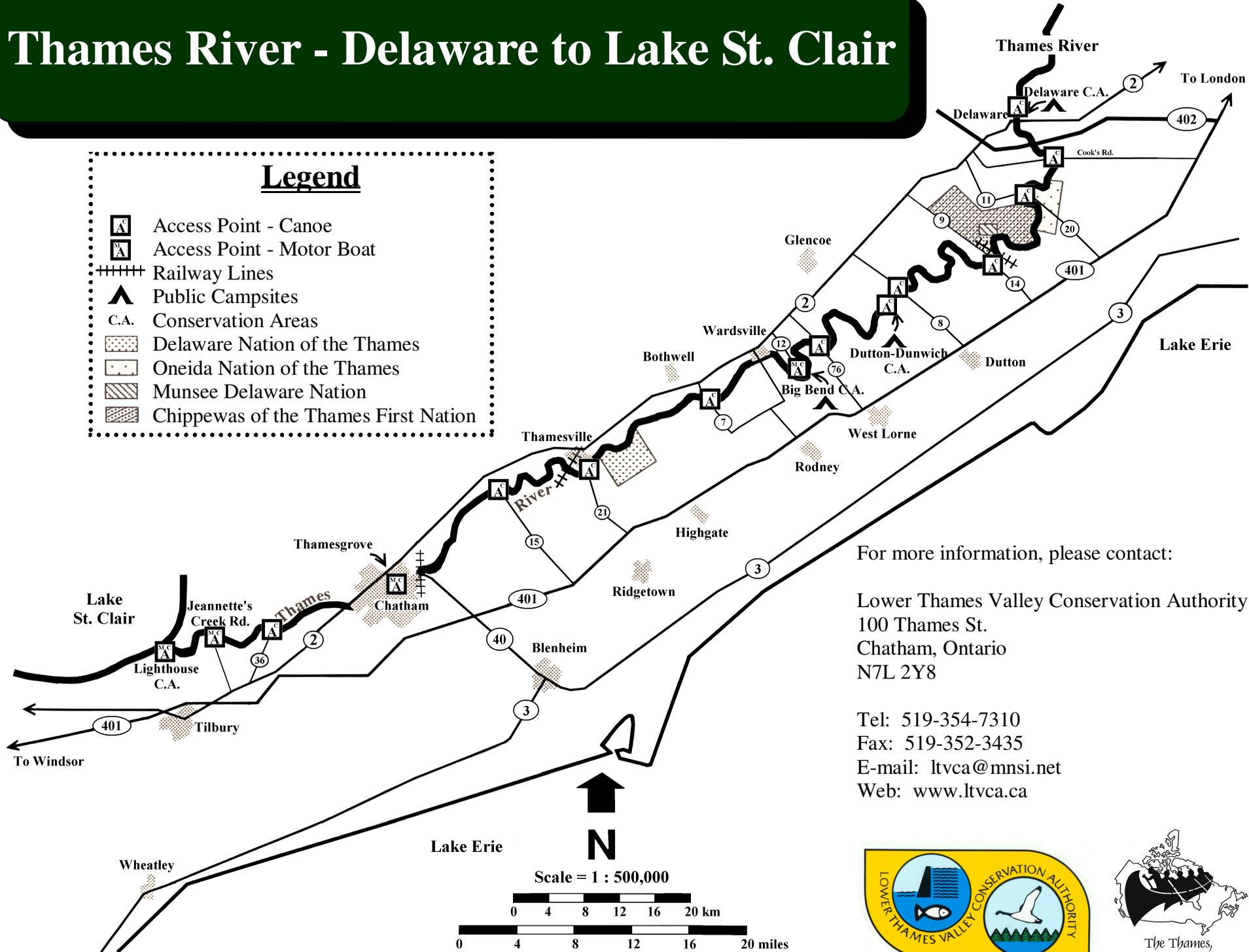


Thames River - Delaware to Lake St. Clair

Legend

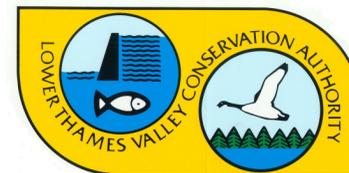
-  Access Point - Canoe
-  Access Point - Motor Boat
-  Railway Lines
-  Public Campsites
-  C.A. Conservation Areas
-  Delaware Nation of the Thames
-  Oneida Nation of the Thames
-  Munsee Delaware Nation
-  Chippewas of the Thames First Nation



For more information, please contact:

Lower Thames Valley Conservation Authority
 100 Thames St.
 Chatham, Ontario
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Canoeing the Lower Thames River



General Information

The lower Thames River, running from Delaware to Lake St. Clair, is 183 km in length with a total elevation drop of 34 m. The river route from Delaware to Thamesville has high banks which help to protect land from flooding. Heading west from Thamesville towards the mouth of the river, flat lands and low banks increase the risk of flooding from high river flow and ice jams.

The lower Thames River is ideally suited for canoeing with scenic landscapes and abundant wildlife. As one meanders down the river, its simple beauty can provide an escape from the stresses and strains of everyday life. Along the river one enjoys navigating many curves, rapids, pools, and shoals. The river gives great recreational opportunities to both the novice or experienced canoeist.

Frequently Asked Questions

- Q. How long would it take to canoe the whole lower portion of the Thames River?
- A. The avg. speed for a recreational canoeist is ~5 km/hr. When canoeing for 6 hours/day, it would take about 6 days to canoe the entire lower Thames River.
- Q. What kind of wildlife can I expect to see?
- A. On any particular day you could see a wide range of birds from kingfishers to bald eagles as well as a wide range of mammals from flying squirrels to white-tailed deer! You may even catch a glimpse of a spiny softshell turtle or a water snake! Commonly, the keen canoeist will spot muskrats, opossums, raccoons, and even the occasional beaver.
- Q. I like to fish. What can I expect to catch?
- A. The Thames River contains a recorded 94 fish species. Some of these include small and large-mouth bass, perch, and walleye.
- Q. Are there any points of interest we can look forward to?
- A. Along the route, keep your eye open for Fairview Village, Tecumseh Monument Park, Thamesgrove Park, and Tecumseh Park.

Drinking Water

The water in the Thames River is NOT suitable for drinking. Even with the use of water purification tablets, the water is still not safe. Please bring your own drinking water (make sure you bring extra too for those hot days!). During the summer months, drinking water and serviced washrooms can be found at the Big Bend Conservation Area and Thamesgrove Park.

Canoe Safety

The best canoeing months for the lower Thames River are between May and October. In the early spring, the water levels are high resulting in strong and dangerous currents. While canoeing down the river, the paddler should keep an eye out for obstacles such as logs, rocks, sandbars, and other large obstacles.

Prior to departure, be sure to notify someone as to the details of your trip (ex: when you are leaving, where you are going, and the expected time of arrival). As well, please be sure to pack an extra paddle (or two!), properly fitted life jackets or PFDs for each canoeist, maps, rope, water, a sounding device (ex: whistle or fog horn), bailer, dry bag, and a first aid kit. Try hard not to forget your canoe. It may come in handy on your canoe trip!

Distances

Delaware to Big Bend C.A. — 82 km (~3 days)
Big Bend C.A. to Chatham — 70 km (~2-3 days)
Chatham to Lighthouse Cove — 30 km (~1 day)

Topographic Reference Maps

Bothwell	40 I/12	Strathroy	40 I/13
Chatham	40 J/8	Wallaceburg	40 J/9
St. Thomas	40 I/14		



The Thames A Canadian Heritage River

The First Nations people of the area have always valued the Thames River and its adjacent lands as a life source providing food, water, transportation and inspiration. With the introduction of agriculture 1,000 years ago, the river provided fertile soils for crops. Currently, First Nations communities have settlements along the Thames River – Oneida Nation of the Thames, Munsee Delaware Nation, Chippewas of the Thames First Nation and Delaware Nation of the Thames.

The first European settlers arrived during the middle of the 17th century and began to clear away the vast forests of the region. As a result, many lumber and flour mills began to appear along the Thames River. One of the first mills was erected on McGregor's Creek near its junction with the Thames River.

The Thames River was also the site of many battles during the War of 1812 and subsequent battles. Amongst these were the Battle of Longwoods, fought near Battle Creek. The Tecumseh Monument commemorates the great Shawnee Chief Tecumseh. The skirmish between the Kent Militia and the American forces took place at McCrae's House, near the mouth of the river.

Soon after, settlers began to prosper and the Thames River became a busy shipping channel. The historic Lighthouse was established at Lighthouse Cove at the mouth of the river at Lake St. Clair.

To qualify for inclusion in the Canadian Heritage River System (CHRS), a river must be of outstanding significance in one or more of the following areas: natural heritage, human(cultural) heritage, or recreational value. The entire Thames was designated as a Canadian Heritage River in August of the year 2000. The presence of impoundments (dams) precluded its inclusion on the basis of natural heritage, although its biological diversity and significance is widely recognized and is essential to sustaining the cultural and recreational features.

Natural Heritage Values

The Thames River watershed's outstanding natural heritage has supported the evolution of significant cultural heritage and recreational values. Significant facts and features include:

- The first river to form in Ontario following the retreat of the last glacier 11,000 years ago;
- Water quality suitable for fish, wildlife and recreation;
- Exceptional diversity of plants and animals characteristic of both the Carolinian and Great Lakes St. Lawrence Forest Zones; and
- Home to 15% of Canada's Species at Risk (including the Eastern Spiny Softshell turtle and Wood Poppy).

Cultural Heritage Values

The Thames River watershed possesses and outstanding cultural heritage reflecting 11,000 years of human settlement, conflict and development. Significant heritage facts and features include:

- First Nation occupancy from 11,000 years ago to present;
- A multitude of archaeological sites along the river system;
- The birthplace of Canadian agriculture and the agricultural heart-land of eastern Canada;
- War of 1812 sites;
- The terminus of the Underground Railway for fugitive slaves prior to the American Civil War;
- A rich architectural heritage;
- Rural and human settlement strongly influenced by the river;
- A leading role in the establishment of Conservation Authorities in Ontario; and

Recreational Values

The Thames River valley offers a great diversity of river-related recreational opportunities accessible to the over half million people who live in the Thames watershed and the millions of others residing a short distance away. Significant opportunities include:

- Canoeing, kayaking, rowing, cruising and sailing;
- Numerous riverside parks and campgrounds;
- Diversity of fish and animal species that provides many angling, hunting and trapping opportunities;
- A variety of natural area where one can enjoy the unique plants and wildlife of the Carolinian Zone;
- Heritage appreciation including many community museums, pioneer and recreated First Nations villages, annual military re-enactments and festivals.

