

WHAT TO EXPECT

On Your Four or Five-Day Lower Salmon River Canyons Trip



First things first:

HOME BASE: MCCALL

All of our river trips meet in **McCall** before departure. The closest airport is in Boise, Idaho.
Boise to McCall is 2.5 hours.

PRE-TRIP ORIENTATION

Plan to meet us at our Boathouse in McCall at 6:00pm the night before your trip leaves.
Address: 184 Industrial Loop

PRE- & POST- TRIP LODGING

Not included in your trip cost. **Please book well in advance** to ensure availability. Contact Lauren for recommendations.

PLEASE REVIEW THE PACKING LIST IN FULL

Each guest will receive two dry bags at our pre-trip orientation: one large one for overnight items and one small one for daytime items. We recommend bringing clothing suitable for changing weather conditions, as the forecast is never guaranteed and can change without notice. Salmon Raft provides all camping gear with the exception of a pillow (tent, sleeping bag, thick sleeping pad). Tents are four-person, however we bring one tent for every one or two guests (any sharing is within your own party). Our well-rounded menu covers all meals beginning with lunch on Day One and ending with lunch on the last day, including appetizers and desserts. Also provided and included are daytime snacks, fresh drinking water, and other beverages (see drink notes on page 4).





THE ROUTINE

Each day of the trip, you can expect to be on board the raft for six to seven hours. We aim to get on the water by about 10am and arrive at camp by 4-4:30pm. There are opportunities for breaks, including a long one for lunch, and safe places to swim or stretch your legs on the numerous sandy beaches. Our coolers are accessible all day and are stocked with snacks and cold drinks, and water bottles can be filled at any time. At camp, our guides take care of everything! Feel free to relax and enjoy your vacation – read a book, swim in the river, play a beach game, or do some fishing. **Keep in mind that every trip is different – we keep a loose schedule, as many factors can influence pacing (weather, water flow, campsite selection, and group dynamics).**

Our trips feature multiple types of watercraft:

- Gear boat: Floats ahead of the group to select and set up camp
- Paddle raft: Holds 4-6 rafters, 2-3 paddlers on each side
- Oar boat: Holds 2-6 rafters, no paddling required, good for fishing
- Inflatable kayaks (duckies): Single or tandem option (on most trips)

Every day is a little different on the river, with a good mix of splashy whitewater and calm stretches. When you arrive at camp, you'll find everything set up for you: Your dry bags, our full kitchen, toilet system, tables and chairs, tents, shade canopy, and appetizers on the way. Salmon Raft guides are there to make your trip comfortable. If you need anything during your journey with us, please don't hesitate to communicate with any of the men and women who will be taking care of you.



DAY BY DAY

Pre-Trip: 6pm meeting at our Boathouse to receive your dry bags and go over trip details.

Days 1-4 or 5: 7:30am departure from our Boathouse on Day 1. Your vehicle will be safe in our parking lot while you are on the river. Our bus will deliver you to the put-in (2 hours for four-day trips, 1.5 hours for five-day trips). At the boat ramp, you'll meet your guides, receive your PFDs, and listen to a safety briefing. You're on river time now and will get in the groove of life in the backcountry.

The Lower Salmon River is broken up into four distinct canyons: Green Canyon, Cougar Canyon, Snowhole Canyon, and Blue Canyon. Four-day trips generally start below Green Canyon.

As you begin your river journey, you'll notice the "pool-drop" nature of the Salmon -- after every rapid, there is a calm pool afterwards. The river goes back and forth between bursts of exciting waves and mellow stretches that are good for swimming or fishing.

Wildlife can be spotted along the way: eagles, ospreys, bighorn sheep, river otters, and plenty of water birds.

Many of our favorite rapids are tucked in the deep canyons spaced throughout the trip: Demons Drop, Half-and-Half, Snow Hole, and Sluicibox, to name a few. You'll also have the opportunity for a few stops along the way -- remains of old Chinese stone houses, scouting the trip's biggest rapids, and incredible geological formations -- columnar basalt, granite, and ancient volcanic ash.

At camp each night, our guides work like a well-oiled machine to orchestrate a diverse and well-rounded dining experience. While they work, you are on vacation and don't need to lift a finger. Dinner and dessert wrap up as the sky darkens and the stars emerge, offering a sense of peace and scale in one of North America's last remote places.

Each morning you'll awake to the smell of freshly brewed coffee and breakfast on the stove. Pack up your things and embark on the next day's journey!

You'll float through the confluence of the Salmon and Snake Rivers near the end of your trip -- the meeting of North America's two deepest river gorges is truly impressive. The Salmon doubles in volume as it meets the Snake and then merges with the Columbia and flows west to the Pacific Ocean. We often use a small, quiet outboard motor to cover the last few miles of the trip.

At the take-out, we'll say our goodbyes and hop in the Salmon Raft bus back to McCall (roughly four hours including a pit stop). We typically return to McCall between 6:30 and 7pm.

THE WHITEWATER

In general, the Lower Salmon River features Class I-IV whitewater during the bulk of our operating season. The excitement of the river lasts all summer long and into the fall, and many of our favorite rapids emerge at lower flows during the late summer! The Salmon is the longest free-flowing river in the Lower 48 -- being undammed means that the nature of the whitewater is dynamic -- always changing, but always fun.

COMMUNICATION

One of the greatest parts of our trips is that there is no cell service! Our guides carry satellite communication for emergencies. We are a team of skilled outdoorsmen and women with certifications such as Wilderness First Responder, EMT, Swiftwater Rescue Technician, and more.

EXTRA ACTIVITIES

Our river trips are well-rounded and offer opportunities for optional activities like:

- Hiking
- Fishing
- Cliff jumping

If you are interested in fishing, Salmon Raft provides all rods and tackle. Anyone age 14+ needs a valid Idaho fishing license, available for purchase in McCall or online [here](#).

RECOMMENDED READING

- [Chief Joseph & the Flight of the Nez Perce: The Untold Story of an American Tragedy](#)
- [National Audubon Society Field Guide to the Rocky Mountain States](#)
- [Roadside Geology of Idaho](#)
- [Topographic Recreational Map of Idaho](#)
- [River Tales of Idaho](#)
- [River of No Return](#)
- [Myths of Idaho Indians](#)

AT CAMP

Salmon Raft provides four-person tents for every one or two people (you will not share with anyone that is not part of your group). Thick sleeping cushions are also provided for each guest. A pillow is not provided.

Our gear boat crew will set up tables, chairs, and a shade fly for your comfort. The toilet system will be set up from the time you arrive at camp and will be the last thing to be taken down the following morning.

We do not bring a generator or charging stations for the group to share. You are welcome to bring your own battery bank to recharge your phone for photos or a small speaker if you want music. However we ask that you are respectful of the group when using these devices. The sound of the river is quite soothing!



10 KEYS TO SUCCESS

It is our goal to provide a fun and safe experience for all of our guests. To make sure you are prepared to make the most of your experience, here are a few things to remember before we see you:

1. Read through trip literature, answer profile questions, and fill out personal details before your trip (these can be accessed through the link in your confirmation email).
2. Don't hesitate to ask questions before you arrive!
3. Understand the risks of whitewater rafting and spending time in the backcountry (easy to miss: dehydration and sun exposure).
4. Bring and utilize appropriate gear -- see packing list. Personal clothing and accessories should be suitable for your trip's weather and current river conditions.
5. Our guides are professionals and will be treated as such. You will be expected to respectfully follow their instructions.
6. Treat your guides and fellow trip guests with kindness and respect. Harassment of any nature is not tolerated at Salmon Raft.
7. Follow the examples of our guides and practice Leave No Trace principles. Leave as little impact on the environment as possible.
8. We love kids! For everyone's safety and comfort, please help be responsible for your children's comprehension and following of our guides' instructions.
9. Remember that you are part of a group. Practice flexibility in knowing that others may have different goals than you.
10. **Have fun!** We invite you to fully immerse yourself in the magic of river life.

WEATHER CONDITIONS

Our company is based in McCall, which sits at about 5,000' elevation. The starting point for your trip is at roughly 1,500' and continues to drop as we go down river. Understandably, it is a different climate in McCall versus on the river (precipitation, temperature, etc.).

When looking at weather forecasts for your trip, good points of reference are: **White Bird, ID** (starting) and **Asotin, WA** (ending).

Furthermore, please remember that weather can change suddenly and unpredictably when we're deep in the river canyon. Please bring plenty of layers and don't forget your "just in case" items, like a rain jacket. It is imperative to bring clothing and gear suitable to spending multiple days in a backcountry setting.



AN IMPRESSIVE HISTORY

One of the most special parts of a multi-day river trip is the recognition of the deep history that the Salmon River canyon holds. You will float through landscapes that have been inhabited for more than 15,000 years! It's impossible to give an adequate and thorough history in just a few paragraphs. As such, we invite you to learn more by engaging in our Recommended Reading list (found on page 3).

We operate on the land of the **Niimiipuu (Nez Perce)**. We acknowledge and respect the rich history and people that were here long before us.

The Salmon River is the longest undammed river in the Lower 48 and is all contained within the state of Idaho. It flows freely, beginning as just a trickle in the Sawtooth Mountains. The river gains volume as tributaries feed into it through the Frank Church Wilderness area, weaving its way west through Idaho, taking a northward bend in the town of Riggins, and then paralleling the Seven Devils Mountains and Lower Hells Canyon. The Salmon converges with the Snake River – the confluence is the meeting of North America's two deepest river gorges, a truly impressive sight.

The Lower Salmon is very geologically diverse and complex. On your trip, you'll notice the stunning and seemingly out-of-place white sand beaches that contrast with dark basalt cliffs, many of them formed as columns. Up river, closer to the headwaters of the Salmon, Idaho's Batholith continuously erodes and is flushed downstream during the Salmon's peak flows. Beaches are refreshed and different each year. The Salmon River exposes deeply buried metamorphic and granite rocks of an ancient subduction zone (a compression of oceanic and continental tectonic plates). The gorgeous white sand beaches are what many guests find to be one of the most memorable parts of their trip – who knew that you could find such barefoot quality beauties in Idaho?

A 2009–2018 archeological dig at Cooper's Ferry (near Pine Bar) uncovered projectile points and blades that support the hypothesis that initial human migration into the Americas occurred via a Pacific coastal route. These artifacts connect early movements from Japan, far earlier than a previously hypothesized inland ice-free corridor through North America and Canada. On our five-day experiences, guests have the opportunity to visit ancient pictograph sites, which serve as a reminder of those who made their home on the river long before us.

There is evidence of the canyon's rich history throughout your trip. You'll see stone houses used by Chinese miners, fruit trees planted above the high water mark, and changes in landscape mile by mile. We look forward to sharing our knowledge with you, as your experience will be felt more deeply while learning about our area.

DIETARY RESTRICTIONS & OUR MENU

We are happy to offer modifications to our menu to accommodate guests with dietary restrictions and allergies. Our menu includes daytime snacks, lunches, appetizers, dinners, desserts, and breakfasts. Please note that we cannot always provide the same diversity or sophistication for restricted diets as we do for our regular menu. By the same token, we are often unable to source certain allergen-free snack foods in McCall, so feel free to bring your own items to supplement our supply.

Advance communication is always best, and we can work together to make sure we have what you need.

We can provide options for vegetarian, gluten-free, dairy-free, and some other restrictive diets without applying any additional fees. However, to cover any increase in costs for more complex needs and requests, there may be a supplemental fee ranging from \$5–20 per person per day.

BEVERAGES

In addition to endless, fresh drinking water, Salmon Raft also provides:

- Coffee (plus cream and sugar options)
- Selection of tea, caffeinated and decaf
- Sparkling water
- Soda (limited)
- Juice
- Domestic beer (such as Coors, Coors Light, PBR, Budweiser, Bud Light, etc.)
 - Supply is calculated for each adult to have 2–3 beers per day
- Red and white wine
 - Supply is calculated for each adult to have 1–2 glasses with dinner

If you would like anything extra (liquor for cocktails, mixers, etc.) you are welcome to bring your own supplies. We provide a limited supply of cocktail ice at camp in the evenings.

OPTIONAL VEHICLE SHUTTLE INFO

Round-trip transportation from our McCall Boathouse to the river and back is provided and included as part of your trip cost. However, most trips also have the option to have your vehicle shuttled so that it's waiting for you at the end point (Heller Bar, near Lewiston, ID). We use a reliable and trustworthy third-party shuttle company. Costs for this service range from \$200–\$275.

Reservations must be made and paid for in advance to ensure availability. Please contact us for more details.