



National Park Service
U.S. Department of the Interior

Mississippi National River
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National Park Service News Release

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“Best Classroom in America?: National Park Service and Partners Celebrate 20 Years of Big River Journey”

Saint Paul, MN – The Mississippi River just might be the best classroom in America to the 70,000 students who have been on a Big River Journey field trip with the National Park Service (NPS) and their partners. Now celebrating 20 years of educational riverboat trips, eleven collaborating groups are hosting a special cruise departing from Padelford Landing, Harriet Island on May 10. Saint Paul Mayor Chris Coleman and Superintendent John Anfinson of the Mississippi National River and Recreation Area will welcome students from Capitol Hill Magnet School at 9:15 a.m. The students board the Anson Northrup for their own Big River Journey at 9:30 a.m. A total of 28 Big River Journey field trips for 3,100 students from 34 schools run this month. More than half the students get scholarships to attend, thanks to the Mississippi Park Connection and philanthropic supporters.

Once aboard, students engage with six science stations led by the NPS, Science Museum of Minnesota, St. Paul Audubon Society, MN Dept. of Natural Resources and Padelford. Using microscopes and binoculars, they correlate aquatic invertebrates with water quality, consider bird adaptations, and assess otter habitats. They examine river rocks to learn how a waterfall set the stage for the Twin Cities. They study navigation from the pilot house. And at the “crime lab” they examine pollution and propose solutions. The floating classroom will beach beneath Historic Fort Snelling for additional land-based learning activities conducted by Fort Snelling State Park (MN DNR) and the Minnesota Historical Society. It’s all meant to stimulate learning, turn students on to the river’s life, help them find their own river connection, and foster future river stewards.

The NPS has set a goal for their 2016 Centennial to create the next generation of national park visitors, supporters and advocates. Students on Big River Journey are most certain to come back.

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NOTE: News media are invited to attend a 9:00 a.m. reception hosted by the Mississippi Park Connection, and may join the cruise by arrangement with the Padelford Boat Co., 651-227-1100.

About the National Park Service. More than 20,000 National Park Service employees care for America's 409 national parks and work with communities across the nation to help preserve local history and create close-to-home recreational opportunities.

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