

Canoe / Kayak Guide West River



City of New Haven
Department of Parks,
Recreation and Trees

John DeStefano, Jr., Mayor
Robert D. Levine, Director

Canoeing Information

Canoe Zone

From Route 34 bridge down to open basin

Trail Length

2 miles roundtrip

Launch Points:

North launch off Rt. 34 & Derby Ave.
(by T. Ahern Monument)
at West River Memorial Park.

South launch off Marginal Drive at Orange
Avenue

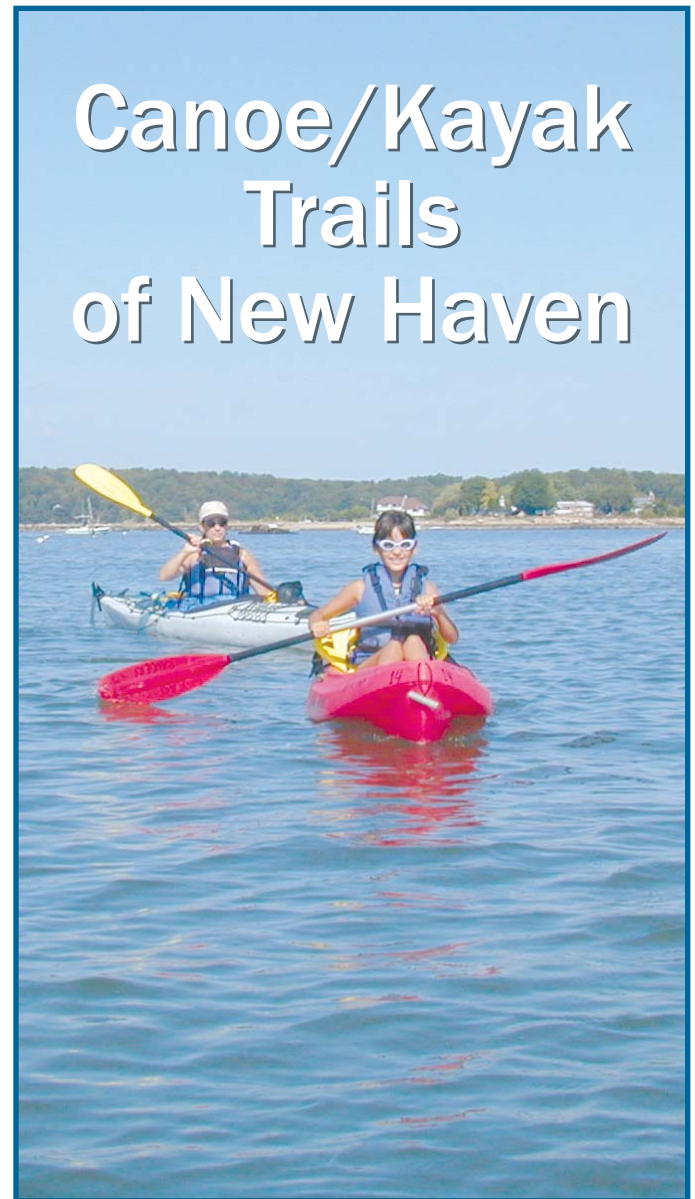
Directions

From Downtown New Haven:

West on Rt. 34 to right on Ella Grasso Blvd. to left
on Derby (lot at corner of Blvd. & Derby).

Safety Tips

1. Always wear a life jacket, even if you're a good swimmer.
2. Don't rock or stand up in the canoe.
3. If your boat flips, stay with the canoe.
4. Watch out for brush, fallen trees and other objects that could capsize your canoe.
5. In an emergency, grab anything that floats.
6. Always paddle directly into or away from the wake of larger boats.
7. Keep a safe distance from wildlife!



West River

For more information, contact:

Outdoor Adventure Coordinator at (203) 946-6768
www.cityofnewhaven.com/parks

West River

The 181 acre West River Memorial Park surrounds the canoeing area of the West River, a beautiful, slow moving river that empties into New Haven harbor further downstream. The river parallels a dredged channel that also offers great canoeing and bird watching opportunities. West River Memorial Park was acquired by the city after World War I to honor those New Haven residents who gave their lives in battle. The riverbanks are now covered by diverse vegetation that provides a rich and varied habitat for wildlife. The beautiful scenic vista from Orange Ave. looking North over the dredged channel to West Rock was the central theme for the original landscape design by Frederick Law Olmstead Jr. and E.G. Whiting. Today that view remains largely unspoiled by development.

There are two canoe launches in the park, North and South. The North launch is off Rt. 34 and the South launch is off Marginal Drive at Orange Ave. From either launch you will be entering the dredged channel. Access to the natural channel of the West River is on the West side of the dredged channel. From either end of the park you will be canoeing around the island with the option of following the natural channel North into Edgewood Park if water level allows.

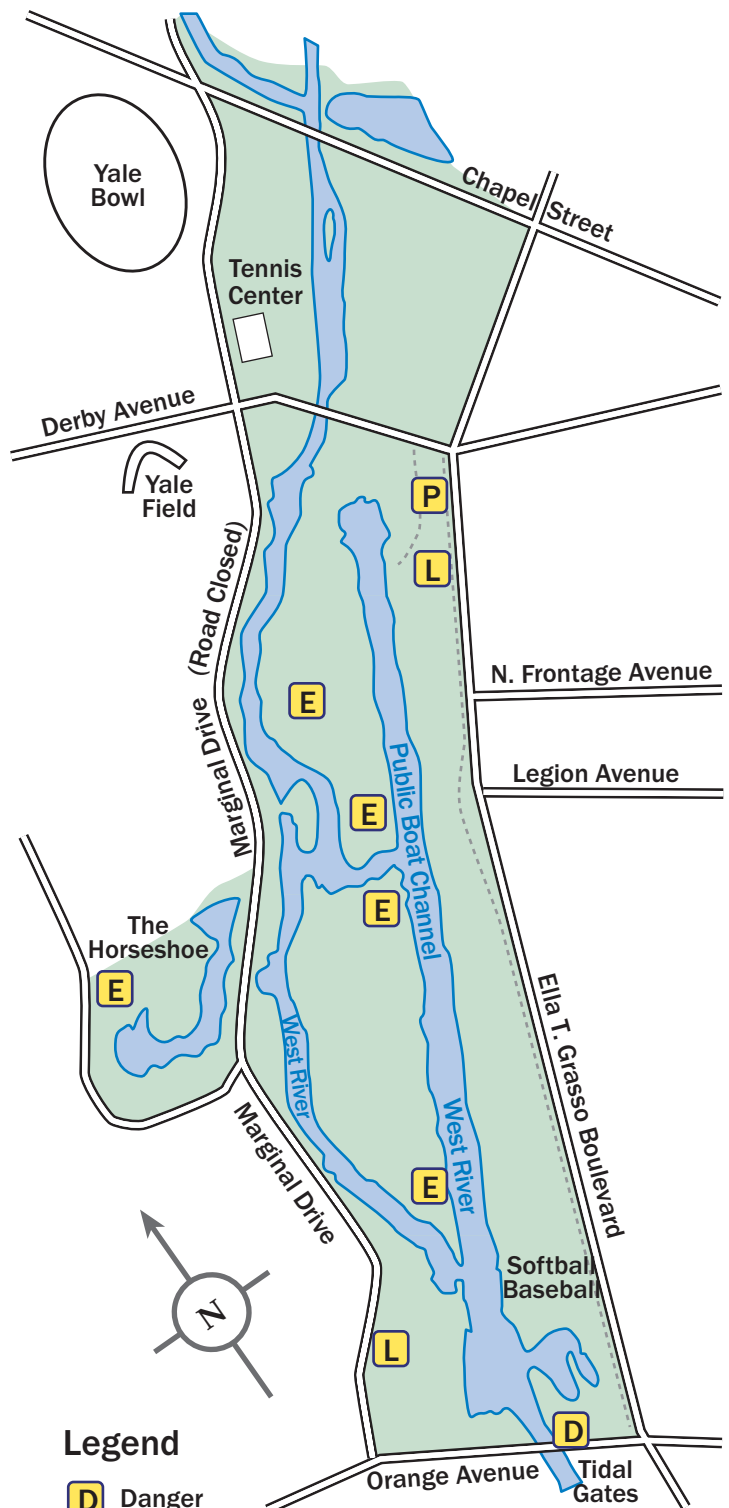
Bird watching from canoe offers a great opportunity to see a wide variety of species. As you paddle along look for Great Egret, Black Crowned Night Heron, King Fishers, Great Blue Heron, wild Turkey, song birds, shore birds and if you are lucky you may see an Osprey plunging into the water for a fish. Also, three Osprey nesting platforms have been erected in the park. Look for nesting Osprey from April through August. In May and June many birds are drawn to the park to feed on River Herring. Watch the water closely and you may see schools of these 6 to 10 inch silvery fish swimming and breaking the surface of the water. During the Fall migration many water fowl visit the park, some wintering over until Spring.

There are other sights along and in the river. White Tail Deer frequent the park and Muskrat can be seen swimming to and from their burrows in the riverbank. At the waters edge many wildflowers can be seen. In late Spring, Yellow and Blue Flag Iris bloom in abundance. Later in Summer, look closely for Cardinal Flower, the brightest red in nature, and the profuse Swamp Rose Mallow with their 5 inch flowers in shades of pink and white.

Early Fall is a great time to get out of the canoe and explore the northern meadow with its' expanse of Golden Rod, Joe-Pye Weed and other late blooming wildflowers. This area is being slowly restored as Phragmites (tall reeds) is eradicated and a more diverse meadow is established.

Canoeing Tips

1. Keep away from the tide gates near the Orange Avenue bridge. They are impassable.
2. Some areas of the West River are environmentally sensitive. These areas are marked with signs and should not be disturbed.



Legend

- D** Danger
- E** Environmental Site
- L** Launch Site
- P** Parking
- Foot Trail
- == Road
- Park/Marsh
- River

West River at Memorial Park