



## Memphremagog South Bay Access

Lake Memphremagog's South Bay access launches onto a southern portion of Lake Memphremagog. South Bay is a shallow, 470-acre section at the southern end of Lake Memphremagog, located near Newport, Vermont. It is a protected wetland area within the South Bay Wildlife Management Area (WMA), which is popular for outdoor recreation like boating, fishing, and birdwatching, and is fed by the Barton and Black Rivers. Paddlers can enjoy the South Bay in its own right or choose to explore the slow moving Black and Barton Rivers as well. Both rivers can be navigated as out and back trips or as one way trips from Coventry.

### **Trip Planning resources**

- [Out and back suggested trip](#) from South Bay boat launch
- [Black River: Coventry to South Bay](#) boat launch
- [Video](#) showing Black and Barton River trips and the South Bay Coventry St. Boat Launch

### **Detailed descriptions**

Below you will find detailed descriptions of the access points in the linked trip descriptions. The South Bay Access is the most approachable for people using wheelchairs or with mobility challenges. The Barton and Black River access points in Coventry currently have notable obstacles as is indicated. Note, photos and measurements were taken at the end of October 2025 when the water levels were extremely low. At higher water levels, the mud and soft ground would be covered by water.

### **South Bay:** Coventry Street Access

#### 1.) Parking:

The parking area at South Bay access on Coventry Street is a very large, hard-packed gravel lot with space for well over 30 vehicles with no trailers. The surface is even and easy to traverse. There are no major potholes or obstructions in the parking lot. There is one van accessible handicap designated parking area close to the boat ramp & dock.



Figure 10.) This angle shows only a portion of the very large parking area. Also pictured is the informational kiosk and the start of the motorized boat launch.

## 2.) Pathway to Water:

From the designated accessible parking space, it is about 100' to the hand launch ramp via the edge of the parking lot. It is 50' from the parking space to the top of a 50', mixed-surfaced ramp. The pathway to the top of the ramp is even and unobstructed.



Figure 11.) Looking at the access “ramp” to the boat launch. Note the various surface types and changes in grade.

### 3.) Access to Water:

There are 2 access points to the water at this location. A large boat ramp fit for launching power boats, and a smaller hand launch. The large boat launch is about 50' long and 5.4° (10%). The hand launch is 100' from the accessible parking space. The launch area is 12.5' wide and situated in a muddy, marshy section of the bay, and at the bottom of a 50' ramp. The ramp consists of hard-packed gravel, asphalt, some grass and loose packed sandy-gravel at the waterline. The slope of the ramp varies from .92° (1.6%) to 7.9° (14%). The 7.9° grade is due to a slight bump as a result of the concrete pad transitioning to grass and steepening off. There are no large rocks or other obstacles at the launch area.



Figure 12.) Looking down at the water from the top of the access ramp. From the flat surface of the parking lot, it is about 50' to the waterline.



Figure 13.) Looking at the boat launch from the floating dock. The launch area is quite muddy with some algal growth.

#### 4.) Environmental:

The South Bay access is in Coventry just a couple minutes from downtown Newport, Vermont. Given the large parking lot, heavy usage is expected during peak season. Users here may experience noises from road traffic, boaters and other sounds from the surrounding town. There is a floating dock adjacent to the large boat launch. A 60' long, 6' wide curbed ramp leads to a 16' x 8'x floating dock with railings on 2 sides. The floating dock is removable. There are no restroom facilities, tables, benches or other usable infrastructure. There is an informational kiosk. The kiosk is somewhat tall; it may be hard to read information for folks in wheelchairs.

**Information Discrepancy:** Information on Kiosk mentions there are currently no invasive species in South Bay, adjacent posted sign mentions presence of Zebra Mussels, eurasian watermilfoil.

**Overall:** The South Bay access was found to be fairly accessible, with a few fixable barriers. The parking lot is a rather large, hard-packed gravel area with one designated accessible parking spot. There are two boat launches within a short distance of the accessible parking spaces. The hand boat launch is at the end of a 50' mixed-surface ramp that has a grass

“bump” following an asphalt pad. The area is located very close to the town of Newport, and capable of handling a large number of people. This water access may be busy & loud.



Figure 14.) Looking at the ramp to the floating dock & motorized boat launch.



Figure 15.) Looking down the ramp to the floating dock.

**Barton River:** Coventry Station Road Access

1.) Parking:

The parking area at Barton River access is a very small, 2 vehicle hard-packed gravel area. The ground is level and has no pot holes. The turn off is immediately after/before a narrow bridge & on a curve in the road. The access is located on a rural road that seems quiet at first but has lots of agricultural traffic. Busy & loud.



Figure 19.) Showing the entirety of the parking area and access to water. Note the close proximity to the road.

## 2.) Pathway to Water:

The pathway to the water is a short distance through a small, grassy area. There is no defined trail. The area varies in grade leading to the water from  $5.2^\circ$  (8.8%) to  $8^\circ$  (14%). The grassy slope leads 40' to a set of 7 stone steps going down a steep embankment.



Figure 20.) Looking at the parking area from the top of the set of stone steps.

### 3.) Access to Water:

Leading down to the water is a set of 7 stone steps. There is room to launch a canoe parallel to the bank during normal water levels. Some large, submerged boulders below stone steps.



Figure 21.) Showing the stone steps & access to the river.

#### 4.) Environmental:

The parking area is situated on a busy road that can be noisy and somewhat dangerous if one is not careful when backing out. The river access is mostly sunny, with some trees nearby to provide shade. There is an informational kiosk. There are about 5 large boulders in the grass near the parking lot. There are no restrooms, tables, benches or other such infrastructure.



Figure 22.) Another angle showing the proximity of the parking area to the main road.

**Overall:** The Barton River access offers a small, two-vehicle gravel parking area located just before a narrow bridge on a rural but surprisingly busy road. From the lot, a short grassy slope (5–14% grade) leads about 40 feet to a set of seven stone steps descending to the river. Launching is straightforward during normal water levels, with room to put in parallel to the bank, though some large submerged boulders lie just below the steps. The site is mostly sunny with limited shade, no amenities, and moderate road noise from nearby agricultural traffic. This site is not very accessible for users with mobility limitations

## **Black River:** Coventry / Route 5 “Access”

### 1.) Parking

The parking at this area is a large, unkempt, asphalt parking lot. Mostly used as “Park & Ride”. It is located directly off U.S. Route 5. The lot has a curb going around its entirety, apart from the entrance. There are no ramps to access the sidewalk if using a wheelchair. There is lots of vegetation growing out of various cracks. There are no designated handicap parking spaces



Figure 23.) Looking at the parking area from the paved walk way. Notice the many cracks and areas of overgrowth on the sidewalk.

### 2.) Pathway to Water

From the parking area there is a long, asphalt pathway that is about 180' long. The pathway is narrow, about 28" wide. Width has been impacted by grass growth. There are cracks in the asphalt. Besides cracks and some bumps, there are no major obstacles heading down the pathway. At the end of the pathway, there is a 31" landscape wall, reinforced with large boulders, that heads toward the river. From the pathway to the water, it is about 50' over the small landscaping wall & down a small embankment.



Figure 24.) Looking at the parking area from the pathway.



Figure 25.) Looking toward the end of the paved path. Further down the trail on the right-hand side is the river access point



Figure 26.) On the right side of the path, there is a short stone landscaping “wall”. In the grassy area past the long rock on the left is the start of the access ramp.

### 3.) Access to Water:

After the 31” landscaping wall, there is a flat grassy patch before it slopes steeply down toward the water. There are 3 large stone steps, then a steep  $15.5^\circ$  (27.8%) slope leading to the water. At the time of the visit there was very little water in the channel, but one could see where it would be possible to launch a canoe. There is enough space to launch a boat parallel to shore. The current surface at the water was made of mud and small vegetation.



Figure 27.) Looking down to the water from the top of the access ramp. Notice the almost completely overgrown “steps” as well as the incredibly low water conditions. Launching in such conditions is not advised.

#### 4.) Environmental:

This parking area is located about 8 minutes south of Newport, Vermont on U.S. Route 5. Due to its location, it is a pretty noisy site. There are some trees in the area, but mostly a sunny spot. There are no tables, benches or informational signage. Many buildings nearby. Not the best location for launching a boat.



Figure 28.) Looking from the parking lot down the long pathway to the water access.

**Overall:** The “access” on the Black River along U.S. Route 5 is not an ideal site to access the river in its current state. The parking lot is overgrown in places, and has some areas of disrepair. A long, somewhat overgrown asphalt path leads most of the way to some sort of “access point” along the river. It is not marked as an official launch site or river access. There is a 31” barrier after the path leading to the water, as well as 3 stone steps and a steep, short embankment. The parking area is far from the current access point. There is very minimal infrastructure: no benches, tables, signage of any kind, restrooms, garbage bins, etc.