance on the Seaway Trail, to the right just after crossing a wooden-railed bridge.

Oswego County, New York **DEER CREEK MARSH**

Deer Creek flows through the Deer Creek Wildlife Management Area. This area is not heavily used by boaters because there is no outlet to Lake Ontario. The abundant wildlife is relatively undisturbed and easily viewed. Wildlife that can be seen include deer, beaver, muskrats,

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painted and snapping turtles, Great Blue heron and bitterns. Stream-side vegetation range from alders, oaks, cottonwoods and an assortment of different flowering plants providing a variety of wildlife habitats.

Directions: Take the seaway Trail Route 3 north 1.8 miles from Port Ontario to a parking lot on the left and a Deer Creek Wildlife Management area sign. Hike 100+ yards, down a trail, to the water and launch.

Jefferson County, New York **LAKEVIEW WILDLIFE MANAGEMENT AREA**

There are three access points to this area from Route 3 the Seaway Trail, Lake-view Pond, South Sandy Creek and South Colwell Pond. The management area is a large marsh with numerous interconnecting waterways and ponds. From the Pierrepont Place Road launch site on Lakeview pond, paddle south on the pond to a channel behind a portion of the Lake Ontario barrier beach. On windy days you can hear the sounds of the waves crashing on the sandy shore of Lake Ontario as you paddle this sheltered route. The channel eventually bares left and enters Sandy Creek. At this junction, go left and paddle up Sandy Creek past North Landing to the Route 3 bridge and return. If you

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Photo courtesy of T.I. Adventures LLC, French Creek, 1000 Islands

NEWFANE & OLCOTT

FESTIVALS & EVENTS 2008

MAY

31 - Sept 20
Saturday Night Car Cruises-Olcott

JUNE

28 David Niethe Memorial Kids
Fishing Derby-Olcott

JULY

3 Fireworks over Lake Ontario-Olcott
4 Patriots Parade & Concert Trolley - Olcott
18, 19, 20 Pirate Festival- Olcott
26 & 27 National Band Organ Rally-Olcott

AUGUST

15 3rd Annual Motorcycle Rally- Newfane
16 Newfane August Fest-Newfane
30 Labor Day Car Show-Olcott

SEPTEMBER

13 & 14 8th Annual Niagara Celtic Heritage
Festival & Highland Games-Olcott

For more information on festivals and events,
www.olcott-newfane.com

Seaway Trail Business Members

Bayside Guest House B&B,

1572 Lockport Olcott Road, Olcott, NY 14126
716 778-7767

Gordie Harper's Bazaar

3333 Lockport Olcott Road, Newfane, NY
716 778-8048 • www.gordieharpersbazaar.com

Mariners Landing Restaurant

1540 Franklin Street, Olcott, NY • 716 778-5535

Olcott Carousel Park

Main Street, Olcott, NY
716 778-7066 • www.olcott-newfane.com

Schulze Vineyard & Winery

2090 Coomer Road, Burt, 14028 NY
716 778-8090 • www.schulzewines.com

Shoppe On Main

2714 Main Street, Newfane, NY 14108
www.ShoppeOnMain.com

Olcott Beach Carousel Park All rides 25¢

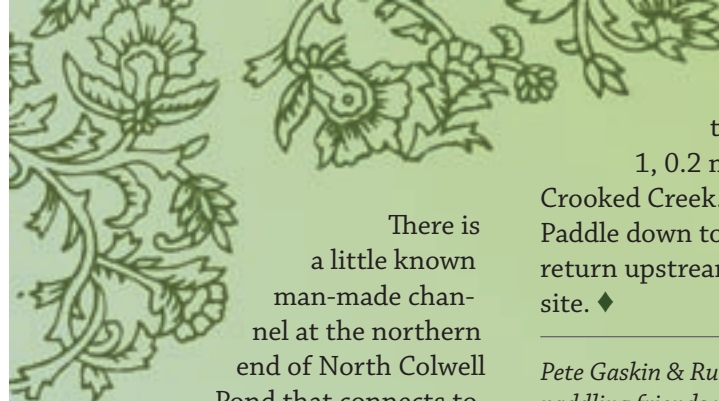
*Building Memories for
a New Generation*

Memorial Day Wknd - June
September - 1st Wknd October
Sat/Sun 12-6pm

July-Labor Day Th, Fri, Sun 12-6pm

Vintage Arcade Games - Skee Ball
716.778.7066 or 716.778.8284

At the Intersection of Rts. 18 & 78, follow 78N
to Lake Ontario, turn right at the Lighthouse



There is a little known man-made channel at the northern end of North Colwell Pond that connects to South Sandy Creek. Using

this connector allows a paddler to transverse the entire route from Lakeview Pond straight through South Colwell Pond, a distance of approximately four miles.

Directions: From Port Ontario proceed north on Route 3 the Seaway Trail for 10 miles to Montario Point Road. Turn left onto Montario Point Road and drive 0.7 miles--turn right onto a dirt road to South Colwell launch site.

The South Sandy Creek access site is located north of Montario Point Road. The site is located in a parking lot on the left after crossing a Route 3 bridge over the creek. From South Sandy Creek access, go north on Route 3 for 3.3 miles to Pierrepont Place road. Turn left onto Pierrepont Place, the Lakeview Pond launch site is directly down the dirt road.

St. Lawrence County, New York CROOKED CREEK

The St. Lawrence River can be rough and good-sized waves can be generated by large freighters and pleasure craft. Therefore, it is best to explore small streams that flow into the main river. One of the favorite local such streams is Crooked Creek. Located on Route 12 The Seaway Trail near Kring Point State Park. This waterway meanders through a good-sized marsh. Cattails, water lilies and other aquatic plant species abound. In one section of the Creek, tall rocky cliffs can be seen. If you take time to explore side channels this adventure could take most of a day.

Directions: From Seaway Trail Route 12 take Scribby Road 0.7 miles,

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turn left onto Route

1, 0.2 miles to a bridge over Crooked Creek. Park along the road. Paddle down to Chippewa Bay, then return upstream to the Route 1 access site. ♦

Pete Gaskin & Russ Mayne are retired paddling friends who both live near the Seaway Trail in Jefferson County.

PADDLING OPPORTUNITIES ALONG THE SEAWAY TRAIL

Presque Isle State Park

Box 8510, Erie, PA, 16505;
814 833-7424; www.dcnr.state.pa.us

Chautauqua Institution

One Ames Ave, Chautauqua, NY,
14722; 716 357-6269; www.ciweb.org

Paths, Peaks & Paddles

1000 Ellicott Creek Rd, Tonawanda, NY 14150;
716 213-0350; www.pathspeakspaddles.com

Lodging-On The-Waterfront- Sportsman's Retreat

6499 Bonnie Castle Road, Wolcott, NY, 14590;
315 587-2677

Salmon Hills Outdoor Adventure Center

100 Noble Drive Redfield, NY 13437;
315 599-7008; www.salmonhills.com

Antique Boat Museum

750 Mary Street, Clayton, NY, 13624;
315 686-4104 www.abm.org

Association Island RV Resort & Marina

1530 Snowshoe Road, Henderson Harbor, NY,
13651; 800 393-4189;
www.associationislandresort.com

Minna Anthony Common Nature Center

44927 Cross Island Road, Wellesley Island, NY;
315 482-2479

McLear's Cottage Colony & Campground

2477 County Rte 6, Black Lake Rd, Hammond,
NY, 315 375-6508, www.mclears.com