

BATTLE RIVER PADDLE GUIDE: BIG JOHN ROUTE

Hwy 53 East of Donalda to Big Knife Provincial Park

#PaddleTheBattle



@BattleRiverWatershed

Why Go?

If you subscribe to the mentality that life is not the destination but the journey, this route is for you. Packed with large oxbows, you can paddle all day but not get far. Don't let that deter you, this is a beautiful route and worth the time it takes. You will paddle 30.5km, which took us 7.5 hours (including 1 hour of breaks) in Sept. You will also paddle through the confluence with Meeting Creek.

This section is named for John Pearson, a tall man with a big voice from Donalda. John was a BRWA board member who passed away in 2019. Be sure to tell a big story after you get back!

Know Before You Go

Like most of the Battle River, there is no cell phone reception in the valley. If you need to make an emergency call, climb to the top of the hills.

The Battle River Generating Station lies just downstream of Big Knife, and because of this the water flows extra slow in the second half of the stretch. As you near Big Knife it feels more like paddling a lake.

Towards the end be careful to follow the river- it could be easy to head into the lake-like cattail marshes and get off track. This would be very difficult in the dark- give yourself lots of time!



Plant and Animal Life

This is the perfect route for paddlers looking to enjoy the watershed at it's most raw and unrefined, with a lush riparian area providing excellent wildlife habitat. Moose and mule deer have been spotted near shore looking for a drink. The sun set as we neared the end point, and the beavers got very active-it was fun to see them swim back and forth across the river and slap their tail as we neared. Golden and Bald eagles are also found in the park, so keep your eyes on the skies!



Local Attractions

Big Knife Provincial Park

See our Big Knife Paddle guide for more details about this park. There is lots to explore and enjoy at the end of your journey. The highlight being the Hoodoos on the Riverflats Trail. Also in the area is the Diplomat Mine Interpretive Site, just off the highway adjacent to the plant.



Local Taverns

Depending on what direction you are heading after your paddle, there are (at least) three great pubs to grab a bite; east to the Donalda Tavern (don't miss seeing the world's biggest lamp!), North to Big Willy's Bar at the Heisler Hotel, or south to the Halkirk Hotel. The authentic charm of these places is a reason to love these small towns. Call ahead to make sure they are open.

Please use discretion when choosing a paddling route. You are expected to follow all traffic and boating laws, be aware of weather, respect private property, and assess hazards before going out. Prepare to be out longer than expected- bring extra food, water, and lights. The Battle River Watershed Alliance holds no responsibility for injuries or damage sustained on your paddle.



WATERSHED ALLIANCE

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