

# winter Paddling

With open water year-round on the Big Manistee River in Manistee County, winter paddling adventure abounds from all access points. For those even with a little bit of paddling experience, don't let the colder temperatures keep you away from paddling in the winter months. You won't regret a moment of your trip down the scenic rivers blanketed in the sparkle of winter.

All along the river routes, nature finds its way to the water source creating the opportunity to view birds and woodland creatures of every sort. It is an experience you won't soon forget.

## **Not for first timers...**

Don't be fooled by the beauty of winter. Paddling during this time of year can be a challenge and we do not recommend you take on paddling any of our rivers if you are a first timer. Get your feet wet during the warmer summer months before venturing onto our waters when the snow flies.

## **Top Big Manistee River paddling stretches...**

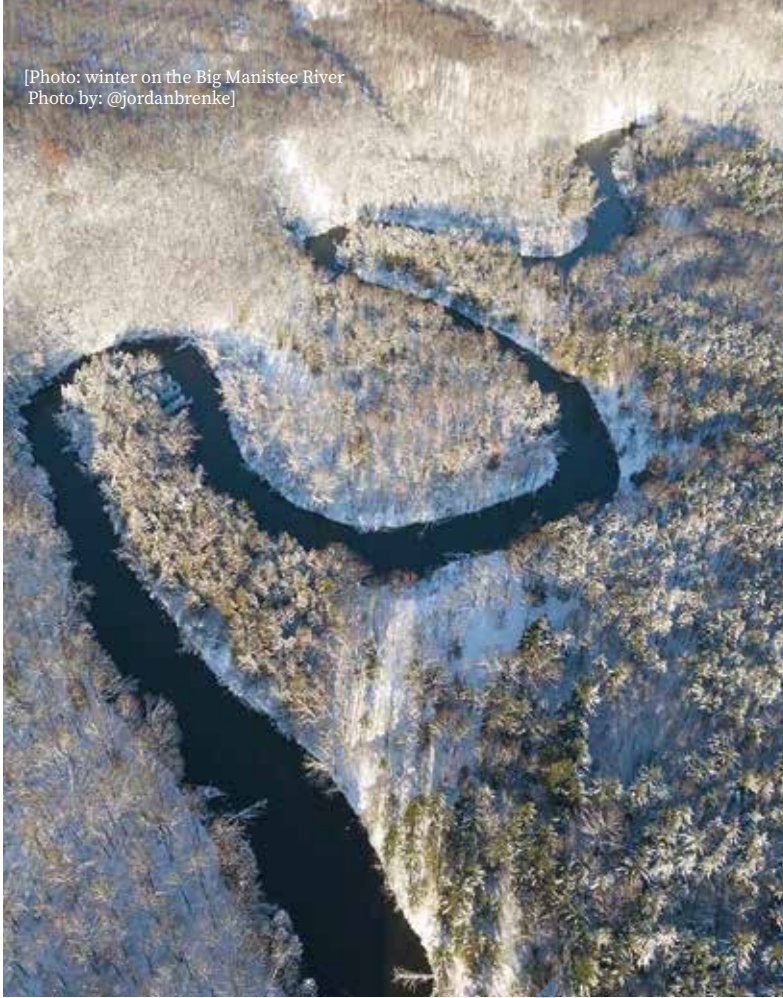
If you are venturing out onto the winter water for the first time in Manistee County, we have outlined two PERFECT day trips for you. Both options are on the popular Big Manistee River.

A photograph of a person in a green kayak on a river in winter. The river is surrounded by snow-covered banks and trees. The person is wearing a blue jacket and a yellow life vest. The kayak is green with a yellow stripe. The water is dark and reflects the surrounding environment. The sky is overcast.

*“a perfect time to explore our waters...”*”



[Photo: winter on the Big Manistee River  
Photo by: @jordanbrenke]



**High Bridge down to Bear Creek** (3 hour float): Ideal for those who are looking for a half day trip. The vehicle staging is very easy along **River Road and High Bridge**, and the river is wide and smooth flowing in this section. If you want a longer paddle, you can also easily tack on a 1.5 hour extension down to **Rainbow Bend**. The **Bear Creek to Rainbow Bend** float can also be nice if you really have just a couple hours, but all the work to get ready for a winter paddle... it's a little underwhelming, so that is why we recommend the **High Bridge to Bear Creek** float as a first option, with the **Rainbow Bend** access as the add-on.

**Little Mac Suspension Bridge/  
Hodenpyl Dam down to Red Bridge**

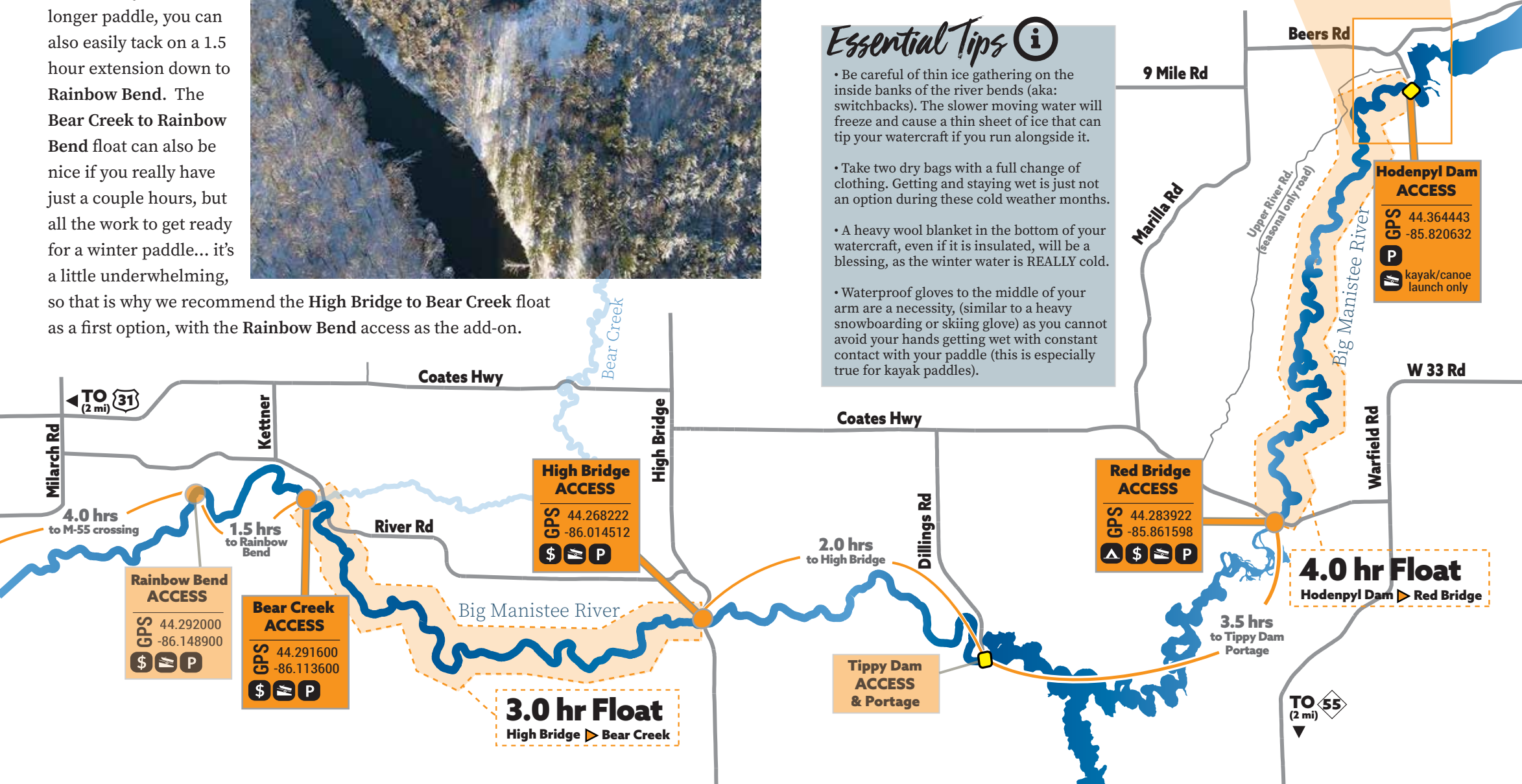
(4 hour float): This is a perfect spot to explore in the winter months if you have an entire day to dedicate to the river. Starting up at **Hodenpyl Dam**, you will float down past the **Little Mac Suspension Bridge** and along the bends of the **Big Manistee River**.

The high banks on this river also make the float a little easier, keeping much of the wind whipping the tree tops high above you. This portion of the river is in the heart of the **Manistee National Forest**, so your view will be of the pure winter landscape, complete with plenty of wildlife.



**Essential Tips** ⓘ

- Be careful of thin ice gathering on the inside banks of the river bends (aka: switchbacks). The slower moving water will freeze and cause a thin sheet of ice that can tip your watercraft if you run alongside it.
- Take two dry bags with a full change of clothing. Getting and staying wet is just not an option during these cold weather months.
- A heavy wool blanket in the bottom of your watercraft, even if it is insulated, will be a blessing, as the winter water is REALLY cold.
- Waterproof gloves to the middle of your arm are a necessity, (similar to a heavy snowboarding or skiing glove) as you cannot avoid your hands getting wet with constant contact with your paddle (this is especially true for kayak paddles).



**Hodenpyl Dam ACCESS**

GPS 44.364443  
-85.820632

Ⓜ kayak/canoe launch only

**4.0 hr Float**  
Hodenpyl Dam to Red Bridge

**3.0 hr Float**  
High Bridge to Bear Creek