

TENNESSEE RIVER SIDE TRIPS

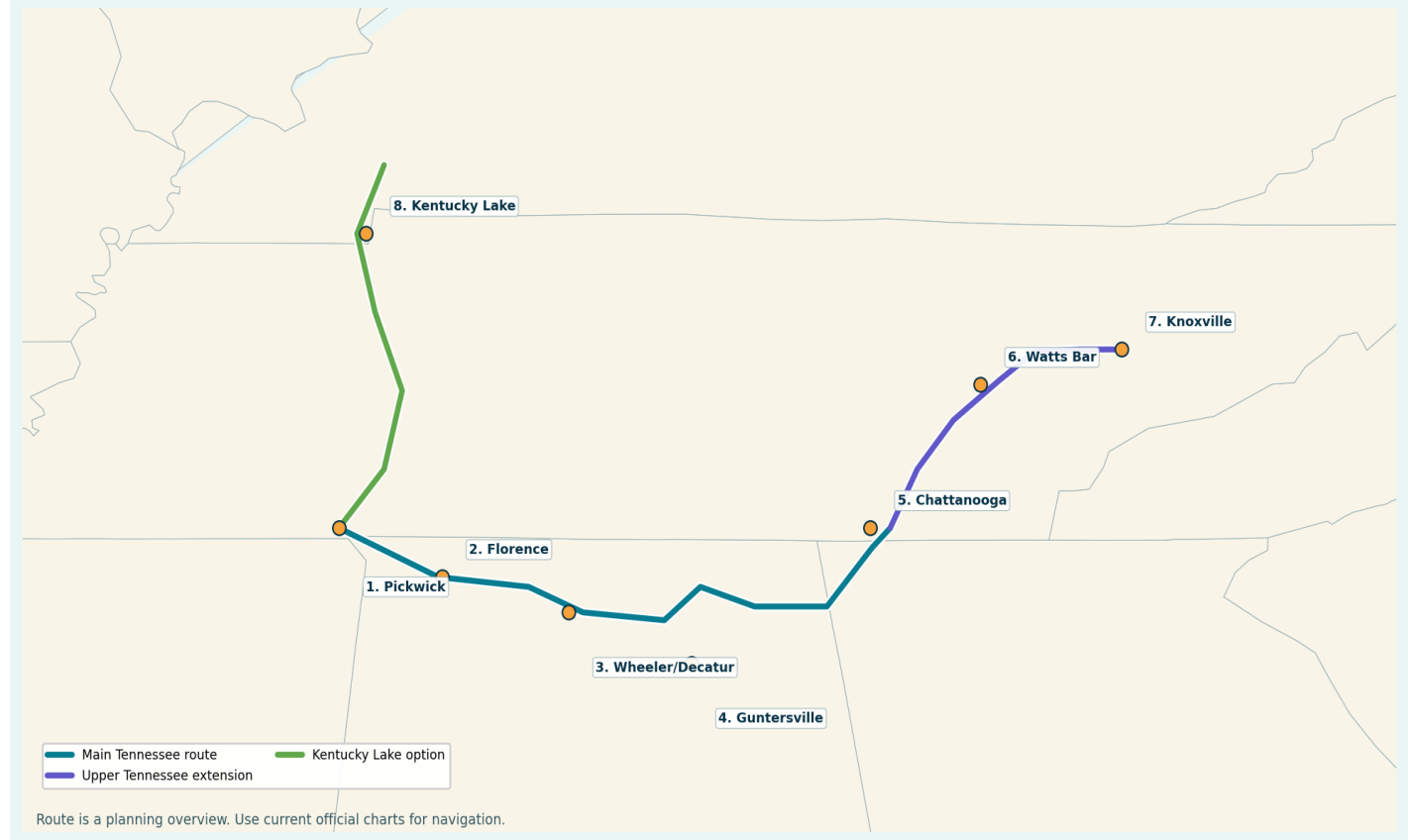
Great Loop cruising extensions for the Yukon Delta Nomad

Pickwick, Florence, Chattanooga, Knoxville and selected tributary options

2027 WORKING MASTER PLAN - NOT A NAVIGATION CHART

Tennessee River side-trip map

Tennessee River Side Trips - Planned Destinations



The map separates the main eastbound Tennessee River route, the optional upper-river extension to Knoxville, and the Kentucky Lake option. Numbered destinations correspond to the itinerary and decision points in this guide.

How to use this guide

This is a practical planning workbook for optional Tennessee River side trips. It is built for two adults, Remi the Belgian Malinois, Ruger the Doberman, and the 25-foot Yukon Delta Nomad. It supports route selection, daily decisions, fuel planning, provisioning, marina/anchorage balance, dog logistics, and contingency planning.

Important: This guide is not a substitute for current charts, Coast Guard Notices to Mariners, USACE lock information, NOAA weather, local knowledge, or the captain's judgment. Facilities, depths, fuel availability, bridge schedules, dredging conditions, and regulations can change before 2027. Call every critical fuel stop and overnight location shortly before arrival.

Core voyage assumptions

- Side trips are modular; take only those compatible with river level, weather, lock schedules and overall Great Loop season.
- Relaxed 4-6 hour cruising days, with additional lay days in major destinations.
- Fuel plan uses 80 gallons total and preserves a 20% reserve.
- Two adults plus Remi and Ruger; every module includes shore-access considerations.

Daily operating rhythm

Before departure	Weather, river stage, notices, engine fluids, bilge, steering, fuel transfer/selector, dog exercise.
Departure	Brief route, hazards, bailout points and next confirmed fuel source.
Every hour	Position, fuel use, temperatures, charging, traffic, wind and remaining daylight.
Midday	Recalculate ETA and reserve; stop early if conditions or crew fatigue warrant.
Arrival	Secure, log fuel/hour-meter data, shore-power check, dog walk, inspect strainers and running gear.

Side-trip decision table

Side-trip	Side-trip length	Side-trip time	Side-trip notes
Pickwick / Florence-Muscle Shoals	Short extension from Tenn-Tom junction	3-5 days	History, waterfalls, services and an easy systems check.
Florence to Wheeler / Decatur	Moderate	5-8 days	Protected river/lake cruising and marina options.
Guntersville to Chattanooga	Long	8-14 days	Scenery, mountain gorge and major destination city.
Chattanooga to Watts Bar / Knoxville	Very long	10-18 additional days	Upper Tennessee exploration; requires schedule margin.
Kentucky Lake / Land Between the Lakes	Flexible	3-7 days	Anchorage, recreation and route-rest opportunity.

Recommended modular itinerary

	Module	Notes
A1	Pickwick staging	Fuel, provisions, lock briefing and weather day.
A2	Pickwick to Florence	Short run; confirm current lock/landing arrangements.
A3	Florence/Muscle Shoals	Two nights for rest, dogs and local visit.
B1	Florence toward Wheeler	Lock timing determines departure and arrival.
B2	Wheeler/Decatur	Marina night, fuel and maintenance.
C1	Toward Guntersville	Early start; choose protected overnight.
C2	Guntersville	Restock and weather review.
C3	Guntersville to gorge approach	Short scenic day; preserve daylight.
C4	Chattanooga	Two or more nights; urban services and crew rest.
D1	Upper-river decision day	Proceed only if seasonal schedule margin remains.
D2-D5	Watts Bar / Knoxville module	Build around locks, fuel and confirmed overnight stops.
R	Return legs	Do not compress the return; retain equal weather and fuel margins.

River and lock considerations

- Reservoir levels, dam discharges and lock maintenance can alter current, approach conditions and schedule.
- Large pools can develop steep wind waves. Stay in harbor when wind direction and fetch make a leg uncomfortable or unsafe.
- Recreational vessels may experience long lock waits. Carry water, snacks and dog supplies where they remain accessible.
- Identify public landings and marinas that can safely accommodate two large dogs; verify pet rules and walking areas in advance.
- Never treat a blue-sky morning as proof of an all-day weather window in gorge or open-reservoir sections.

Fuel and range plan

Use the 80-gallon capacity as total capacity, not guaranteed usable fuel. Keep a minimum 20% reserve and begin looking for fuel before reaching it. At 2-3 gallons per hour and 5-6 knots, the planning range varies widely with current, wind, hull condition, loading and engine tune.

Conservative	3.0 gph	5.0 kn	64 gal	107 nm
Middle	2.5 gph	5.5 kn	64 gal	141 nm
Favorable	2.0 gph	6.0 kn	64 gal	192 nm

Fuel rules

- Confirm the next fuel source by telephone; do not rely only on an app listing.
- Record engine hours, gallons added and conditions after every fill. After three to five legs, replace planning estimates with the boat's measured consumption.
- Avoid routinely drawing tanks completely empty. Rotate tanks deliberately and keep a written selector-valve log.
- Carry absorbent pads, spare filters, approved clamps and tools; never carry loose gasoline containers inside the cabin.

Crew and dog plan

Remi and Ruger make short, predictable cruising days especially valuable. Favor stops with safe shore access and avoid committing to long exposed legs without a realistic landing option.

Exercise	Long walk before departure; shore break at arrival; choose a midday landing when practical.
Heat	Shade, ventilation, nonslip cool surface and abundant drinking water. Never leave dogs unattended in a closed cabin.
Boarding	Harnesses with handles, fixed boarding routine, nonslip ramp or steps and one handler assigned per dog.
Identification	Current tags, microchip registration, recent photos, vaccination records and veterinarian contact list.
Emergency	Canine first-aid kit, medications, muzzle appropriate for emergency handling, nearest emergency-vet lookup before remote legs.

Safety, communications and contingencies

File a float plan with a shore contact and update it when the itinerary changes. Monitor VHF 16 and the working channel used locally. Use AIS as an aid, never as a substitute for a visual watch.

Fast current / debris	Rising river, recent storms, reports from tow traffic	Delay; use protected marina; avoid night travel; maintain maneuvering speed.
Grounding	Shoaling reports, water-color change, cross-track error	Idle immediately, assess hull/drive, back off only if safe, call for assistance if uncertain.
Engine overheating	Temperature trend, reduced raw-water flow	Reduce load, shut down if temperature continues rising, anchor only if safe, inspect intake/strainer/impeller.
Thunderstorm / high wind	Radar or alert, building gusts	Seek secure harbor early; remove loose gear; avoid exposed anchoring.
Crew or dog medical issue	Symptoms or heat stress	Identify nearest road-access marina/ramp; call 911 for emergency; keep vet and medication records accessible.

Required pre-departure checks

- USCG-required safety equipment, properly sized PFDs, dog flotation and recovery method.
- Primary and backup navigation devices, paper overview charts, charging cables and offline chart coverage.
- Two anchors appropriate for bottom and conditions, adequate rode, chafe protection and windlass/manual recovery plan.
- Spare belts, impeller, filters, fluids, fuses, relays, hose, clamps, plugs, basic fasteners and repair materials.

Destination planning cards

Florence / Muscle Shoals	Marina space, lock timing, pet access and ground transport	Fuel, groceries, laundry, history/music visits and maintenance.
Decatur / Wheeler	Fuel availability, transient dockage and wind protection	Resupply and rest before exposed reservoir legs.
Guntersville	Weather window and next safe harbor	Fuel, dog exercise and staging for the gorge.
Chattanooga	Downtown docking/reservation, current, events and pet policy	Multi-night destination, major resupply and mechanical support.
Knoxville / upper river	Lock schedules, seasonal time, return weather and fuel	Optional extended exploration only with ample reserve days.

Side-trip selection rule

Choose the next module only after protecting the Great Loop's seasonal route. A side trip is successful when it remains enjoyable and reversible; it is not worth forcing if it creates pressure to cross the Gulf, Atlantic coast, canals or Great Lakes in a poor season.

Official checks

- Tennessee Valley Authority reservoir levels, release information and navigation conditions.
- US Army Corps of Engineers lock status and navigation notices.
- National Weather Service marine/local forecasts and river observations.
- Current charts, marina confirmation calls and local harbor staff.