

RIVER RAFTING IN IDAHO

Looking for a different kind of vacation- one that involves *blow outs, ducks, Sheepeaters and typewriters?* Searching for a family adventure that combines fun and education, excitement and relaxation? Then try river rafting on the Middle Fork of the Salmon River, in the heart of some of the most spectacular scenery found anywhere!

Idaho may be famous for potatoes but the state also has the appeal of crystal clear rivers, teeming with trout, flowing through the majestic Rocky Mountains. The Middle Fork of the Salmon River dissects the heart of Idaho and offers the vacation of a lifetime.

The raft trips originate in Stanley, accessible from Boise by car or air charter. The crisp mountain air and snow capped mountains surrounding Stanley refresh the spirit and hint at the breathtaking scenery that awaits the traveler beyond the valley.

In the evening prior to departure the rafting group meets for an orientation and safety meeting. General questions and procedures, packing tips and how to set up and take down a tent (the only real work expected of the guests) are discussed in anticipation of the adventure that will begin the next day.

After a good breakfast, it's onto a yellow bus for the 2 hour ride to the Boundary Creek launch area. The guides provide a thorough safety briefing, and guests board either an oar boat or a paddle boat. The larger

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oar boats, carrying supplies and equipment, are powered by a guide while the guests relax in the bow. The paddle boats are smaller, with 6 guests paddling, as the guide steers the boat. For an afternoon of added excitement, there's the chance to ride a *duck* down the rapids. A *duck* is an inflatable kayak that puts thrills in even the smallest rapid. Needless to say, whatever the vessel you choose, helmets and life vests are worn at all times.

The May and June rafting trips are for those who desire an adrenaline rush. Guests on these early trips wear wet suits as protection from the cold water and the snow that still might fall at this time of year. Thanks to the snow melt, the river runs high and fast, providing all the thrills anyone could want. When the river narrows, its speed increases and rapids form. Very large waves are created, often higher than the boat is long. If the guides choose the wrong "route" to enter the rapids, a huge wave will force the boat across its face, an action called *typewriting*. The wave literally pulls the boat across itself, much as the carriage on the typewriter is returned. Amidst all the excitement, however, the guides work diligently to ensure that all safely "survive" the ride. More thrills are in store, for the next set of rapids may contain even bigger and faster waves. The wet suits are much appreciated at this point.

By late June, the water level has fallen enough that now one of the big problems is becoming "hung up" on the rocks. A gentle shove or

hanging off the back of the raft is usually enough to free the boat and continue the journey. For the next 6 days the Salmon River will share all

the beauty that nature has to offer. Every turn of the river offers another set of churning white water rapids or an awe inspiring view of sheer rock cliffs that rise on either side, each more spectacular than the last. Occasionally the appearance of a big horn sheep, a river otter or a mule deer adds to this magnificent spectacle.

After a full day on the river, camp and another delicious meal are on everyone's mind. The guides' prowess with a Dutch oven is beyond belief. Breakfasts of coffee cake, French toast made with banana bread or scrambled eggs start the day. Dinners of lasagna, salmon fillets with mashed potatoes, shrimp-k-bobs, grilled steak, pasta salad, fresh vegetables and even carrot cake are like no other. After dinner, with a roaring fire and a sky full of stars, the day's adventures are relived and tomorrow's anticipated.

Much too quickly, 6 days pass and only memories remain. Perhaps the hike to Rattlesnake Cave to view the *Sheepeater's* (an offshoot of the Shoshone tribe) pictographs, Joe Bump's cabin and stamp mill, Veil Falls or Jackass rapids are still vivid in the mind. Or, maybe, the rain that caused a *blow out*. *Blow outs* occur when sudden, heavy rains, high in the mountains, cause mud slides that muddy the water. The river usually clears within a day. But always, the memories of new friends, running

the rapids and the spectacular scenery will remain.

If interested in such a trip, contact Dave and Sheila Mills, who operate Rocky Mountain River Tours. P.O. Box 8596, Boise, Id. 83707. Visit their web site at www.rafttrips.com, or e-mail at rockymtn@micron.net. The phone number is (208) 345-2400. Give river rafting a try. You won't regret it!