

Rome

Length: -- 13 Miles (Ga. Loop 1/Grizzard Park to Lock N Dam Park)

Class: I & optional Class II rapid at Lock and Dam Park

Time: 5-7 hours

Minimum Level: River can be run year round. Releases from the Allatoona Dam can cause water levels to fluctuate. Water released from the dam takes approximately 12 hours to reach Ga. Loop 1. Release schedules are issued by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers every day at midnight and can be retrieved by calling 706-334-7213

River Gauge: The nearest river gauge is located at the Ga. Loop 1 launch site. http://waterdata.usgs.gov/ga/nwis/uv?site_no=02395980

Launch Site: Dixon Landing is a paved Department of Natural Resources boat ramp with large parking area located at the end of George Griffin Jr. Drive in the Rome-Floyd YMCA Sports Complex along Ga. Loop 1 on the outskirts of Rome.

Directions: The launch site can be accessed from US 411 between Rome and Cartersville. Eastbound travelers from Rome should turn left on Ga. Loop 1. Proceed 1.9 miles to Turner Chapel Road. Turn right and then immediately right into the YMCA Sports Complex. Follow George Griffin Jr. Drive until it dead ends at Dixon Landing.

Take Out Site: Lock and Dam Park is a Floyd County Park located on the Coosa River with overnight camping, showers, restroom facilities, picnic areas, walking trails, fishing areas and a camp store. Two take outs are available at the park. To avoid running the Class II rapid over the dam, take out upstream of the dam utilizing wooden steps and a canoe/kayak flume on river left. Otherwise, run the rapid and utilize the boat ramp on river left just below the lock. The park charges a nominal parking fee.

Directions: From US 411 and Ga. Loop 1 proceed west toward Rome on US 411. At the interchange in Rome, bear left on U.S. 27/U.S. 411 toward Cedartown. Proceed 3.4 miles to Walker Mountain Road. Turn right on Walker Mountain Road and proceed 3.4 miles to the entrance to Lock and Dam Park on right. Turn right and follow road into park.

Alternative Take Out Site: An alternative take out site is located in Downtown Rome at Heritage Park on the Coosa just downstream from the confluence of the Etowah and Oostanaula rivers. The journey from Grizzard Park to Heritage Park is six miles.

Directions: From US 411 and Ga. Loop 1 proceed west toward Rome on US 411. At the interchange in Rome, bear right on U.S. 27/Ga. 20 toward Rome. Proceed 3.2 miles on Ga. 20 (Turner McCall Blvd.) to Martha Berry Blvd./North 2nd Ave. Turn left on to North 2nd Ave. and proceed 0.2 mile to the entrance to Heritage Park on the right.

Description: A town and country tour, this 13-mile stretch of river travels from the rural outskirts of Rome into the heart of the city. In downtown Rome, the Etowah meets the Oostanaula River to form the Coosa River. Wide and deep, the Coosa winds westward through the city's suburbs, down a historic steamboat path to Lock and Dam Park.

Outfitters:

The Coosa River Basin Initiative in Rome is the nearest canoe/kayak outfitters.

Points of Interest:

Mile 157.7—(34°13'59.55"N 85° 7'13.56"W)—Spring—This unique spring carves a pocket from the river bank sending up a gusher of clear, cold water through sand and sediment. It is visible during low water on river left.

Mile 158.1--(34°14'4.17"N 85° 7'29.55"W)—Fish Weir

Mile 158.9—(34°14'3.60"N 85° 8'20.27"W)—Callier Springs Country Club—Fore! Watch for golf balls in this stretch. Founded in 1939, Callier Springs boasts of willow trees around the course's water features that are offspring from a tree that grew

on the gravesite of Napoleon Bonaparte.

Mile 159.3—(34°14'14.20"N 85° 8'37.40"W)—Cattle Access—Mooo! This site is an example of the damage to stream banks that can be wrought by livestock. While state agriculture agencies encourage cattle owners to exclude their animals from rivers and streams, no state laws mandate such practices. Livestock can denude riparian vegetation, creating erosion problems and animal manure can contribute to elevated bacteria levels.

Mile 160.3--(34°15'11.84"N 85° 8'45.80"W)—Fish Weir

Mile 161.2—(34°15'25.38"N 85° 9'28.36"W)—City of Rome Water Intake—On average, the City of Rome pumps a combined 6.2 million gallons per day from this location and its primary pump station on the Oostanaula River. In recent years, the City has expressed interest in pumping all of its supply from the Etowah because it generally carries less sediment and other pollutants than the Oostanaula.

Mile 162.3—(34°14'44.55"N 85°10'4.11"W)—Rome Floathouses and Brothels—During the early 1900s, and especially during the Great Depression years of the late 20s and 30s, many of the destitute turned to the rivers for survival, taking up residences on shantyboats or floathouses where the living was cheap and where a trotline could always supply dinner. Rome had its share of these. At the 2nd Avenue Bridge, one notable floathouse operated as a brothel, a line of business for which Rome became somewhat famous. About a mile upstream and just north of the river was a brothel called “Peggy’s” that reportedly achieved national acclaim. A former textile mill worker, Peggy Snead operated what was considered a “clean house” and reportedly even paid city taxes on her services. City leaders looked the other way and the house operated quietly for several decades. An advertisement for the establishment even appeared in the 1963 Georgia Institute of Technology yearbook.

Mile 162.7—(34°14'45.61"N 85°10'22.84"W)—Battle of Hightower—On Oct. 17, 1793, somewhere near the confluence of the Etowah and Oostanaula rivers, a group of Creek/Cherokee Indians battled a U.S. force led by Gen. John Sevier. Sevier and his men pursued the natives from Tennessee after an attack on settlements there. In the brief Battle of Hightower, Sevier’s troops forded the Etowah and met resistance from the Indians led by the Cherokee chief, King Fisher. King Fisher was killed in the battle and the Indian force retreated east toward present day Cartersville. A city recreational trail that parallels the river here is named in honor of King Fisher.

Mile 163.1—(34°15'8.92"N 85°10'36.54"W)—Myrtle Hill Cemetery—Rising above the South Broad Bridge in downtown Rome, Myrtle Hill and the cemetery on its flanks is the final resting place of 20,000 people, including some 370 Confederate and Union soldiers of the Civil War; Ellen Axson Wilson, the wife of President Woodrow Wilson (Wilson courted Miss Axson in her hometown); and, believe it or not, the great grandparents of rock n’ roll legend, Jim Morrison. Morrison’s forebears came to Rome around 1886 and operated the Morrison-Trammel Brick Company. A four-year-old Jim attended his great grandmother’s funeral at the cemetery in 1947. Early Romans chose this spot for a cemetery because of the river’s frequent floods.

Mile 163.2—(34°15'13.79"N 85°10'37.16"W)—Etowah & Oostanaula Confluence & Downtown Rome—Where the Etowah and Oostanaula meet to form the Coosa, you will find the heart of Rome, founded in 1834. Rome was a thriving river town during the 1800s and early 1900s. The 100-block of Broad Street is referred to as the Cotton Block because this is where cotton was loaded on to steamboats bound down river. In 1873, six steamboats operated out of Rome. Between Rome and Gadsden, Alabama, there were some 140 landings. When within their banks and carrying cotton, the rivers were a blessing, but the rivers’ periodic freshets were a curse. The town’s most famous flood occurred in 1886 when parts of downtown were covered in more than 10 feet of water. During high water, the paddlewheeler “Mitchell” steamed up Broad Street, took a left on Fourth Avenue and crossed the Oostanaula in an effort to save a horse. Some 30 homes were washed downstream along with three bridges, prompting the city to raise the level of Broad Street by eight feet. What are now recognized as the first floors of many historic downtown buildings are actually the former second floors. An inspection of the iron railroad bridge over the Oostanaula at the confluence will reveal that this structure was designed as a pivot bridge allowing the span to swing parallel to the river from its center footing, permitting the passage of river steamers. Also note at the confluence the disparate water temperatures of the two rivers, especially notable during the summer months. The Etowah runs noticeably cooler because of releases from the cold water at the base of Allatoona Dam—a change in river habitat that has, in part, caused the demise of many fish and mussel species in the Etowah.

Mile 163.3—(34°15'14.29"N 85°10'40.65"W)—The Dixie—Lying along the banks of the Etowah and Coosa rivers is the remains of the paddlewheeler, The Dixie. The wood structure of the boat can still be discerned in low water along with cribbing from the wharf where she once docked. The boat caught fire in 1914 while moored at a landing, reportedly after the cook’s fire got out of control.

Mile 163.4—(34°15'18.14"N 85°10'43.72"W)—Heritage Park & Flood Control—A boat ramp at the City’s Heritage Park provides a take out location and views of the city’s extensive levee system. Completed in 1939 by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, the levee saved portions of Rome from the freshets, but proved ineffective at preventing floods in the downtown business district. The construction of Allatoona Dam in the late 1940s finally remedied that problem.

Mile 164.3--(34°15'19.74"N 85°11'30.83"W)—Horseleg Creek & PCBs-- This creek, which drains much of West Rome, has been impacted by PCB contamination from General Electric’s Medium Transformer Plant in Rome. A known carcinogen, PCBs left the GE facility in stormwater that emptied into Horseleg and other creeks. GE, under order from Georgia’s Environmental Protection Division (EPD), has done extensive excavation

along Horseleg to remove contaminants. During the years PCBs were used at the plant, an unknown number of GE employees used PCBs at their homes as a termite deterrent, dust suppressant and wood treatment. And, an undetermined number of residents used PCB-contaminated sludge from Rome's wastewater treatment plant as fertilizer for gardens and farms. Today, the extent of PCB contamination in the area is still not fully known, and PCBs continue to be found in fishes of the Coosa River Basin, resulting in fish consumption advisories for most rivers and streams in the area. The clean up of PCBs at the GE facility and in and around Rome is expected to take decades.

Mile 164.7--(34°14'51.73"N 85°11'33.54"W)—Marshall Forest—Located on river right here, Marshall Forest is a 300-acre Nature Conservancy preserve that is home to one of the last remaining stands of old growth forest in the Ridge and Valley province, a geographical corridor that runs from Pennsylvania to Alabama. More than 300 species of plants, including 55 tree species can be found in the forest. Designated Georgia's first National Natural Landmark in 1966, the forest is said to be the country's only old-growth forest located within a city limits.

Mile 166.1—(34°13'46.75"N 85°11'49.61"W)—Rome Water Reclamation Plant—Until 1965 when this facility was constructed, the City of Rome had limited sewage treatment. It's said that Coosa River anglers of the 1950s routinely reeled in toilet paper on their lines. Beginning in 2001, the City, under order of EPD, embarked on a \$38 million upgrade to the plant that was completed in 2008. The facility can now treat up to 36 million gallons of sewage daily.

Mile 167.3—(34°13'1.43"N 85°12'34.67"W)—Blacks Bluff Preserve—The "bluffs"—500-million year-old Conasauga limestone—are visible on river left rising above Black's Bluff Road which runs parallel to the Coosa. The Nature Conservancy has protected 132 acres along the river here because of its botanical diversity. A massive natural rock garden, the north-facing slope of the bluffs keeps things cool and moist and the alkalinity of the lime-rich soil provide habitat for endangered large-flowered skullcap and the state-endangered limerock arrowwood. The site includes limestone caves that are home to cave salamanders.

Mile 170.4—(34°12'1.48"N 85°15'25.48"W)—Lock and Dam Park & Popeye—In the 1800s, this was the site of a troublesome shoals known as Horseleg Shoals that made navigation difficult for the paddlewheelers. The solution was to build a small dam and a lock to move the ships and the cotton they carried up and down river. The project was completed in 1913, and operated until 1941. It's most lasting contribution to the Coosa Valley and the world is as the birthplace of the cartoon character, Popeye. Popeye's creator, Tom Sims, was the son of a boat captain who operated ships on the Coosa River for the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers including one called the "Leota". The stories of Popeye are drawn from Sims' childhood on the Coosa. Sims said, "Fantastic as Popeye is, the whole story is based on facts. As a boy I was raised on the Coosa River. When I began writing the script for Popeye I put my characters back on the old "Leota" that I knew as a boy, transformed it into a ship and made the Coosa River a salty sea."