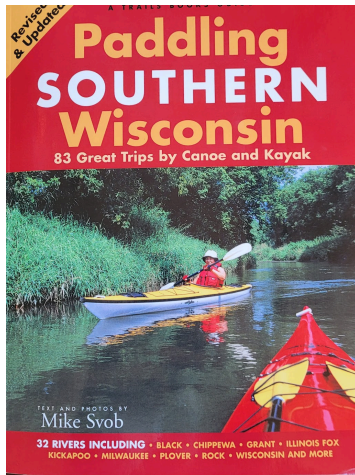


## HCKC Trip Report on the Wisconsin River Through the Upper and Lower Dells and the Narrows: June 9-13, 2022

**Trip Leaders: Mariann Davis & Suzy McCain**

To the uninitiated, this popular vacation area would seem like a cliché from childhood family vacations. The HCKC delivered this successful first time trip following 2 days of scouting in October 2021, conversations with local outfitters, reviewing on-line trip reports of the area, and meticulously gathering GPS coordinates of 5 different put-ins and take-outs. This book was our bible.



We had been so impressed with the beautiful topography of the area that we were sure to make this a combined hiking adventure and so much more. And so it was... What follows is the report of the 35 mile, 3 days of paddling, and 1 day of beautiful hikes @ Devil's Lake. With the weather so changeable and rain threatening in some part of everyday, we were able to adjust our itinerary's date and time to include every paddle and hike. (The last paddle suggested a serious retraining in weather map skills). *There was no certified meteorologist among us, to be sure).*

**Day 1:** We paddled the lower Dells. This 13.5 mile trip below the dam provided a peak into the areas to come: (as our featured trip was the 7 mile stretch through the Narrows and we would have to wait for a weekday and the best weather to do this part). [Click on video in photo below.](#)





We launched from a very pretty pristine beach @ the “River’s Edge Resort” in Wisconsin Dells and began our paddle. Along the way, we saw many craggy rock formations, stumbled upon sand beaches, entered caves, and, in Jan’s case, traded sunglasses for her freedom from a startled beaver. (a story only she could tell). Jan also found some menacing sand bars that seemed to have a magnetic attraction for her. (Her ‘boat was made for walking’ — became her anthem). It was a beautiful day and we had lunch on one of the many sand beaches. We all soon learned how to navigate around these sand bars by reading the water...BETTER or “booty scooting”. Our take out was down town WI Dells where we treated ourselves to ginormous ice cream treats.



*Evening campfire followed as we made plans for the next day*

**Day 2:** We knew that most of the mid and late afternoon would be rainy, so we opted for an early hike at Devil’s Lake, an area Suzy and I





fell in love with on our scouting trip. The weather cooperated and we enjoyed a



beautiful trek on the west bluff and lower boulder field around Devil's Lake...only the photos can describe the beauty of this area. It was considered a strenuous hike but our HCKC paddlers, now turned hikers, were undaunted... a light drizzle began as we finished the 2.7 mile trail.

We ate at the spacious concession restaurant at lakeside and afterwards some of us decided to hike the East Bluff—a 3.5 mile other worldly terrain. The area proved equally beautiful as the West Bluff and had some free boulder climbing as an acrobatic challenge. We returned to Rocky Arbor campground as the light rain began to diminish. (see beautiful photos of this hike in [My Flickr posted below](#)).

*Evening campfire followed as we made plans for the next day*



**Day 3:** The Upper Dells and the Narrows-11+ miles: [Tah Dah!](#) The “Creme de la creme” of the trip is upon us. At the evening campfire, a group decision was made to paddle the Narrows on Sunday due to the threat of rain on Monday. We were uncertain of the amount of boat traffic on a weekend, but we were to find out that early season planning afforded less competition for the Narrows. Checking the Muscoda river gage also proved that the water and flow was excellent and safe.

We launched from the Wisconsin River boat ramp on a beautiful sunny morning a little nervous about the water that was ahead of us. *[we had heard stories of serious boat traffic rebounding waves and confused water]*. All the paddlers were experienced in these conditions as our trip guide established the criteria for this trip. BUT none of those conditions prevailed at any risk to our paddlers. So as we paddled from our launch site down the 4-5 miles stretch to the entrance to the Narrows, we came upon some very pretty river topography: there were various



narrow channels that split the group purposely for a broader experience. There were sandy beaches occupied by nesting turtles laying their eggs. There were beautiful forested areas. And there was one delightfully inviting beach we couldn't resist landing on where we had our lunch. This beach was 3/4 mile from the entrance to the Narrows. There we contemplated our next big adventure we were about to embark upon.

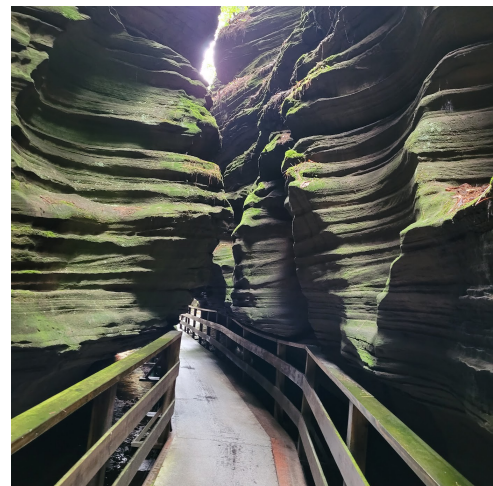
The first big feature we came upon was the the huge rock face (at least 100 ft tall) on our left that promised more to come. This "oracle" did not deceive us as we held our breath for more. (I have taken literary license here but I do not exaggerate on the beauty of the area).



Here  
Comes  
The  
Dells

Okay, the rest is picture worthy. However, there is one area that we could not enter unless on the river

boat cruise, Witch's Gulch,: a spooky, beautiful quarter mile gulch that is worth visiting by river boat. *Cast aside any tourist prejudice and just do it.*



The Almost 5 miles through the Narrows is a trip worth repeating along with the upper dells. The group arrived back at the campground around 5 pm and we had





a celebratory dinner in town @ the “River Walk Pub” where we discussed the next day’s paddle. We would check the weather in the early AM and text everyone with the “go” or “no go” decision.

*No evening campfire tonight*

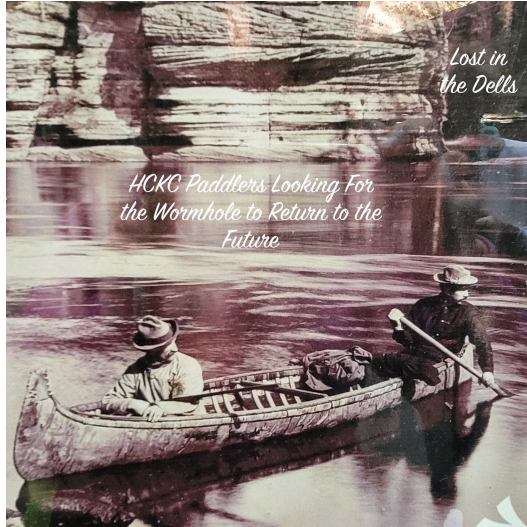
**Day 4:** Lower Dells— 10 mi trip from below Castle Rock Dam to the Wisconsin River Ramp.

If ever a meteorologist were needed on a trip, this would be the day. The group decided after seeing the weather map that the storms would head north of us and that only rain would follow....Well, lots and lots of rain followed our paddlers to the take out about 10 miles away. Only one photo was taken during this trip as the rains started about 1 mile from our launch and is the only evidence of this paddle. This photo was at a



rest stop at an outfitter who provided coffee and shelter for a lengthy respite. Everyone arrived home very damp but NOT their spirits.

*Evening campfire followed late into the night as we all said our goodbyes and celebrated our success on this fun trip.*



Suzy and I want to thank you all for a memorable trip...so many new friends are connecting through paddling and I hope to see you all on future paddles!

## Mariann Davis & Suzy McCain

Paddlers: Mariann Davis, Suzy McCain, Linda Decker, Jim Heichelbach, Ellen Popodi, Phyllis Malpas, Marion Fischer, Jan Rugaber, Stephen Lytle

Click on this link for more fun photos: [WI river trip-June 9-13, 2022](#)