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**This National Scenic Riverway in Wisconsin is simply amazing**

Did you know that a free national park flows right through Wisconsin?

The [Namekagon River](https://www.nps.gov/sacn/planyourvisit/namekagon-river.htm) is, hands down, one of Wisconsin’s most beautiful waterways. It’s part of the [St. Croix National Scenic Riverway](https://www.nps.gov/sacn/index.htm) in northwest Wisconsin, which is the only river managed by the National Park Service. (In fact, the St. Croix National Scenic Riverway was the first river declared “wild and scenic” by Congress back in 1968.)

The Namekagon happens to be the cleanest tributary of the Mississippi River, and it was the river that inspired [Gaylord Nelson](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gaylord_Nelson), who was the founder of Earth Day.

This 101-mile long river starts at Lake Namakagon in southern Bayfield County and flows southwest into the St. Croix River.

Part of what makes this wild and scenic river so beautiful is the way it meanders through uninterrupted stretches of pristine prairies and forests. At some points, the river consists of tight, twisting turns. At other parts, the whole river seems to open up to camera-friendly vistas.

The Namekagon — which translates loosely to “Place of the Sturgeon” in Ojibwe — is teeming with wildlife. White-tailed deer, painted turtles and even black bears pay visits to the riverbanks. And more than 100 species of fish call this river home. (Taking kids on your river adventure? Your little ones will love this [Checklist of Common Animals](https://www.nps.gov/sacn/learn/nature/upload/common-animal-checklist.pdf) found along the Namakagon.)

**What to do:**

* Bring (or rent!) some tubes and make your way down the Namekagon slowly.
* A paddler’s dream, kayakers and canoers come from all over to take in this beautiful river.
* During the winter months, lace up those boots or strap on the snowshoes for a hike along [Trego Nature Trail](https://www.travelwisconsin.com/trails-and-hiking/trego-nature-trail-198658), which winds its way along the banks of the river.
* Birders love the Namekagon, too! Bald eagles, trumpeter swans, American coots, great blue herons and so much more can all be spotted along this river.
* Of course, there’s plenty to do just off the river too! The [Freshwater Fishing Hall of Fame](https://www.freshwater-fishing.org/), [Namekagon River Visitor Center](https://www.travelwisconsin.com/science-and-nature-centers/namekagon-river-visitor-center-197465) and [Cable Natural History Museum](http://www.cablemuseum.org/) are just a few of the destinations you’ll find minutes from the Namekagon River.

Begin your adventure along one of Wisconsin’s most gorgeous rivers at [namekagonriver.org.](namekagonriver.org)

**»**[**View Map**](https://namekagonriver.org/river-maps/)

[***Mariah Haberman***](http://www.mariahhaberman.com/) is a host and the director of Discover Wisconsin, the state’s leading media brand. Watch the show Saturdays at 10 a.m. on FSN Wisconsin’s outdoor block or online at [*DiscoverWisconsin.com*](http://www.discoverwisconsin.com/). Follow Mariah on Facebook ([*facebook.com/mar1ahha3erman*](https://www.facebook.com/mar1ahha3erman)) and Instagram ([*@MariahHaberman*](https://www.instagram.com/mariahhaberman/))