

Planning Your Trip (cont'd)

Fuel is scarce on the lower Missouri River. Locate fuel sources before you begin your trip and plan accordingly. Upstream boaters should expect a 15-80 percent reduction in speed and corresponding increase in fuel consumption due to the 4-7 mph current of the river.

Swimming

Swimming and tubing on the Missouri is extremely dangerous and is strongly discouraged. A fast river current (normally 4-7 mph) can quickly exhaust even the strongest swimmer. Inner tubes should never be used on the river. There's no way to control them in the current and they pose problems with boats and tugs especially on holidays and weekends when recreational traffic peaks.

Never swim in floodwaters, the main river channel, around structures like wing dikes or around moored barges. Strong hidden currents, drop-offs, and hidden obstacles make these areas extremely hazardous to swimmers. Swimmers and waders should always wear a life jacket.

Equipment

"Life jackets float ... you don't". Life jackets (also referred to as Personal Floatation Devices or PFDs) do save lives and are the most important piece of safety equipment in your boat. Make sure you follow the boating rules for your state regarding life jackets. Be sure they fit snugly to avoid the PFD coming off if you should accidentally fall in the water. Frayed or damaged PFD's should be replaced. Smaller children should wear PFD's made for them. The U.S. Coast Guard label affixed to the PFD will aid in selecting the appropriate type and size.

Boats must be equipped with appropriate emergency equipment (i.e., first aid kit, oars and paddles, anchor, sound device, fire extinguisher, navigation lights, and 100 feet of line or rope).

If your boat capsizes, do not attempt to swim to shore. Stay with the craft until the boat can be safely beached. Remember, hypothermia is a possibility during most of the year. Life jackets help to minimize loss of body heat.

Avoid sunburn, wear a wide brimmed hat, long sleeved shirt, long trousers and use sunscreen. Sunscreen alone is not sufficient for long exposure to the sun.

Always carry a change of clothing in a waterproof container. Dry clothes could save your life by preventing hypothermia if the clothes you are wearing become wet. It does not have to be "cold" for hypothermia to strike.

Respect Private Property

Most land along the lower Missouri is privately owned. You'll see by looking at the green shading on the map that public lands are very limited. Camping should be done only if you know who's land you are on and have the landowners permission.

Be especially careful not to moor to drainage structures or to trees that might damage or imperil private levees.

Boating & Barges

It is not necessary to get off the river because a barge is approaching. You should move toward the off channel shore (the inside of a bend) and be alert for rock dikes which are located there. Move as far away from the barge as possible and position the bow of your boat perpendicular to the wake. Never turn your boat broadside to the wake created by barges and tugs, they can easily swamp a small boat. Remember, barges have the right-of-way.

Pilots of towboats have a blind spot in front of their vessels and it could take a barge and tow up to 1 ½ miles to stop. These barges also create extreme turbulence up to ½ mile behind the tow. The strong wake may lift your boat onto the rocks, dikes or other hazards. Hydraulics generated by barges can suck under objects including smaller craft so it's best to give them a wide berth. Playing games with this kind of vessel can result in serious injury or even death.

Permits are required for regattas and special events on the river. The U.S. Coast Guard (314-269-2332) or Missouri Water Patrol (573-751-3333) should be contacted to obtain these permits.

Stewardship & Endangered Species

Human disturbance can disrupt bird nesting, fish spawning, and other wildlife activities. Avoid dragging your boat across gravel bars or through spawning areas. Launch and land only on designated sites. Keep pets under control.

Minimize campfire impacts and dispose of all waste properly. Pack out all of your trash and pick up litter left by others.

If artifacts or fossils are found, leave them in place and undisturbed. Photograph or sketch rock art, but do not touch.

Check your boat and clean for zebra mussels before taking it from the Missouri River to any other body of water. Signs at launch ramps will provide further instruction.

Mooring & Anchoring

Never set an anchor in the fast flowing river channel. Current can pull you under and debris (e.g. logs) floating under the surface can hook your line and draw you under in an instant. It can also be difficult to unhook the anchor from submerged obstacles you can't see. Be sure you can quickly cut or detach the anchor line on your boat if you need to.

If you do anchor in the river, pick your anchorage carefully out of the channel and current. Remember to use a bowline and keep your bow into the wind or current. This will minimize the risk of being swamped by water coming over the transom or back of the boat. The anchor line should be at least seven times as long as the depth of the water in which the boat is moored.

Never attempt to moor to stationary objects such as dikes and moored barges and never approach these objects from upstream. Swift water flowing over, under, and around these objects creates very strong turbulence and undertow currents that may overturn your boat and pull you under.

When stopping, make every attempt to turn your boat upstream into the current and cut the throttle to an idle. The throttle setting will vary with the speed of the current.

Always land your boat facing upstream and pull in parallel to the riverbank. If you try landing facing downstream or perpendicular to the bank, the current will pivot the boat to position the bow upstream and parallel to the bank. A two-point tie off should be used to keep the prop out of the rock and prevent its contact with the bank.