Explore the Arkansas River in downtown Wichita

The Arkansas River is one of the longest rivers in the country, starting near Leadville, Colorado, and flowing nearly 1,469 miles through four states to its confluence with the Mississippi River in eastern Arkansas. A 192-mile section of the river – from Great Bend, Kansas, to the Kansas/Oklahoma border – is designated a National Water Trail by the U.S. National Park Service. This stretch meanders through prairie, pastures and farmland, and it passes through small towns as well as downtown Wichita.

Wichita Park & Recreation offers several Floatin' on the River tour options this summer and early fall: sunset, glow (timed with the Ring of Fire lighting at Keeper) and a senior tour. All tours cost $40 per person and pre-registration is required. Space is limited so sign up early or check for a cancellation if you are visiting and were not able to register early. Find out more on their River Recreation webpage or facebook.com/WichitaParkandRec.

A shorter tour option is with ICT River Rides. These 15-minute leisurely boat rides depart from the east bank of the river at the Douglas bridge. The cost is $15 per person and the boat holds six passengers. Check Facebook for up-to-date operating hours, but generally they run 5-10 p.m. Friday through Sunday from May 1 through Oct. 1.

Watercraft Rentals

You can bring your own non-motorized watercraft to enjoy the Arkansas River in Wichita. You also can rent equipment right on the river. Always check current river conditions; rainfall can cause high water levels and fast currents that close the Arkansas River to recreational use. The city regularly updates the river status here.

Wichita Park & Recreation offers year-round self-service rentals of kayaks and kayak equipment. Rentals include a life jacket, paddle and kayak and are facilitated through the Rent.Fun app. The self-service kayak rental station in downtown Wichita is located at the Kellogg Bridge, 605 S. Wichita (behind the building). Self-service kayak rentals are $15 per hour and all users must be 18 years or older.

For more information on River Recreation, kayak rentals, river tours and river rules, visit Wichita.gov/parkandrec.