

St. Francis River

In sharp contrast to the more western Ozark streams, the upper St. Francis cannot be called a “float” stream. It presents a challenge to the experienced paddler. Due to its boulder-strewn course, it can be run only during high or moderately high water; that is, in spring or after rather heavy rains. Both the St. Francis and its tributary, Big Creek, run a straighter course than float streams, through narrow defiles of resistant granitic rock called shut-ins. Big Creek is floatable only in spring or early summer. The rougher sections of these streams are clearly indicated in the descriptions below. Due to their relatively hazardous nature, these sections provide some of the wildest scenic river runs in the state. For shut-ins sections, it is advisable to carry only lunch and other small items in the canoe and to take life jackets and enough rope to line canoes through bad places if deemed necessary. In high water, decked canoes or whitewater kayaks with spray skirts would be advisable.

- Difficulty:** I to III in most runnable stages. Some sections IV, in high water, to possible V in flood.
- Gradients:** general — 6.1; Route H, 3 miles S. of Farmington, to Hwy. 72 — 8.2; to Silvermine (Route D) — 20; to Route C-N — 5.7; to Sam A. Baker State Park — 3.8; to Hwy. 67 — 2.8.
- Counties:** St. Francois, Madison, Wayne.

St. Francis River I

- 0.0 **Gruner Ford Access.** Route H Bridge 3 miles south of Farmington. River has a normal float gradient. Must carry boats a short distance to river.
- 3.0 Hwy. 67 Bridge.
- 7.0 **Syenite Access** on right, just downstream of Route H Bridge. Gravel ramp.
- 8.2 River begins to flow more rapidly. Next 3 miles has gradient of 20 feet per mile. Several long pools end in rocky, steep drops. Vision is often obscured by dense willow thickets. Use caution! This can be a dangerous section in high water.
- 13.2 Spur from Route K meets river. No access.
- 16.7 Wachita Creek enters on right. Granite bluffs with pines on each side of river.
- 17.7 **Roselle Access** on right at Hwy. 72 Bridge. Gravel ramp. Begin shut-ins sections. This section should not be run by inexperienced canoeists. In high water it should be run by experts only. Difficulty ratings of the rapids range from III in moderately low water to V in flood stage. Fast riffle below the access leads to slow section but rapids soon begin. Low bluff on the right and sound of the water

warn of first rapids, which begins with a rocky ledge across the river. The next 1.5 miles includes three sharp drops. Quiet sections invariably end in rapids.

- 20.2 **Millstream Gardens Conservation Area** and access on left. Must carry boat down steep slope to gravel ramp.
- 20.8 Begin mile of continuous rapids with sharp drops. Scouting on foot is essential. A picnic shelter on left bank overlooks beginning of this rapids section. The steepest drop on the river is just below this. It is 4-6 feet, depending on water stage, but the chute has a difficult S-curve approach.
- 22.3 Turkey Creek enters on left. Rocky rapids continue to damsite.
- 22.7 Silver Mine Dam. Breach blown in left side of dam is runnable, but in high water produces a high wave at the bottom which would swamp an open canoe. A “rock-garden” run from here to the bridge.
- 22.8 Silver Mines Recreation Area (Forest Service) and campground. Access on right.
- 22.9 Route D Bridge.
- 24.7 Little St. Francis enters on left.
- 27.5 Route E Bridge. Cedar Bottom Creek on left.
- 28.2 Rock Creek on right.
- 29.6 Begin passage between Marlow Mountain, on left, and Black Mountain. There are some fast runs both above and below this area, but the passage between the two mountains is mostly a long pool with Route E along right bank.
- 31.4 French Mills and Little Rock Creek on right. Half a mile up this creek there is a pretty shut-ins area, about a half mile in length, with a drop of 80 feet. It can be reached on foot via Route E, which parallels it.
- 32.0 Marble Creek on right has shut-ins 2 miles upstream.
- 32.8 Begin passage between two high hills. At lower end of this run, granite outcroppings constrict the river, producing a rapids with two drops. Waves are sometimes high enough to put a considerable amount of water into a loaded, open canoe. May be scouted easily from rock ledge on left.
- 34.8 Wade Ford. Closed to public access.
- 36.2 Unusual cave in bluffs.
- 37.6 Marsh Creek on right.
- 41.9 Marsh Ford.
- 42.1 Twelvemile Creek on left. Settlement of Saco is 1 mile up the creek.
- 43.4 Route C Bridge at Jewett.

Little St. Francis

This St. Francis River tributary is a fair-sized stream, at least 10 miles of which are runnable with adequate water. The general gradient is 7.5, but the lower end is faster. The lower end includes one of the most beautiful small river white-water runs in the state.

Difficulty: II in most runnable stages. Some sections IV, in high water, to possible V in flood.

Gradients: general — 7.5.

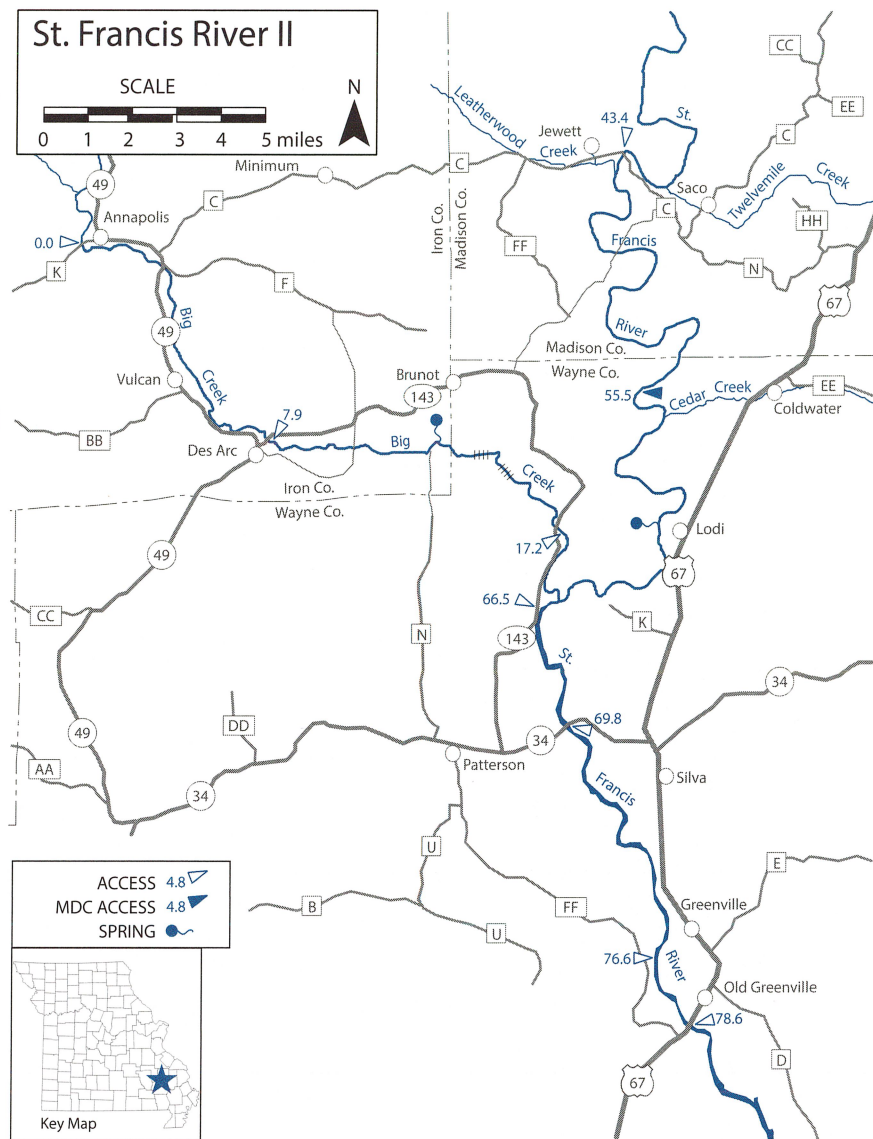
County: Madison.

- 0.0 Thompson Ford Access on right, off Hwy. 72 to County Road 504 to 503. Must carry canoe/kayak from parking lot to river.
- 2.8 Barnes Creek on right.
- 4.1 Paved ford. Portage left.
- 4.5 Mathews Creek on left.
- 7.2 Enter shut-ins section with high hills on both sides.
- 8.5 Pine Mountain on right. Tin Mountain on left. Fast, rocky riffles and reddish porphyry bluffs in this area.
- 10.0 Junction with St. Francis River.



St. Francis River II

- 43.4 Route C Bridge at Jewett.
- 43.7 Leatherwood Creek on right.
- 47.4 Shelton Ford at junction of county roads 445 and 447.
- 51.2 Reed Bend Ford. Cannot drive to river here.
- 52.1 Five small caves in bluff on right.
- 53.5 Bald Knob on left.
- 55.5 **Coldwater Access.** Reached from Coldwater on County Road 302. Primitive camping allowed. ▲
- 56.9 Cedar Creek on left.
- 61.9 Spring on right. Settlement of Lodi on left.
- 62.4 Kelly Ford. No access.
- 65.2 Spur of Mudlick Mountain on right. Logan Mountain on left.
- 66.1 Big Creek enters on right.
- 66.5 Sam A. Baker State Park (DNR). Access and campgrounds. Water becomes slower below this point.
- 69.8 34 Bridge Recreation Area (USACE) on left. Access. Parking.
- 71.2 Clark Creek on right.
- 73.4 Hubble Creek on left.
- 75.4 Hwy. 67 runs near left bank.
- 76.4 Lake Creek on right.
- 76.6 Lake Creek Access/Carlton Boat Ramp (USACE) on right. Parking. Camping.
- 78.6 Hwy. 67 Bridge. Last access before Lake Wappapello. Greenville Recreation Area and Access (USACE) on left. Parking lot on left just below bridge. Dam is 18 miles across the lake.



Big Creek

This St. Francis River tributary is only floatable in spring and early summer when there is sufficient water. The Big Creek Shut-ins are a scenic feature of Sam A. Baker State Park but can only be accessed by boat when water levels are high. Expect rapids and times when portages may be necessary.

Difficulty: I to III in most runnable stages. Some sections IV, in high water, to possible V in flood.

Gradients: general — 11.8.

Counties: Wayne, Iron.

- 0.0 Route K.
- 2.2 Hwy. 49 Bridge. Section to Des Arc is fast but has some shallow pools. This part is a high-water float only. A railroad parallels the creek to Vulcan.

- 7.9 Hwy. 143 Bridge. Good access.
- 10.1 Paved ford. Portage.
- 11.1 Shut-ins between two hills.
- 12.2 The Battery, a group of cottages at the site of an old bridge, 2 miles south of Brunot. Spring just above bridge.
- 12.9 Big Creek Shut-ins begin. A beautiful run. Run is possible only during high water levels and then expect several rapids that require caution. Portage may be required.
- 13.9 Crane Pond Creek on left.
- 15.9 Shut-ins open up.
- 17.2 Hwy. 143 Bridge. Sam A. Baker State Park. Good access. There are a couple of fast runs below this access and other accesses downstream in the park.
- 19.2 Junction with St. Francis River.