
ALABAMA

RIVER BASIN

The Alabama River begins when the Tallapoosa River and the Coosa River come together in Wetumpka, Alabama. The Alabama River then flows southwest from Montgomery, Alabama towards Selma, Alabama where the Cahaba River joins it. The river then continues south until it merges with the Tombigbee River to form the Mobile River near Mount Vernon, Alabama. The Alabama River is 314 miles long and contains 35,640 acres of water area.

The Alabama River Basin watershed includes the counties of Elmore, Montgomery, Chilton, Autauga, Dallas, Lowndes, Wilcox, Perry, Marengo, Monroe, Clarke, Escambia, and Baldwin (Figure 1). A watershed is an area of land through which rainwater drains by flowing across, through, or under the soil surface to a

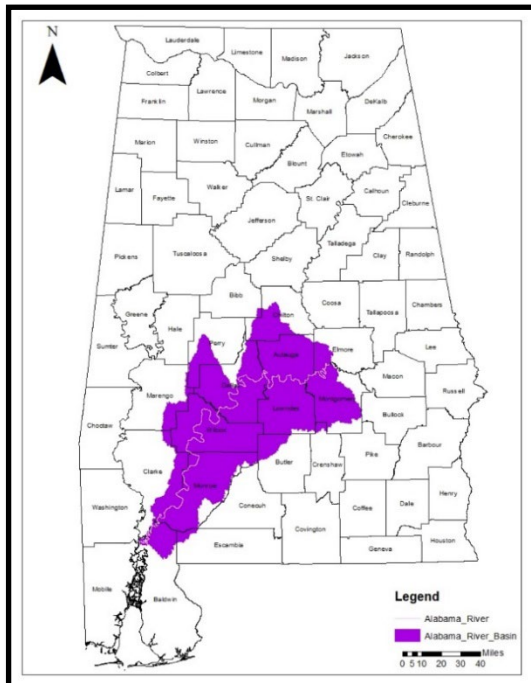


Figure 1. Alabama River Watershed and Alabama River.



Figure 2. Harriot II Riverboat in the Alabama River.
Photo Credit: Jennifer Barker

common low point, typically a stream, river, lake, or ocean (Brantley, Bell, & Dictson, 2019). The Alabama River watershed has a drainage area of 22,168 square miles.

The Alabama River is impounded in three locations to form lakes: R.E. Woodruff Reservoir (aka Jones Bluff), William Dannelly Reservoir (aka Millers Ferry), and Claiborne Lake. The Alabama River watershed is home to giant spotted bass and largemouth bass near Jones Bluff, and largemouth bass and crappie near Millers Ferry. Claiborne Lake offers fishing for largemouth bass, crappie, bluegill, and catfish. The lower portion of the Alabama River contains alligator gar, paddlefish, Alabama darter, Alabama sturgeon, and freshwater mussels.

The state of Alabama, named after the Alabama River, originates from the Alabama Tribe. In the 18th century, the Alabama Tribe became part of the Creek Confederacy.

After the French and Indian War, the tribe left Alabama, allied with the Coushatta Tribe, and the two tribes moved to east Texas in 1795. The Alabama-Coushatta reservation is currently the oldest reservation in Texas. However, one section of the tribe remained in Alabama and is now known as the Poarch Band of Creeks.

Steamboats played an important role in Alabama's history. The first steamboat, named the Alabama, was launched in 1818 on the Alabama River. This allowed commerce to develop along navigable waters such as the Alabama River, encouraging development of towns such as Montgomery and Selma. Steamboats also made the cotton trade possible as well as increased its production (Mellown, 2019). The [Harriot II Riverboat](#) (Figure 2), a 19th century steamboat replica, can be found docked in Montgomery's Riverfront Park, and cruises are provided along the Alabama River (Figure 3). Montgomery, known as the "Birthplace of Civil Rights," has long been entwined in the history of Alabama. In 1846, Montgomery was chosen as the capital of Alabama. Montgomery became the first city to incorporate an electric streetcar system in 1886, and in 1936 the system was replaced by buses. The Selma-to-Montgomery march occurred in 1965, led by Doctor Reverend Martin Luther King Jr.



*Figure 3. Alabama River, Montgomery, Alabama.
Photo Credit: Jennifer Barker*

In visiting the watershed, historical tourism is a must. Montgomery is home to the Rosa Parks Museum, the Legacy Museum, Dexter Avenue Baptist Church, the Civil Rights Memorial, and the Wright Brothers Park. The City of Montgomery also offers multiple recreation opportunities at the Montgomery Zoo, the Alabama Shakespeare Festival, and the Montgomery Museum of Fine Arts.



*Figure 4. Edmund Pettus Bridge over the Alabama River.
Photo Credit: Heather Griffin*

Travel southwest from Montgomery to Selma to visit the famous Edmund Pettus Bridge (Figure 4), the Slavery and Civil War Museum, the Civil Rights Memorial Mural (Figure 5), and the National Voting Rights Museum. While in Selma, also take in breathtaking views of the Alabama River. Farther south, is the [Alabama River Museum](#) near Franklin, Alabama. Situated on the banks of Claiborne Lake, the museum offers ancient fossils, Native American artifacts, and a steamboat exhibit.

Continue travelling south to Camden, Alabama. Camden contains the Roland Cooper State Park, a 236-acre park and campground along the William Dannelly Reservoir. Camden also is home to Alabama's most haunted restaurant, the Gaines Ridge Dinner Club. The restaurant is inside an 1820's antebellum home and visitors have reported hearing babies crying, seeing a floating woman, and smelling the aroma of pipe smoke. The Black Belt Treasures Cultural Arts Center can also be found in Camden. The center sells local fine art, educates people about the local history, and provides workshops to teach people skills, such as quilting.



Figure 5. Civil Rights Memorial Mural in Selma, AL. Photo Credit: Heather Griffin



Figure 6. Autauga Creek at Pratt Cotton Gin Factory, Prattville, AL.

Photo Credit: Jennifer Barker.

North of Montgomery is the city of Prattville, offering the Daniel Pratt Historic District and the Pratt Cotton Gin Factory (Figure 6). Recreationally, the city offers the world-renowned Robert Trent Jones Golf Trail, Cooter's Pond Park, the bamboo forest at Wilderness Park, Autauga Creek Canoe Trail, and Heritage Park. Heritage Park offers views of Autauga Creek, the Pratt Cotton Gin Factory, and historic downtown. The Autauga Creek was a crucial part of Prattville's early history. Daniel Pratt, Prattville's founder, put several mills and a dam along the creek to process crops. Pratt hoped to build a company town that would prosper from the mills that were established there. Today, the dam is a centerpiece for the civic life in Prattville.