

Michigan Canoe Trip

Kobak's on Flat Water - 2012

I enjoy all kinds of paddling and enjoy scenic areas, clean water and small numbers of other boaters. Peggy & I just upgraded our motor home to a new model. We bought it directly from the factory in Elkhart, IN about a month ago. I had them do a lot of customized modifications and installed a solar charging system and roof racks for my canoe and/or kayaks. We primarily use the RV in Mexico every winter and really don't use it in the summer. But we did not want to get far from the factory on our shakedown cruise so we decided to head to Michigan for a week, See [Photos of new Motorhome](#) if you want to see what it looks like.

At first Peggy was not too keen on going canoeing. The last time she was in a canoe was in [Florida - 2008](#) the last time we canoed in Michigan was [Michigan - 1997](#). I read my report from 1997 and thought that sounded great maybe we should repeat that trip. We decided to go up in mid-week to avoid the weekend crowds, since the area around the [Pine River](#) is very popular like the Mohican River in Ohio. We picked Silver Creek State Forest Campground which has campsites right along the river. It has great access for put-in or take-out for two upper sections of the Pine River.



The camp is within easy driving distance to two other rivers in the Manistee National Forest; The Pere Marquette and the Little Manistee. We paddled those rivers in 1997 but this year never got around to it. When we got to the campground on Tuesday afternoon there was only one other camper there but almost filled all 19 RV sites on the weekend.

When we camp on the beach in Xpu Ha, Mexico there is a German couple, Vera and Dierck that stay there all year long and help run the campground. Last year was their first summer in the Yucatan and they found out that it was too hot, so this year they decided to tour the USA and Canada for 5 months. It just so happens that they were in the area and we asked them if they wanted to camp in a forest instead of private campgrounds. They loved it, in fact when we left they were still there enjoying the heavily wooded campsites and the \$13/night cost.

The weekend campers are almost all Recreational Kayakers and a few Sit-On-Tops. We only saw one other canoe. The river in this area is only about 15' wide and has a very fast current. There are small rocks and class I-II rapids and are really fun in any kind of watercraft. It is also a popular trout fishing stream. The biggest dangers to paddlers are the fallen trees, which are everywhere.



We decided to start at Meadow-Brook Bridge and take-out at our campsite. We drove the RV to the put-in which had enough room for a few cars. My intention was to bike back from camp after the run but our German friends gave me a ride back up. In fact they were waiting for us at camp and took this [Video](#). We saw 7 deer and a few Mergansers on this stretch. There were two places where we had to lift around fallen trees. It is an 8 mi section that took us about 3 hours at a relaxing pace. Since it was a Wednesday we saw no other paddlers. In fact even on the weekend this section gets very little use. The most popular section of the Pine River is near Peterson Bridge National Forest Campground. On Thursday we decided to paddle from the campground to Dobson Bridge. This 10 mile section has a little more water from all the springs entering along the way.



If you paddle beyond Lincoln Bridge on the weekend you better have a permit from the National Forest Ranger. To get one of their permits you need to stop at the NF office in Cadillac, MI. The permit is only \$2/day. They limit the total number of boats on any section, but you must decide which section and which day you are paddling. The permit is color coded and you hang it on your boat.

This time I drove the RV to the take-out and peddled my bike back to camp. It was an easy 40 minute bike ride. We were going past the bridge where a permit was required but since it was mid-week we didn't bother getting a permit. We had stopped at the NF office on our way up on Tuesday and got a permit for a section of the Pere Marquette River which has the same regulations but we never ended up using it. This section of the Pine River is not near as pretty as the upstream section we did yesterday. We saw very little wildlife. There were trees down everywhere. In between Lincoln Bridge and Elm Flats there was a big impassable log jam that I pictured on the first page. A novice could get in real trouble here if they didn't take out in time. We had to drag the canoe up a hill, through the forest and put-in downstream. Even with that portage this 10 mi section only took us 3 ½ hours. We never saw anyone else on the river.

On Friday Peggy said she was tired of paddling and wanted to hike. There is a nice 2 mile trail from the campground downstream to Lincoln Bridge and you can return on the opposite side of the river. It was starting to get pretty hot out but it was a nice 2 hour hike. We did take the wrong trail several times on the way back as it is not as well marked on this side of the river. We saw several Recreational Kayaks paddling this section. We warned them about the log jam. There is a nice bridge right across

from our campsite to get you back on the right side of the river. Fifteen years ago I mountain biked this trail and found out this bridge was missing. It took me a long detour to find my way back to the camp.



We finally just hung around camp on Saturday and watched all the others paddlers go by. For all you flatwater recreational paddlers, these MI Rivers will provide you a great paddling experience.

We left early on Sunday morning to go to the [Gilmore Car Museum](#) near Kalamazoo. It was way better than I imagined with over 300 beautifully restored cars in 6 different buildings. I even found a '52 Chevy that was nearly identical to my first car when I was in High School and College.



On Monday morning we were at the [Phoenix RV factory](#) in Elkhart for a few minor adjustments to our new RV and we got home in the early afternoon.