

The Central Falls Landing Makes a Splash: Kayak rentals, river cruises, educational programs and more

You don't need to buy a boat in order to enjoy a relaxing afternoon exploring a scenic river. The Blackstone Valley Tourism Council and the City of Central Falls have been hard at work creating the Central Falls Landing, located on the corner of Madeira Ave and Broad St. It runs along the Blackstone River and has a variety of activities on water and land that will be enjoyable for adults and children alike.

The Blackstone River is an asset to the community because it brings people together and connects them to nature. **Bob Billington**, president and CEO of The Blackstone Valley Tourism Council, describes a typical boat ride on the river: "Lots of trees, lots of wildlife, lots of fish life, and turtles," are highlights of the Explorer River Tour. This Nature and Heritage Tour runs on Sundays from 1 - 4pm and the boat takes off at the beginning of each hour.

The Central Falls landing also hosts *The Samuel Slater*, an authentic 40-foot canal boat that replicates those popular in the Blackstone Valley in the early-to-mid 19th century. "The Slater was brought here in 2000, to celebrate the Millennium," Billington says. "It's there for the public to enjoy a cruise or an overnight on a British-built canal boat. It is the perfect place to enjoy a relaxing evening on the Blackstone River." Half a dozen people can ride on a cruise and up to four people can stay overnight. There's even a kitchen and a bathroom with warm water.

Additionally, the Central Falls Landing also has many educational opportunities for kids and teens.

First is the RiverClassroom which enables teachers to bring their students on board *The Explorer* to study wildlife firsthand. "They learn about river science — how to protect the river [and] how to check its life status to date," explains Billington. "They love learning on the river. A highlight is our Remote Operated Underwater Vehicle. This is where kids can control the ROV and see what is living under the boat."

Second, a program that enables any Central Falls or Pawtucket resident under the age of eighteen to get free kayaking lessons. Billington says, "They will have the life skill of paddling which they will take with them forever. They ... learn river safety as well."

The Central Falls Landing provides life jackets and all other necessary supplies for participants. Billington explains that safety concerns are minimal, "We have our dam safety line across the Central Falls Dam and that makes it very safe for the public to enjoy Central Falls Landing." Both programs aim to teach kids the value of the Blackstone River and generate interest in conservation efforts.

After a long day on the river, people often find themselves feeling hungry; luckily there are two restaurants on location. For those interested in trying something new, there's Shark's Peruvian Cuisine and for comfort food, there's Royal Fried Chicken. Both restaurants are excellent choices for those in need of a hearty meal.

For more information about tours, rates and bookings, go to rivertourblackstone.com.