



Northern Forest Canoe Trail

Missisquoi Wildlife Wonders

One Day Visitor Itinerary

Trip Summary

Maps and Guides

- [NFCT Map Section 4](#)
- [NFCT Guidebook](#)
- [Google map and directions](#)

Paddling Options

- Louie's Landing to Donaldson Point (1/2 Day)
- Dead Creek (2 -4 hr)
- Missisquoi River Dead Creek Loop (Full Day)

Other Activities

- Birdwatching along Refuge Trails
- Visiting the Swanton Train Depot and Museum
- Visiting the Abenaki Tribal Museum
- Walking or cycle along the [Missisquoi Valley Rail Trail](#)
- Bass fishing on Lake Champlain

Places to Stay

- The [Swanton Motel](#)
- [Lakewood Campground](#)
- [Campbell's Bay Campground](#)
- [Lake Carmi State Park](#)

Where to Eat

- [The Lighthouse at Marble Mill Restaurant and Pub](#)
- [Shaggy's Snack Shack](#)

Outfitters and Guides

- [Montgomery Adventures](#)
- [Brooks to Bays Nature Tours](#)
- [Campbell's Bay Campground](#)

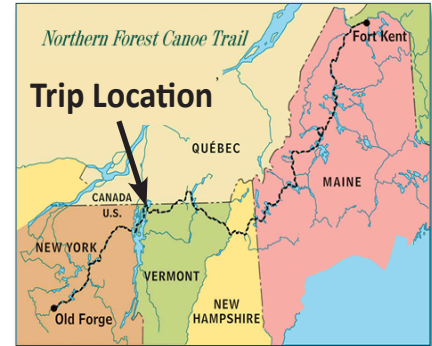
NFCT Package Specials

- [Montgomery Marvels](#)

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The Missisquoi National Wildlife Refuge

just a 45-minute drive from Burlington, Vermont, provides a great opportunity for a half-day or full day trip along the Northern Forest Canoe Trail. Known as the "Bird Foot Delta," the Missisquoi River's mouth is marked by quiet waters and extensive wetlands. The refuge provides excellent habitat for migratory songbirds, resident mammals and other wildlife, and as such offers some of the finest wildlife viewing in the state. Refuge lands also protect the Shad Island Great Blue Heron rookery, the largest colony in Vermont.



Paddling the Refuge

Before you head onto the water, pick up a copy of [NFCT Map #4](#), a great reference for this journey. If you'd like a guided trip, contact [Montgomery Adventures](#), or [Brooks to Bays Nature Tours](#). Skilled naturalists from both companies would be happy to take you to some of the Refuge's hidden gems. Canoes can also be rented from Montgomery Adventures, as well as from [Campbell's Bay Campground](#), located at the tip of Donaldson Point.

It is also worth stopping by the Refuge Visitor's Center (open from 8 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. Monday through Friday, and from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. on Saturday) while in the area. At this LEED-certified green building, refuge staff will fill you in on river and lake conditions, and you'll find interpretive displays providing insights into the region's rich ecological resources.

The best put-in is Louie's Landing, a public boat launch off Route 78, 4 miles north of Swanton. Various trips are possible from this location. Thanks to the Missisquoi delta's mellow current, out and back trips are possible. Paddling upstream and into Dead Creek is a great choice for wetland lovers. Keep your





eyes open for Osprey's circling overhead and for the threatened [Eastern Spiny Softshell Turtle](#), best observed from a distance to avoid disturbing its basking.

For the adventurous setting out on a calm day, a full day 12.5 mile round-trip is possible by paddling out to the river's mouth and circling back to Lake Champlain on Dead Creek. Before embarking on this adventure, check lake conditions by drive to the Missisquoi Bay Bridge or by looking up the [NOAA's Lake Champlain weather forecast](#). A shorter (6.5 mile) alternative is to paddle north past Shad Island, west along Metcalfe Island, and then south through

Goosebay to end your trip at the [Campbell's Bay Campground](#) on the tip of Donaldson Point, where you can arrangement for shuttle services back to Louie's Landing. Both of these trips will take you past the raucous Shad Island Heron Rookery.

On your way out of town, satiate your appetite at the [Lighthouse at Marble Mill Restaurant and Pub](#), across the street from the Swanton Dam and adjacent to Marble Mill Park. Recently established by Justin Lussier and Christina Larche, this restaurant is quickly becoming a local favorite. Among its eclectic and varied entries one finds an "eruption burger" (a twist on the basic cheeseburger), homemade soups, and hot turkey sandwiches. Alternatively, swing by [Shaggy's Snack Shack](#) on Rt. 78, just east of downtown, at outdoor eatery where you'll find satisfying burgers, incredible french fries and delicious maple milk shakes.

Extend Your Trip

The Missisquoi Wildlife Refuge has many additional bays, islands, and coves to explore; in particular, Goosebay is worth visiting. Alternatively, stretch your legs by taking a walk on one of the Refuge's hiking trails. One of the most pleasant is a 1.5 mile trail along Maquam Creek. This trail traverses a floodplain forest dominated by birch, alder, maple, and several species of ferns. Cottontail rabbits and red-tailed hawks abound. You can access this trail from a parking lot 1.5 miles south of Louie's Landing. Plan on an hour and a half for this hike.



Train buffs will appreciate the restored [Swanton Train Depot and Museum](#), a railroad museum located in a historic toll house. The site features a 1903 caboose and several exhibits, and is adjacent to a one mile recreation path passing by various historical sites, with signs providing a self guided tour. Access to the trail is possible thanks to the relocation to the site, of the beautiful West Milton Bridge, made possible through the efforts of the Swanton Historical Society. Alternatively, get a glimpse into the region's rich Native American history by stopping by the [Abenaki Tribal Museum](#), where you will find a collection of traditional attire and artifacts.



Camping is available at two private campgrounds on the delta: [Campbell's Bay Campground](#) and [Lakewood Campground](#), both popular with fisherman. In addition, [Lake Carmi State Park](#) is a short drive to the east. Your best bet for local lodging is the [Swanton Motel](#), which is pet-friendly and grants NFCT members a discount. The motel's owner, Shelly Cunningham, is happy to provide shuttling services for day trippers and through-paddlers alike. Be sure to ask about a barbecue on the patio! Otherwise, several worthy bed and breakfasts are located on the Lake Champlain Islands to the west, or in Richford and Montgomery Center to the east.