



Image Details
Tim Palmer

📍 Red River

Kentucky

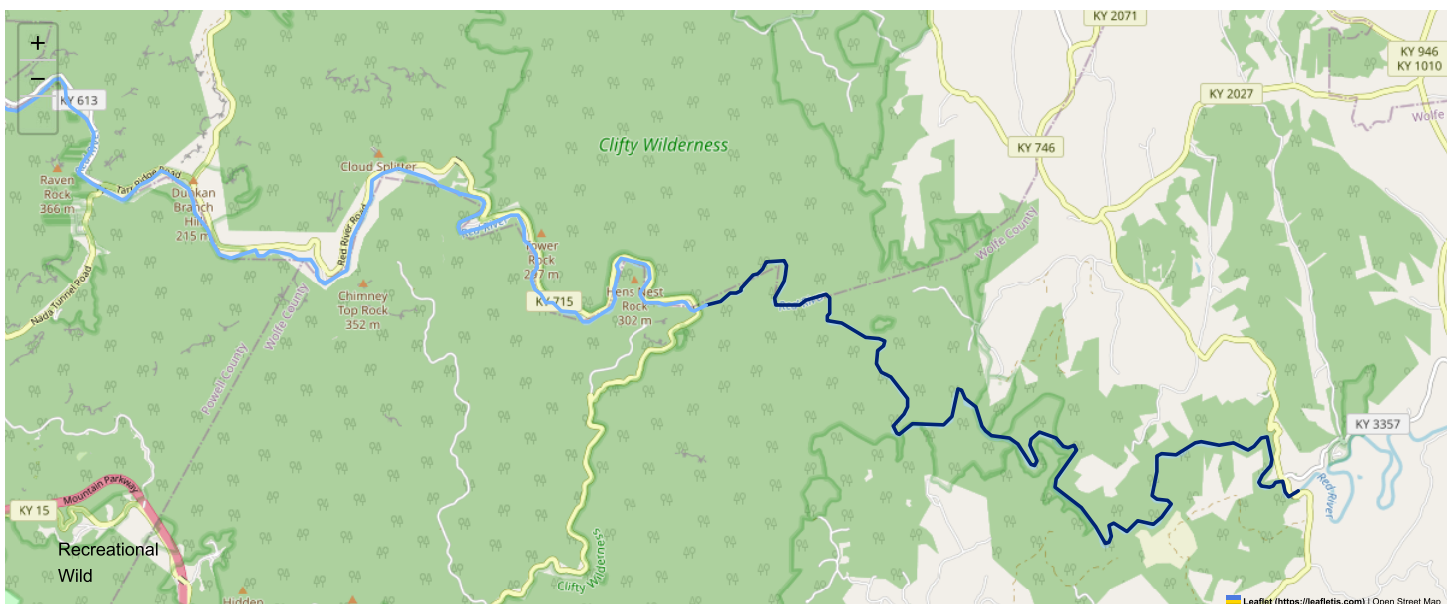
The Red River flows through the Red River Gorge geological area and bisects the Clifty Wilderness. Sandstone cliffs, rock shelters, natural stone arches, and boulders provide excellent views of unique geological features nestled among the mountain laurel, rhododendron, and hemlocks. The river offers scenic views, as well as protection for numerous prehistoric and historic sites featuring unique ethnobotanic remains and other features that led to the designation of this area as a Natural Historic Landmark. The surrounding cliff lines are home to the white-haired goldenrod, a plant only found in the Red River Gorge, as well as numerous other species of wildlife. More than 70 species of fish and 16 mussels thrive in the free-flowing waters of the Red River. The scenic beauty and geological formations throughout the river corridor attract thousands of visitors each year.

This area is managed as wilderness to provide a semi-primitive, non-motorized experience near trails, access points, and other areas of concentrated use. In other more remote areas, primitive recreation experiences are available. Access to the river corridor is limited to a few primitive hiking trails in order to protect natural resources rather than provide for human comfort or convenience. People are challenged to rely on their own physical abilities and follow primitive "leave no trace" recreational pursuits. Facilities, such as trailheads and bulletin boards, are usually located outside the wilderness. Hiking, primitive camping, rock climbing, fishing, hunting, canoeing, kayaking, and rafting are allowed where they do not adversely impact the wilderness resource.

The U.S. Forest Service maintains one access point at Copperas Creek Canoe Launch on Highway 715. The river is too low for canoeing or kayaking most of the year. However, Class I-III rapids may be experienced after late fall and spring floods or heavy rains.

A camping permit is required for dispersed camping in the Red River Gorge Geological Area. Permits can be purchased at local vendors or Gladie Learning Center.

The Red River corridor is black bear habitat. Proper food storage is required. The forest website and area bulletin boards provide additional information regarding food storage requirements and other rules.



[VIEW LARGER MAP \(/MAP?RIVER=RED\)](#)

Designated Reach

December 2, 1993. From the Highway 746 Bridge to the confluence with the School House Branch.

Outstandingly Remarkable Values

Botany

The conjunction of several climatological, geologic, and topographic features has created a diversity of plant life in a variety of ecological niches. Of particular interest is the drip line area at the base of cliff lines where rock shelters exist. These areas provide suitable environment for th...

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Fish

The river environment contains 3 at-risk aquatic species in addition to 16 mussel species. It also provides a high quality warm-water fishery of 70 fish species, including such sport fish as rock bass, catfish, and smallmouth bass, as well as numerous types of sunfish and muskellunge. The river i...

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Geology

The area is famous for its rugged and unique topography and geology, including numerous natural arches, pinnacles, and prominent cliffs. Perhaps the most striking feature of the area is the sandstone arches carved out by years of wind and water erosion. The most popular arch is Sky Bridge, a grac...

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History

Old saltpeter mine activity from as far back as the Civil War era can be found in some rockshelters. In the 1880s, there was a boom in logging activity in the area. The Nada Tunnel, the western portal for the area, is a narrow tunnel dug out of the rock originally created for a narrow-gage rail l...

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Prehistory

The uniqueness of the Red River Gorge Geological Area and its river corridor is not only a draw for present day adventurers, but as far back as 10,000 years, it drew Native Americans to its natural beauty and abundant resources. Most ridges harbor cliff lines with rock shelters at their base. The...

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Recreation

The Red River draws river enthusiasts from all over Kentucky, as well as surrounding states. Rugged shorelines edged with steep rock cliffs and a river with abundant large boulders provide canoeists and kayakers a variety of whitewater, from Class II and III during the winter and spring run-offs ...

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Scenery

The Red River is a central feature of the Red River Gorge Geological Area. The eastern part of the area contains the Clifty Wilderness, which is bisected by the wild segment of the Red River. Because of its outstanding natural features, the Red River Gorge Geological Area is also designated as a ...

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Managing Partners And Contacts

Daniel Boone National Forest 

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Documents

 **Public Law 103-170 (Red River Designation Act)** (<https://www.rivers.gov/sites/rivers/files/2022-10/Public%20Law%20103-170.pdf>)

 **Public Law 95-625** (<https://www.rivers.gov/sites/rivers/files/2022-10/Public%20Law%2095-625.pdf>)

Classification/Mileage



Recreational — 10.3 miles; Wild — 9.1 miles; Total — 19.4 miles.

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PARTNERS

[Bureau of Land Management \(https://blm.gov/programs/national-conservation-lands/wild-and-scenic-rivers\)](https://blm.gov/programs/national-conservation-lands/wild-and-scenic-rivers)
[National Park Service \(https://www.nps.gov/orgs/1912/index.htm\)](https://www.nps.gov/orgs/1912/index.htm)
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[U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service \(https://fws.gov\)](https://fws.gov)
[U.S. Forest Service \(https://www.fs.usda.gov/managing-land/wild-scenic-rivers\)](https://www.fs.usda.gov/managing-land/wild-scenic-rivers)
[River Management Society \(http://river-management.org/\)](http://river-management.org/)

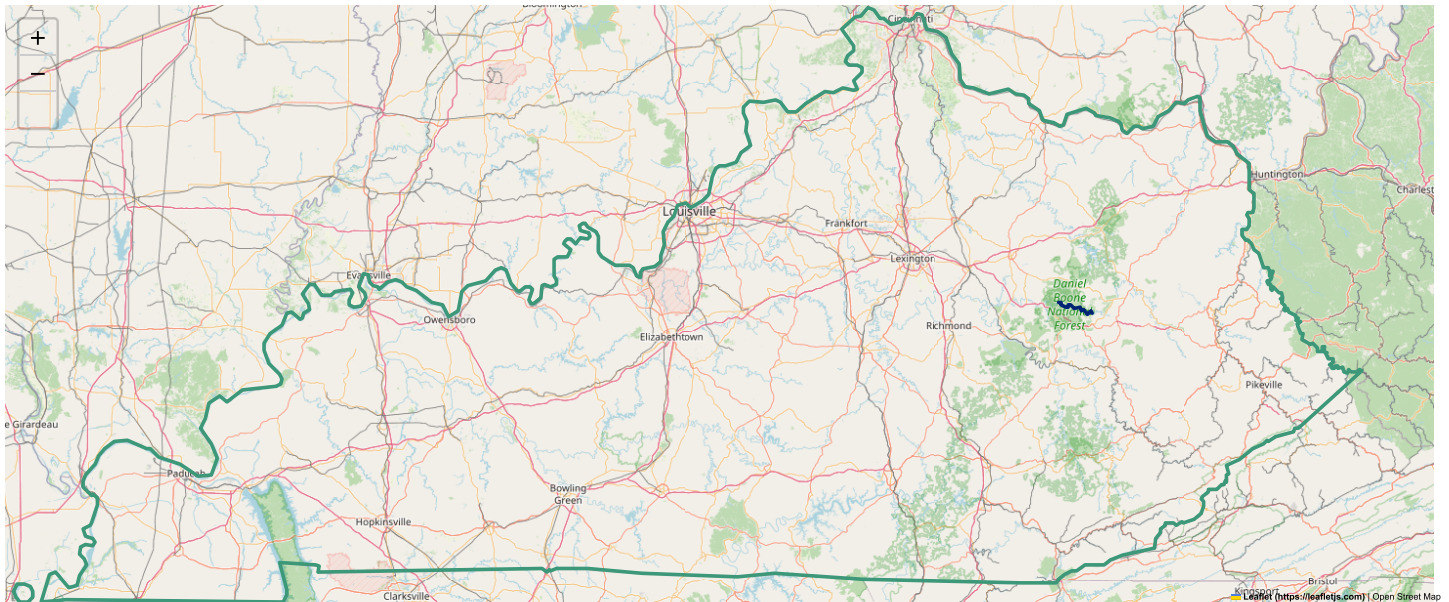
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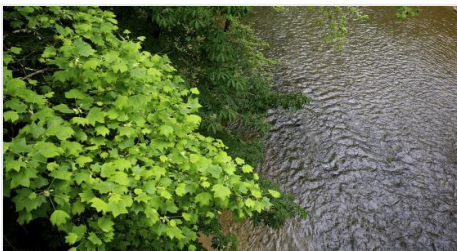


Kentucky has many lakes and rivers that are perfect for fishing, swimming, or just relaxing on the water. All rivers in Kentucky flow to the Mississippi River, nearly all by virtue of flowing to its major tributary, the Ohio River, which forms the state's entire northern border.

Kentucky has approximately 49,105 miles of river, of which 19.4 miles of one river, the Red, are designated as Wild & Scenic—less than 4/100ths of 1% of the state's river miles.



Rivers In Kentucky



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