



Kayaking the Kinnickinnic River

Description

If you want to be alone in nature, but not too far from civilization, then one of the best places to go is the lower Kinnickinnic River in River Falls, Wisconsin. Locals call it the Kinni for short. There are two parts you can paddle on the Kinni, the upper and lower. They are both really nice places to kayak, but the lower part has a more remote feeling.



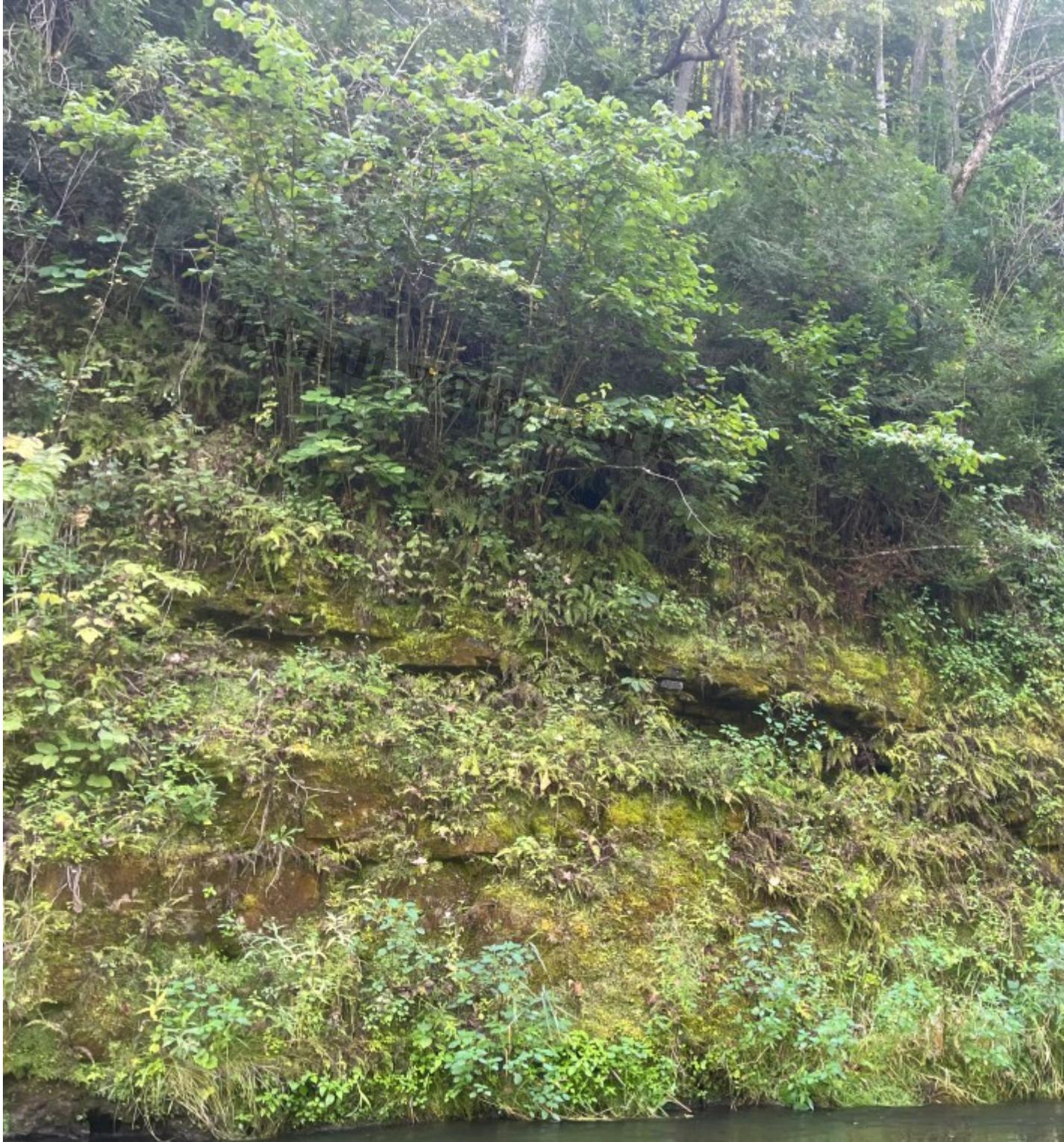
What the lower section of the river is like

Imagine paddling downstream next to limestone cliffs soaring above you and all different types of trees and plants as far as the eye can see. There are no road noises, few people, and few signs of humans being around at all. There are no houses along this section of river until the very end, right before you exit the river. This is also the only time you will see a bridge going over the river on the lower section. I Kayaked on this beautiful piece of river today, August 13th, 2024, and saw 3 people the whole way down. One person was fly fishing, and two were pulled off on the side of the river taking a break from kayaking.

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Mental health benefits



As I paddled down the Kinni today, I felt mentally relaxed even though I was navigating the river in my kayak avoiding fallen trees, shallow areas, and rocks just barely under the water. I needed to be out in nature on a beautiful sunny day. This is something everyone needs in their lives. Immersing yourself in nature will help revive you and give you that mental energy you are lacking, if you are feeling mentally drained. It's important that you try and be in the moment while you're in nature to get the full benefits for your mental health.

What you should know before you go

The one thing that I really like about paddling this part of the Kinni is that it will take 2 to 3 hours to get to the exit point. It guarantees that alone time in nature, I need. There is no way to exit the river before the exit point, so it's important to have everything you need with you. Make sure you have enough water, snacks, sunglasses, life jacket, sunscreen, and bug spray. I never used bug spray while I was on the river, but it's always good to come prepared. It's also important to know that there are no bathrooms along the way or at the exit point either.

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Phone use on the river

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Bringing a phone with you in this section of the river is risky. It could get wet, or you could lose it. Cell service is very limited in this area. It seems to be getting better, but they do have a sign up letting you know that there isn't cell service. One time, I was kayaking with my two youngest kids and my daughter decided to bring her phone. I told her to put it in a zip lock bag and put that into a zip lock bag. This normally works for me, but I also have a special bag that is waterproof I put it in. She took her phone out a few times and didn't get it sealed shut all the way. After tipping her Kayak, her iPhone got wet and never worked again. She still claims PTSD from this experience and doesn't like to go kayaking anymore.

Benefit of kayaking on a smaller river

My daughter says she doesn't like to kayak, but that's because it involves physical work like paddling. If you are someone who doesn't like having to paddle a lot, then kayaking on smaller rivers is a good option. The current on the river will do most of the work for you. The only thing you really need to do is control your direction.

Safety on the river

The lower Kinni provides more action when kayaking because of the strong current, turns, small rapids throughout, down trees, and shallow areas. It's important to pay attention to how the water is moving and watching for obstacles in your way. If you get hung up on shallow areas or down trees; try to make sure the kayak doesn't turn sideways. This is when the current will end up flipping your kayak. I have flipped my kayak a few times on this section of the river. Once a long time ago, I was canoeing this section with some kids as part of a naturalist program I was helping lead, and I ended up swamping the canoe. This happened because we had to turn sharply due to a down tree causing our canoe to be sideways. Then the two kids with me both leaned to the side the current was coming from causing the canoe to tip. We were all fine because we were wearing our life jackets.



Life jackets and water levels

It is important to wear a life jacket when kayaking because even if you can swim or the water is shallow, you could hit your head and go unconscious. The life jacket is there to help you, when you can't help yourself. The Kinni normally is only a few feet deep. Infact, the lower river seems to be only one to two feet deep in most areas. The water levels do fluctuate and if it has rained a lot, the water will be higher,

and the current will be stronger. The time it takes to get downstream will be faster than normal. If there has been an unusual amount of rain; I would not go kayaking because it could be dangerous. Here is a link to the USGS site that monitors the water level on the river. [USGS](#)

Things to do on your trip down the Kinni

Make your trip down stream last longer by stopping somewhere and having a picnic, go for a swim, try some fly fishing, or rock hounding. There are some important things you should know if you plan to do any of these things. Plants line the shoreline and make it hard to find a place to pull your kayak out of the water. If you want to take a break along the way; I would take advantage of any good spot you can find. Don't stop at places with no trespassing signs because it is privately owned land. If you do plan on going swimming in the Kinni; the water will be very cold. The Kinni is a trout stream, so it is normally between 50 degrees Fahrenheit and 60 degrees Fahrenheit. The current is strong, so hold onto your kayak if you stop in the middle to look for rocks. Some areas of the river have a sandy bottom and other areas are rocky. Most of the rocks are just limestone, but there are other rocks that might look interesting to you. People rock hounding haven't picked this area over yet like they have on many beaches.

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Birding on the lower Kinni

There are a variety of birds that live and use the river as their home. There are also many birds that migrate through this area during the migration season. If you are into birding and looking for different birds, you will want to go early in the morning to see the most. Another blogger talked about his experience down the lower Kinni in May to record the birds he saw. Check out his story and the bird he saw [here](#).

Where to put your kayak in the river

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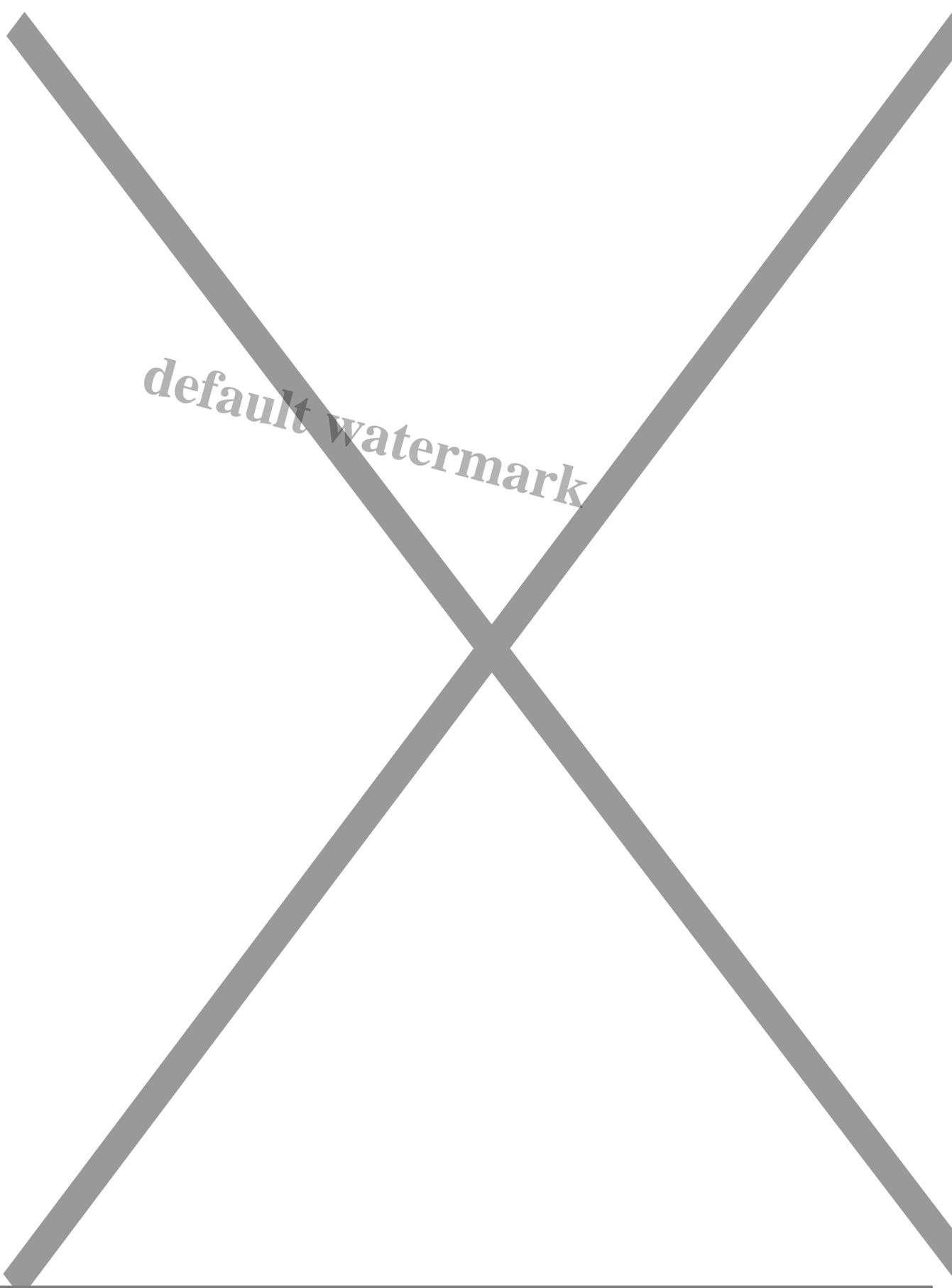
The lower Kinni starts at Glen Park in River Falls, Wisconsin by the pickleball courts. You put your kayak into the water just below the dam. There is a path leading to the river at the end of the road Glen Park is on. This is where the road makes a 90 degree turn to the left. Instead of turning left you will go straight into what looks like a driveway. The path starts there. Follow it all the way down the hill to the river.

Where to exit the river

The exit point on the lower Kinni is at Kinnickinnic State Park. It isn't the main part of the park, but it does require paying state park fees if you don't already have an annual pass on your vehicle. Pay for your vehicle if you plan to leave it there. If you have someone picking you up, then you don't really have to worry about paying. You will pull your kayak out of the river on the right side right after you go under the bridge. If you don't pull your kayak out there you will continue down river until you enter the St. Croix River.

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Path leaving the river.



Extending your kayak trip

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If you want to extend your trip, you could keep going downstream until you reach the St. Croix River. Then, I would kayak across the river and continue downstream until you get to a boat landing that is in St. Croix Bluffs Regional Park. This is a Washington county park and also has fees to enter it. You could also continue down the St. Croix until you got to Prescott. There is a boat landing after you go under the railroad bridge and pass the marina. This will be on the left side of the river. This might take a long time to do this extended trip, so I would start early in the morning. I would also plan for a full day of being on the river.

Kayak rental companies

Using kayaks on the Kinni if you don't have your own, is easy. There are two rental companies that will either drop you off or pick you up if you rent their kayaks. They even provide life jackets. This is a great option when you don't have your own kayak, or you don't have a way of transporting your kayak. It really makes it a stress-free activity.

[Kinni Creek Lodge and Outfitters](#) has a variety of options for different trips down the Kinni. They even offer the lower Kinni to Prescott trip.

[River Guide Kayaks](#) has different trip options down the Kinni. They even offer a guide to go with you for a fee if you want one.

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sherri

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