












# Legend

-  Small boat launch
-  Boat launch
-  Commercial campground
-  Canal
-  Mile markers
-  Bridge
-  Landmark
-  Class I Rapid
-  Class II Rapid
-  Appalachian Trail
-  Park\*

\*All land along river bank is private property unless noted otherwise.

These maps have been orientated so that the river always flows from the bottom of the map to the top of the map. This allows paddlers to orient themselves in the river in terms of river right and left while paddling downstream.

## General Safety

- 1) ALWAYS WEAR A LIFE JACKET.
- 2) ALCOHOL AND PADDLING DON'T MIX.
- 3) KNOW THE RIVER WATER LEVELS. – DON'T PADDLE WHEN RIVER IS TOO HIGH.
- 4) KNOW THE WEATHER & WATER TEMPERATURES.
- 5) KNOW HOW TO CONTROL YOUR BOAT.
- 6) NEVER PADDLE ALONE.
- 7) KNOW YOUR ROUTE.



Paddlers launching at Iron Gate Beach, mile 0.8.



**Class I Rapids**

Island Run Right.

**Eagle Rock**

Roanoke

15.2

Old Train Trestle Last Lock Park Bridge

Map 2

Map 1

43 Gravel Beach  
Route 220 Bridge

13

11.8

**TRO Campground- Gala**

11.3

Gala Public Access 50 FT Up Sinking Creek Under RR Bridge

**Class I Rapids**

Class I+ Wave-field. After the bend, Class I rapids. Run first two left, and last one right.

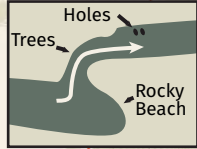
**Gala**

Prices Bluff 150 ft cliff

622

**Class II Rapid: "The Squeeze"**

River turns to the left and narrows down. Caution in high water. Scouting is recommended!



Island

Small Island

Railroad Bridge

Glen Wilton Bridge Route 622

**Glen Wilton**

**Iron Gate**

Lick Run Access

Lick Run James River Gauge

**Class II Rapid**

Start right of center and move far right.

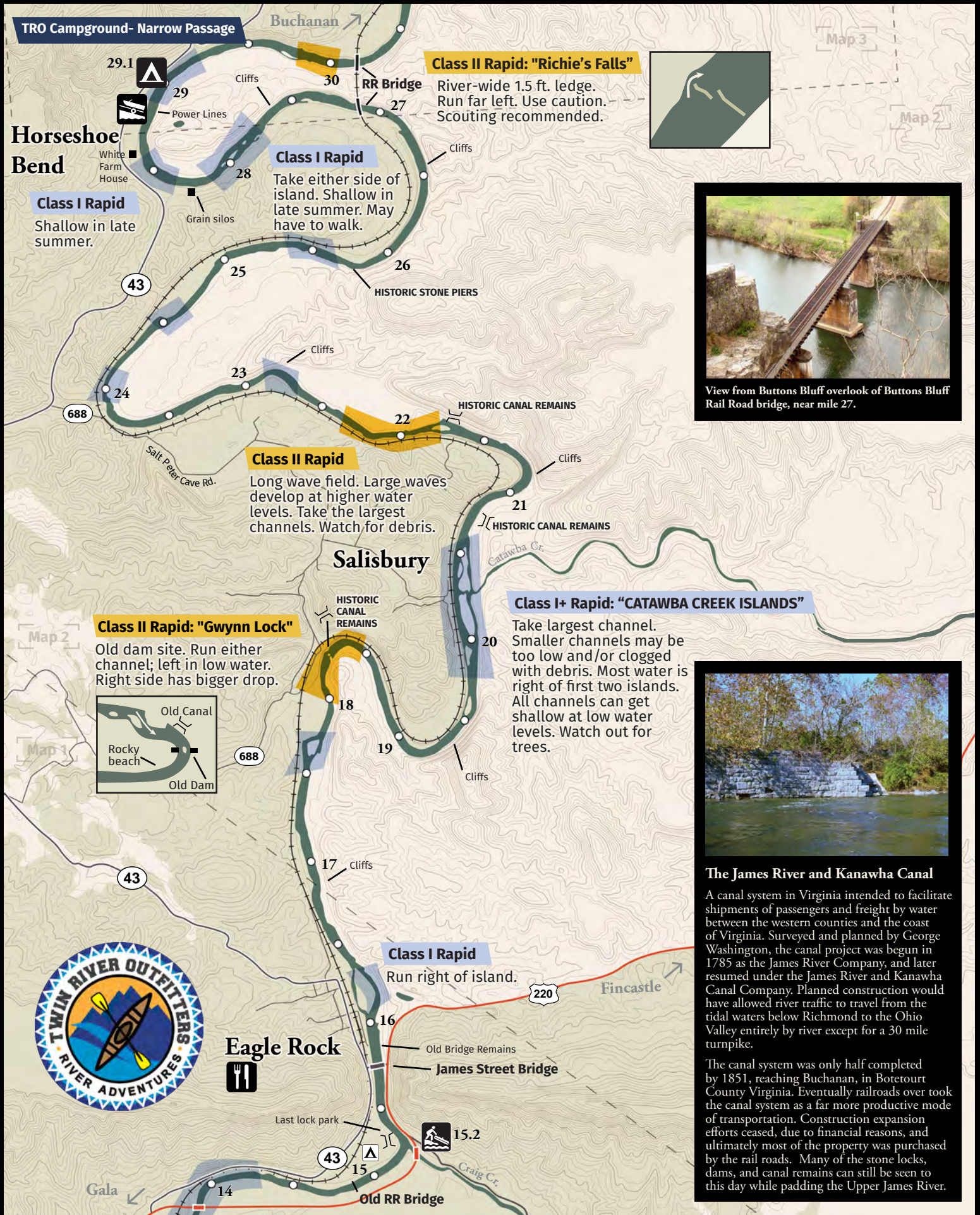
Start of James. Mile "0"

Clifton Forge

**Class II Rapid: "Surprise"**

Easy class II rapid, can be tricky in lower water levels. Run left.





TRO Campground- Narrow Passage

# Horseshoe Bend

## Class I Rapid

Shallow in late summer.

## Class I Rapid

Take either side of island. Shallow in late summer. May have to walk.

## Class II Rapid: "Richie's Falls"

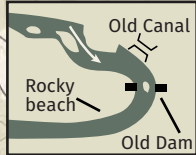
River-wide 1.5 ft. ledge. Run far left. Use caution. Scouting recommended.

## Class II Rapid

Long wave field. Large waves develop at higher water levels. Take the largest channels. Watch for debris.

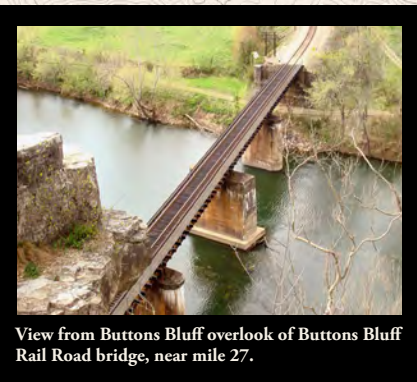
## Class II Rapid: "Gwynn Lock"

Old dam site. Run either channel; left in low water. Right side has bigger drop.



## Class I+ Rapid: "CATAWBA CREEK ISLANDS"

Take largest channel. Smaller channels may be too low and/or clogged with debris. Most water is right of first two islands. All channels can get shallow at low water levels. Watch out for trees.



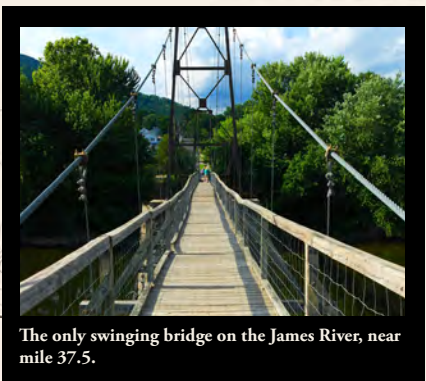
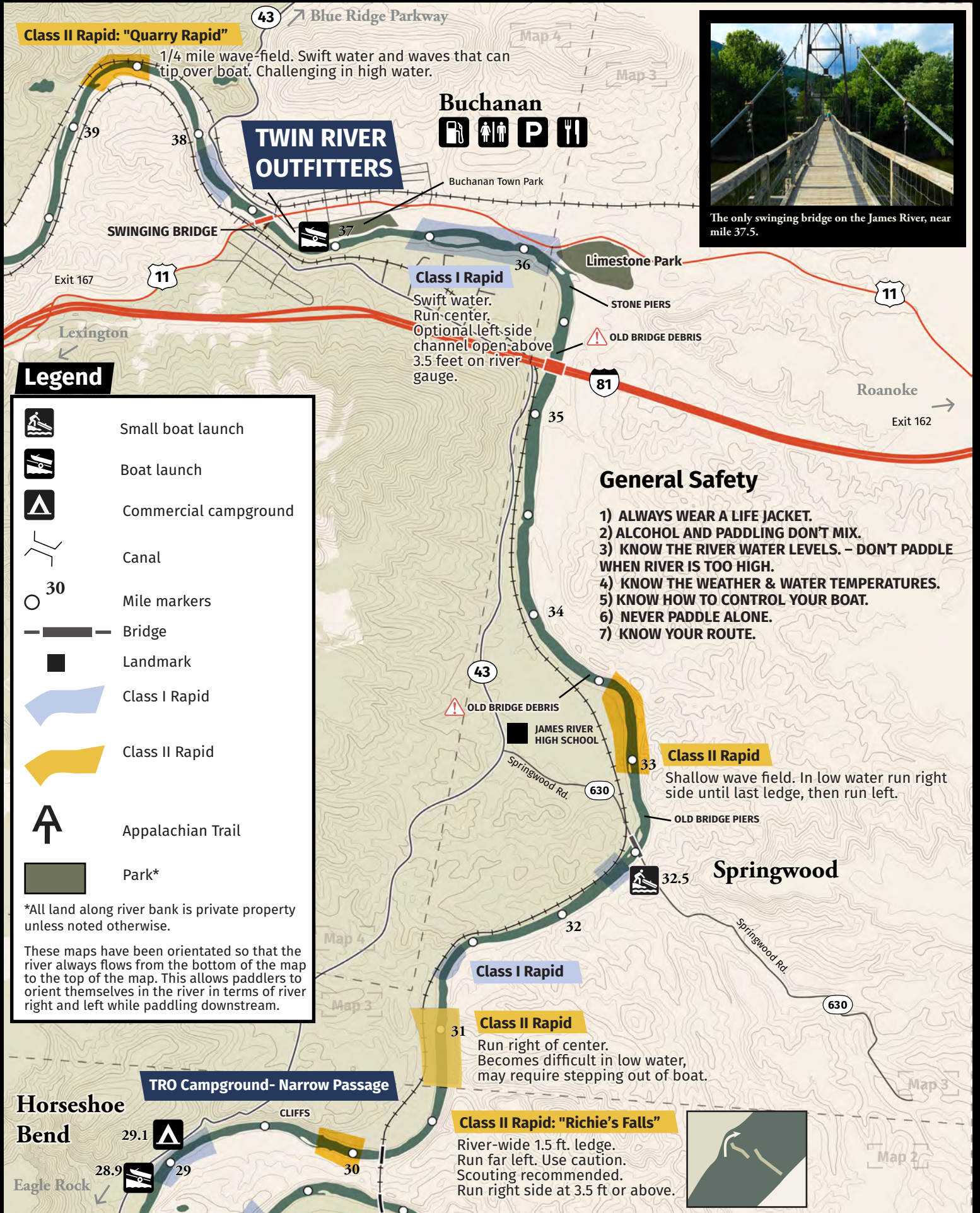
View from Buttons Bluff overlook of Buttons Bluff Rail Road bridge, near mile 27.



### The James River and Kanawha Canal

A canal system in Virginia intended to facilitate shipments of passengers and freight by water between the western counties and the coast of Virginia. Surveyed and planned by George Washington, the canal project was begun in 1785 as the James River Company, and later resumed under the James River and Kanawha Canal Company. Planned construction would have allowed river traffic to travel from the tidal waters below Richmond to the Ohio Valley entirely by river except for a 30 mile turnpike.

The canal system was only half completed by 1851, reaching Buchanan, in Botetourt County Virginia. Eventually railroads over took the canal system as a far more productive mode of transportation. Construction expansion efforts ceased, due to financial reasons, and ultimately most of the property was purchased by the rail roads. Many of the stone locks, dams, and canal remains can still be seen to this day while paddling the Upper James River.





### Arcadia take-out

Call 540-254-8012 at Arcadia Bridge. Take out 150 yds past bridge on river right. Gravel road with Breeden Bottom Campground sign. Last pick-up 5:30pm. No exceptions!

### TRO Campground- Arcadia

### Class II Rapid: "Jennings Creek"

Left channel at island is class II rapid. Ledge sticks out from left bank past first island and forces water sharply to right. Stay to right in the bend. Right channel is class I+ and typically low in summer.

### Alpine take-out



Call 540-254-8012 at Arcadia Bridge. Take out gravel trail on river left, beside small island before island. Last pick-up 5:30pm. No exceptions!

### Class II Rapid

Take left channel around island. Right channel typically is low in summer.

(Public Arcadia Hand-Carry Access)

### Class I Rapid

Shallow late summer.

### Class II Rapid

Run left of center, aiming for downstream V.

### Class II Rapid: "Quarry Rapid"

1/4 mile wave-field. Swift water and waves that can tip over boat. Challenging in high water. Run center-left.

### Class I Rapid

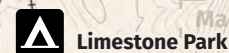
Run right downstream V.

## TWIN RIVER OUTFITTERS



Buchanan

Buchanan Town Park



Limestone Park



Paddling downstream from Buchanan, near mile 38.



Lexington



Glasgow Timber Steps and Boat Ramp, mile 59.

Exit 180



### Legend



Small boat launch



Boat launch



Commercial campground



Canal



30

Mile markers



Bridge



Landmark



Class I Rapid



Class II Rapid



Appalachian Trail



Park\*

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Map 5

Map 4

Glasgow



#### Class II Rapid: "Cement Tower"

Start in left third and angle back to right side for best ride. Sneak is extreme left. Becomes class II+ in high water.

#### Class III Rapid

Maury River entering James River. Last take out before Class III section.

#### Class II Rapid: "Old Dam"

Old dam site. Run in center.

### Natural Bridge Station

#### TRO Campground- Back Run

### Natural Bridge



RR Bridge Left Bank Over Cedar Creek

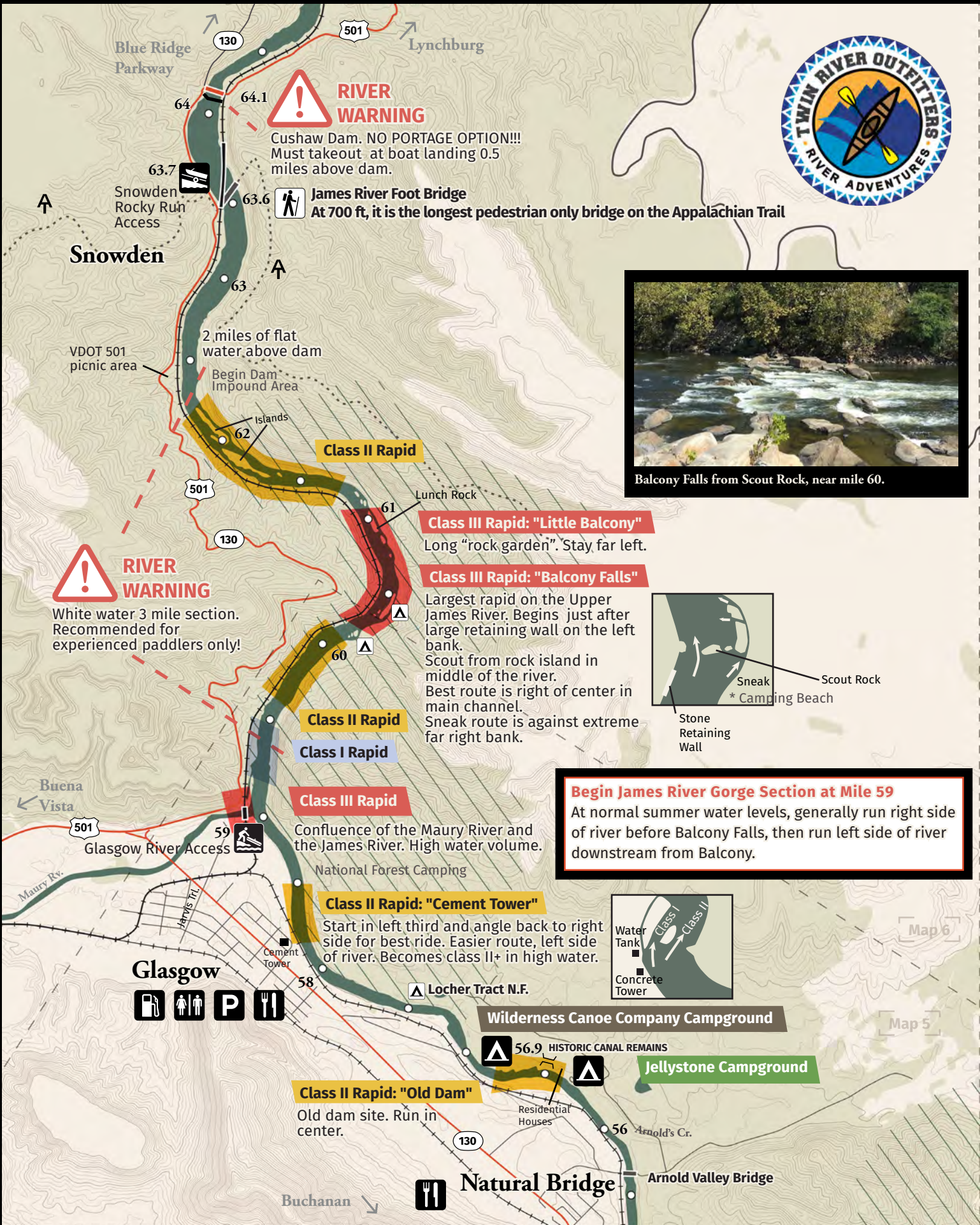
Exit 175



Roanoke

Alpine





**RIVER WARNING**  
Cushaw Dam. NO PORTAGE OPTION!!!  
Must takeout at boat landing 0.5 miles above dam.

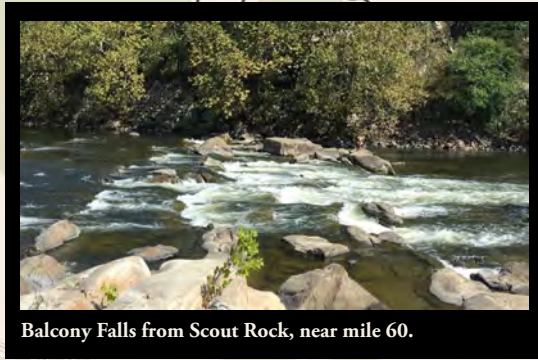
**James River Foot Bridge**  
At 700 ft, it is the longest pedestrian only bridge on the Appalachian Trail

**RIVER WARNING**  
White water 3 mile section.  
Recommended for experienced paddlers only!

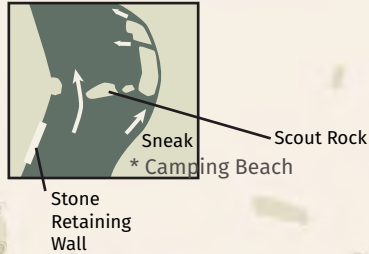
**Class II Rapid**

**Class III Rapid: "Little Balcony"**  
Long "rock garden". Stay far left.

**Class III Rapid: "Balcony Falls"**  
Largest rapid on the Upper James River. Begins just after large retaining wall on the left bank. Scout from rock island in middle of the river. Best route is right of center in main channel. Sneak route is against extreme far right bank.



Balcony Falls from Scout Rock, near mile 60.



**Class II Rapid**

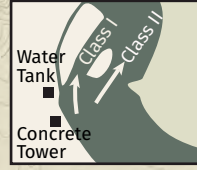
**Class I Rapid**

**Class III Rapid**

Confluence of the Maury River and the James River. High water volume.

**Class II Rapid: "Cement Tower"**

Start in left third and angle back to right side for best ride. Easier route, left side of river. Becomes class II+ in high water.



**Begin James River Gorge Section at Mile 59**  
At normal summer water levels, generally run right side of river before Balcony Falls, then run left side of river downstream from Balcony.

**Glasgow**  
Icons for gas, restrooms, parking, and dining.

**Wilderness Canoe Company Campground**

**Jellystone Campground**

**Class II Rapid: "Old Dam"**

Old dam site. Run in center.

**Natural Bridge**

**Arnold Valley Bridge**

# River Safety

## General Safety

**1) ALWAYS WEAR A LIFE JACKET.** Wear a properly fitting U.S. Coast Guard-approved life jacket at all times on the water.

**2) ALCOHOL AND PADDLING DON'T MIX.** Save the alcohol consumption for after your day on the river. Unfortunately, a huge percentage of river accidents and death involve alcohol in some form.

**3) KNOW THE RIVER WATER LEVELS. – DON'T PADDLE WHEN RIVER IS TOO HIGH.** Check the water levels online before you float. High water causes faster currents, larger waves, and increases risks of encountering strainers or boat pinning tree limbs. The Upper James River Water trail closes at 6 feet on the Buchanan James River Gauge due to high water and safety issues .

**4) KNOW THE WEATHER & WATER TEMPERATURES.** Check the forecast before you go and dress appropriately for expected conditions.

**5) KNOW HOW TO CONTROL YOUR BOAT.** Be in command of your paddle craft and know how to move your boat forward,

back, and sideways, and how to stop using paddle strokes. Watch ahead for hazards. Stay low. Learn how to enter and exit your boat safely and stay low in your boat when possible. Consider taking a canoe or kayak safety paddling skills class to learn more about handling your boat.

**6) NEVER PADDLE ALONE.** Companions can come to your aid if you get in trouble. New paddlers should paddle with someone more experienced— it's a great way to learn and remain safe if there's a mishap. Additionally, it's a good idea to tell someone your "Float Plan" for accountability and safety.

**7) KNOW YOUR ROUTE.** Know the route you are paddling including the put in, take out, and any major rapids, or hazards expected to encounter along the way. Consult maps, books, outfitters, or other paddlers for trip advice when paddling a new section of water.

## RAPID CLASSIFICATION

**Class I (easy):** Fast moving water with riffles and small waves. The river has few obstructions which are all obvious and easily missed with little training.

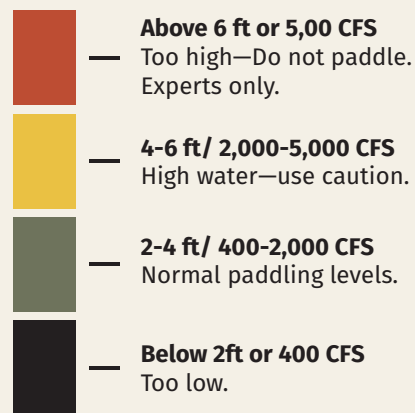
**Class II (novice):** Straightforward rapids with wide, clear channels which are typically evident without scouting. Occasional maneuvering may be required. Swimmers are seldom injured and group assistance. Rapids that are at the upper end of this difficulty range are designated "Class II+."

**Class III (intermediate):** Rapids with moderate, irregular waves which may be difficult to avoid and which can swamp an open canoe. Complex maneuvers in fast current and good boat control in tight passages or around ledges are often required. Scouting is advisable. Large waves or strainers may be present. Strong eddies and powerful current effects can be found, particularly on larger volume rivers.

## Water Levels

The river levels on the upper James River are constantly changing and are ultimately determined by amount of rain upstream in the watershed and releases from the Gathright Dam from Lake Moomaw. The National Weather Service maintains a forecast river gauge of the James River – Buchanan River Gauge. Local outfitters and paddlers have generally adopted this graph to interpret the water levels for the Upper James River. River forecast can be found at [canoevirginia.net/Riverlevels](http://canoevirginia.net/Riverlevels)

Generally speaking the Upper section of the James River is able to be paddled the entire season due to releases from the Gathright Dam through out the summer. That being said, it can have low water levels, normally August and September and you may have to step out of your boat once every 4 - 5 miles due to low water issues. So even when the river is 2.3 ft or lower 99% of the paddle is very good conditions and fun and its one of the few rivers in the western part of Virginia that can be paddled all season long.



Scan QR Code to get up-to-date river levels.