

(Revised 2 June 2009)

Hampton/Newmarket Creek from Air Power Park (Mercury Blvd)

This put-in is at the City of Hampton's Air Power Park, located on Mercury Blvd. Check your map - the park is at the intersection of Mercury and LaSalle Ave.

The park has a new pontoon float for launching canoes and kayaks. The launching facility is open from sunrise to sunset, seven days a week. The park's gates are no longer kept closed and locked, so paddlers can drive right to the float for unloading/loading, then move their cars to the ample parking spaces available in front of the park. Check-in is no longer required.

Once you're in the water you can choose from two equally interesting trips - (1) paddle downstream (go under Mercury Blvd) and follow Newmarket Creek to the Back River, or (2) paddle upstream (away from Mercury Blvd) toward the Hampton-Newport News city line.

Trip (1) takes you under LaSalle Ave., and into the Back River, where you can paddle past Langley AFB, go under Langley's King Street Bridge, and paddle as far down the Back River as you care to go. You might encounter some wind and waves when you get into the open water on the Back River.

Trip (2) is interesting in that it passes under the Armistead Ave. bridge, goes past the Coliseum, under the I-64 and I-664 bridges, and under the Queen St. bridge. Most of this trip is along heavily-vegetated banks, out of sight of the signs of civilization (it's interesting to paddle alongside the Interstate and hear but not see the traffic). There are several places where the route opens up to unexpectedly large marshes...the open area at the I-64 and I-664 junction provides an entirely new perspective on that busy highway.

Posted by: Al Smith