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## Types and Options for River Trips & FAQ's

### **What is the Difference Between a Motorized Raft Trip and an Oar-Powered Raft Trip?**

Well, for starters, the former has motors, the latter does not. Each of these modes of getting the job done has its unique qualities and advantages. The rafts are stable and spacious enough to allow you to move around during the smoother stretches of the float, chat with the other guests, take plenty of photos, or simply take in the breath-taking scenery.

The information that follows consists of generalities. Outfitters may differ greatly from one another.

#### Motorized Rafts:

Because of their size and power, commercial motorized rafts are very stable, approximately 35 feet long, and accommodate about 15 passengers. Two guides navigate the boat from the back (or stern). It is powered by outboard engines, with all the associated noise, fuel smells, and vibration. Folks from large cities may feel they have not left home behind. Advantage: you see more of the Canyon because *motorized* rafts travel about twice the speed of the current—cruising at about eight miles per hour. You will experience an exciting and exhilarating ride, especially if you choose to sit upfront. Or you can “relax” at the stern to dry off. Because of the larger carrying capacity, there is less concern about the amount, weight, and volume of gear. Therefore, creature comforts are likely to be somewhat enhanced. Motor trips allow you to experience the entire 225-mile stretch of the Colorado River through the Grand Canyon in seven to ten days or so, making motorized rafts the most popular choice.

*Motor raft trips are ideal for:*

- ⊗ families
- ⊗ group charters—family reunions, professional seminars
- ⊗ folks who don't have the time for a longer trip
- ⊗ those of most ages (minimum age from eight to ten years)
- ⊗ those with disabilities

Oar-Powered Rafts:

Oar-powered excursions (non-motorized) provide a more intimate adventure with the River and rapids. Several oar-powered rafts will comprise your expedition. Rafts are about 18 feet long (smaller and more responsive), and carry up to six passengers each, plus one guide. The guide rows from the center of the raft using two long, wooden oars to navigate through the River and rapids while the passengers relax, take advantage of photo ops, and enjoy up-close-and-personal thrills. Passengers also tend to get acquainted with other folks on the trip quicker because of the more intimate, quiet, relaxed atmosphere.

The raft will float along at the speed of the current, about four miles per hour. For this reason, oar-powered trips are typically longer in duration, allowing a more detailed study of the Canyon and its environment. However, you may choose to float one half of the River if time is an issue (one week for half the length of the River, two weeks for the entire stretch).

*Oar-Powered Raft trips are best suited for:*

- ⊗ those who desire more time and opportunities to hike and explore side canyons, hidden streams, waterfalls, and swimming holes
- ⊗ folks who desire to experience a leisurely pace allowing a more intimate experience
- ⊗ those who wish to absorb the quiet and solitude of the Canyon
- ⊗ those of all ages (minimum age, usually 12 years)

All-Paddle Rafts:

Commercial All-Paddle rafts are smaller than oar-powered rafts. Passengers (or most everyone, depending on the Outfitter) have their own paddle and are expected to help propel and navigate the raft in accordance with commands of the guide at the back of the raft.

All-Paddle trips are demanding, and are offered for those who want a more physically challenging adventure, enjoy teamwork, and desire to meet the River on its own terms.

However, the majority of the time, paddling will be easy while keeping to the main current, or at times just drifting with the natural pace of the River. If you are an avid photographer and expect to capture world-class, award-winning images while negotiating exhilarating rapids, this type of raft excursion may not be for you since you will have your hands full with your paddle.

Each All-Paddle raft will accommodate up to six adventurers, plus the guide. Minimum age with most Outfitters: 16 years.

*All-Paddle raft trips are best suited for:*

- those who have rafted before; although this is not necessarily a prerequisite
- high-energy, active people who already know they want the ultimate whitewater experience

Combination Trips:

These are some of the most popular trips offered by some Outfitters. These trips incorporate the Oar-Powered Rafts *and* the All-Paddle Rafts (and maybe other types as well) in the same excursion. Frequently you may freely switch rafts, actively participating on each type of experience. These trips are the choice for those who want variety, and for couples or small groups whose raft preference varies among their group members.

## **What Are Dories, What Are They Like?**

A dory boat adventure down the Colorado offers an exciting alternative to an inflatable raft. The dory is often considered the “classic” way to run the River. They are traditional wooden fishing dories in design (some made of fiberglass or aluminum), with bench type seating and hardwood rails and trim, imparting a unique mystique. Grand Canyon dories are small, carry four people (three passengers and one guide who paddles and navigates) and an enormous amount of gear. Approximately 16 to 17 feet from stern to bow, a dory is a flat-bottomed, splay-sided “rowboat” with high upturned ends. Dories have about six hatches in which gear is stowed beneath.





## The Right Stuff – Clothing – What and Why, How to Choose

**P**urchase the best you can comfortably afford. Just about everything you need for your River trip can be used at home, on other vacations, and of course, on your next River trip.

Remember, you are living outdoors—your clothing for the most part is your shelter. Don't skimp on quality gear and clothing for your kids. Go for quality, not quantity. Purchasing inferior products can put you or your child in jeopardy.

Because the types of clothing and equipment are specific to this sport (outdoors, hiking, camping, rafting) you will find just about everything you will need at your favorite service-oriented, Specialty Outdoor Retail Stores. These specialty stores are also staffed with knowledgeable and experienced individuals who have “been there, done that,” to help answer your questions and point out the benefits and features in the universe of amazing technical, light-weight (fast-drying) materials and fabrics. They are experts at fitting boots and packs, can advise you on how to pack, set up a tent, and perform myriad other indispensable daily tasks during your trip. Visit your trusted outdoor store early on, so that if you need to special order anything, you won't find yourself caught short of time.

Most items of clothing or equipment can have multiple purposes, thereby keeping your clothing to a minimum—since you “can't take it all!” You won't need a new outfit everyday. You will wear the same clothes (without washing) more than once, but you can also rinse clothing and let it dry overnight.

Light colors reflecting the sun are best. Avoid black, or very dark clothing as it absorbs too much heat, especially during the summer.

Experience is the best way to learn which items of clothing and equipment are indispensable. Several trial runs on short hikes during different types of weather conditions, testing your clothing, gear, packs, hiking boots or shoes, sandals, techniques (hiking poles for example), before your River trip, can be very enlightening. Become familiar with how everything functions in combination with everything else.

Expect to get wet on a whitewater-rafting trip, either from the rapids or the rain! Therefore, *all* your clothing and equipment will get wet, or should be well protected from the elements. On hot summer days you will welcome the thrill and excitement of getting doused by chilling waters of roiling rapids.

Even in summer, you can expect cool evenings or chilly early mornings. Being wet can very easily bring on chills. The Colorado River's temperature ranges between 48 F and 53 F. On summer trips, it is recommended that you bring one set of clothing to keep you warm. On spring and fall trips, plan to bring a couple of sets.

Most people tend to pack more than they actually use. You will be limited to the space/volume of the two dry bags provided. Pack for the season and your personal needs. Weight is generally not an issue, though space is. Select clothing that is compactable. Note: some Outfitters will limit your total gear and clothing pack to 25 pounds (usually required by helicopter and airplane services).

*Reality is – you need very little clothing –  
only the correct clothing.*

As you set aside your clothing and equipment, keep all or most of what you are likely to need in one place and well-organized. Refer to your checklist often.

## The Universe of Fabrics – Which Ones are Best?

Clothing fabrics in the outdoor industry are generally categorized as either Wicking, Quick Drying, Lightweight, Sun Protective, or NOT.

**Cotton** falls into the latter category. Advantages: may be okay in very hot, non-humid conditions; inexpensive; natural fiber. Disadvantages: requires pesticides for cultivation, does not dry easily; provides no warmth when wet; not appropriate for cool or cold water or cold weather conditions; retains water, and becomes heavy; holds moisture next to your skin, sapping heat, keeping you cold and wet. Even in warm weather, hypothermia can set in.

**Synthetics** – polypropylene (not polyester) and a whole host of newbies, *including* wool *and* silk blends, fall into the “wicking” category. Advantages of synthetics: many are made from recycled plastic soda and water bottles; quick drying (faster than wool); highly breathable; light-weight, provide superior warmth to weight ratio; can have sun-protective properties (some come with a Certified UPF–Ultraviolet Protection Factor) rating; perform well; retain shape, motion-friendly stretch content in some; some are water-repellant, and wind-resistant. Disadvantages: can’t think of any except they are not a natural fiber.

**Wool**, and especially Merino wool is a great “go to” fabric. *Lightweight* wool can actually be cooler in hot weather, because wool absorbs perspiration and evaporates it more efficiently. It is a great insulator, and very durable, keeping you warm during cool evenings. Wool also is imbued with naturally antimicrobial properties, which means you can wear it for extended periods of time without having it stink, even if *you do!* (I know: I have worn the same three layers of Merino wool, long-sleeved tops for two months while trekking in the high Arctic, rotating each layer daily so that I always had a “fresh” layer next to my skin each evening, while sleeping and trekking 24/7. Believe it, no stink at the end of my expedition!). Merino wool is made from fibers that are very long and soft, which explains why it’s not itchy.

**Silk** is slower to dry, requires special care, can be pricy, and is not as efficient in moisture management as synthetics. However, it has a soft and luxurious feel.





## More Right Stuff – Gear – What and Why, How to Choose

**N**ow that we've sorted out the clothing necessities in Chapter 6, let's go on to the "Hard Goods." In outdoor industry jargon "Hard Goods" refers to just about everything you don't wear. Clothing is referred to as "Soft Goods." Personal items fall into a whole other category, that are discussed in Chapter 8. Take a deep breath and hang in there. Remember: half the fun is gettin' there!

Check out any new piece of gear before your trip. Is it comfortable? Do you know how to use it? Do you know how to adjust or fine-tune it to your needs, do a field "repair," if necessary? Make field tests realistic. For example, don't set up a new tent in your living room, take it outside and set it up in the dark, in the wind, in the rain.

*The "price" for equipment failure  
in the wilderness can be significant.*

*Choose your gear wisely and don't skimp on quality.*



The following items are not listed in order of importance. Choose those that are most important to you.

### **Day Pack or Waist Pack**

You will find that a daypack (sized to fit you) is essential for day hikes during your River trip. On a typical day hike you will want to carry:

one or two water bottles or a hydration reservoir—a water bladder which encourages you to drink water often; sunscreen, camera, clean (or sorta-clean) dry socks, personal first-aid kit, toilet paper and zip-lock bags, rain gear, bandana, headlamp, small journal/pen, lip balm, and some tasty snacks. For this reason, you will want more than the typical waist pack, unless you have serious back issues, or you have a partner/friend to carry all your essentials that won't fit into your waist pack.

If you are a member of a split trip and will be *hiking out* of the Canyon at the halfway point, and have arranged for the mule service to carry out your main gear and clothing, a medium-size daypack will be suitable.

### **Backpack**

If you will be joining the trip midway, and therefore hiking into the Canyon to meet up with the rafts near Phantom Ranch (*or hiking out* of the Canyon with all your gear and clothing at the finish of your split-trip), you will need a larger, *internal frame* backpack to accommodate everything you will be taking. The staff at your camping store has the knowledge to expertly size a pack to fit you. Getting the correct size pack is crucial! A proper pack fit means a pack that hugs your back and has a slim profile that doesn't restrict your arm movement or throw you off balance. You don't carry your pack, you actually *wear* your pack. The waist belt and shoulder straps (with all their multitude of adjustments), and the torso length must all match your body. The staff will also show you how to put on, and take off your pack without undo strain on your back, and how to properly load your pack to take advantage of your pack's suspension, so as to not throw off your center of gravity. Besides making sure your pack is the correct size for your frame (body), it is just as important that your pack has the correct capacity for the *essentials* you will be taking. If the capacity is too small, you end up over-packing, which will round out the pack, throwing off its fit and integrity, and making you miserable. On the other hand, if the pack volume is too large, you end up filling that space and taking too much stuff, and therefore too much weight.

A few packs come with the added feature of a detachable daypack. However you could attach one yourself for use during your Canyon day hikes. Consider getting a pack cover if you may be hiking in the rain.

Don't get an *external frame* pack. It won't fit in your large dry bag, and won't pack well on the raft. It will be vulnerable to damage.

Your new backpack may feel comfy strollin' around the store, so load it up with *all* the gear and supplies you plan on carrying, and spend some time wearing it on your walks and hikes in preparation for your River trip. Note: Of course you will want to gradually add your gear to become accustomed to carrying a heavy load. Refer to Chapter 5, Physical Fitness–Ability and Agility, for appropriate training.

### **Duffle for Mule**

If your River trip includes the entire stretch of the Canyon, skip this section.

Only if you are a member of a split trip and will hike *into* or *out* of the Canyon at the halfway point, and have arranged for a mule to haul your gear and clothing, read on. A medium-sized daypack will be sufficient for your essentials—especially water—for The Hike. You will need to pack ALL the rest of your gear and clothing securely in a sturdy, canvas or Cordura® type duffle bag. (You will have brought your gear and clothing in this duffle if you began your trip at Lees Ferry, so this is not an extra piece of equipment and is packable enough to stow away for the duration of your River trip).

I have found it very useful to have straps on the duffle bag that can function as shoulder straps similar to those on a backpack—not as comfortable, but they do get the job done during the schlep from the raft landing to the Phantom Ranch mule depot.

Specifications are not to exceed 36" x 20" x 13", which equals 9360 cu. in., or about 153 liters, and cannot weigh more than 30 lbs. (13 kg.). Most daypacks and large backpacks are measured by volume: cubic inches or liters.

Note: Your “duffel” CANNOT be several small bags tied together.

Refer to Chapter 19 for more information regarding the Mule service.

### **Flashlight/Headlamp**

I champion the use of headlamps over the hand-held variety of battery-powered light sources. Being able to walk (and talk) in the dark, set up





## Still More Stuff – Personal Essentials

**W**hile this may look like a formidable list, it really isn't. You won't be able to take everything you may consider creature-comfort essential, but at least most of what follows will help you feel that you have most bases covered. What is "essential" to *you* may or may not be listed. Use your best judgment.

The following are not in any particular order of importance, but some items ARE essential!

### **Water Bottles**

Avoid the ones with a carry strap like a sling; they have a tendency to bounce with every step you take, and if you bend over to examine that cute little critter close to an edge, the bottle lunges forward, keeping *its* center of gravity while yours is totally compromised. The wide-mouth, quart (liter) size, leak-proof, Nalgene® is great, and comes in a variety of colors to help you keep track of yours and, has a screw "loop top" cap that can't separate from your bottle. It would be a real bummer to accidentally loose your cap down an embankment, or overboard. Take at least two—even three, water bottles!

If you opt for carrying water bottles during your day hikes (instead of the Camelbak®-type reservoirs), you will need to stow them in your daypack, or in an outside sleeve on your pack if it has one. These unfortunately will not be accessible without taking off your pack. You will want one of your water bottles aboard the raft, always where you can reach it. The Nalgene type with the loop top can be secured to something aboard the

raft with one of your carabineers. Plastic insulated water bottles have a much smaller capacity and don't usually (at least not yet as of this writing) have a loop top to secure it to your raft. In time (usually a short time) the contents will pretty much assume the outside temperature anyway. Some stainless steel bottles will keep contents the same temp for many hours. However, being much larger, much heavier, and not able of being secured to the raft, they are not suitable for your River trip.

Do not bring those flimsy plastic soda or water bottles. Those are designed for *single use only*, to be recycled. They will not withstand the rigors of your River trip.

During your day hikes, the Camelbak type water reservoirs are ideal. They are "standard issue" with all sizes of Camelbak daypacks. The reservoirs can also be purchased separately (several quality brands are available) and will fit in most daypacks. These offer the convenience of always having water when you need it without having to stop, take off your pack, unzip, and retrieve your water bottle while your hiking buddies surpass you by several hundred feet. Your alternative to this situation is to not stay hydrated! Or, of course, to opt for a water reservoir.

### **Electrolyte Replacement**

Thirst happens and water alone isn't enough. Electrolytes are essential in the hydration equation. There are many brands available in powder, tab or gel formulations. They turn water into a refreshing hydration drink providing the electrolytes, vitamins and minerals your body thirsts for during exercise. These vital replacements hydrate, revitalize, and energize.

### **Cup, Plate, Bowl**

Get an unbreakable, inexpensive, Lexan® (my choice) cup with handle (good with hot liquids, preferably with a lid), plate with raised edges, and bowl. Some folks prefer an insulated mug.

### **Eating Utensils/Mesh Bag for Storage**

Take an unbreakable, inexpensive, Lexan (my favorite), spoon, fork, knife, and a mesh storage bag to contain all dinner wear. I personally don't care for a "spork," a combination of a spoon and a fork. If this eating instrument intrigues you, try it at home for a couple days before committing to a longer duration and possible regret.

## Carabineers

Carabineers are an oval-shaped rock-climbing device made of aluminum, with a spring-loaded gate. Guides are insanely protective of theirs (because they so often become missing) so bring at least two or three of your own. Choose a large, *locking* carabineer to clip and secure your daypack, small dry bag, and/or water bottle, to the raft. If you use the non-locking variety, you risk losing some very valuable gear, as a twisting action of gear rolling about the raft can cause the gate of the carabineer to open, and your gear may go bye-bye. These can be found at your outdoor shop that caters to rock climbers. The smaller carabiners are a bear to use. The ones from the hardware store are non-locking, and may last only the first day out, so don't waste your money.

## Whistle

Many Outfitters issue an emergency whistle. If yours does not, bring your own. In the event of an emergency, a whistle is essential. Hopefully, you won't need it. A whistle can outlast and outdo a human voice, and the shrill call will carry considerable distances—sometimes over the roar of rushing water—a human voice will not. Three short blasts of your whistle indicate distress—an emergency! Because whistles are only used in emergency situations, they get immediate attention from everyone within hearing range. Your whistle needs to be worn on your life vest or on YOU. If it's on, or in, your pack, and you are separated from it, well . . . you see the problem. Choose a small, quality, unbreakable plastic, or metal referee whistle, not a cheapie plastic one—for obvious reasons. Choose one suitable for use in water. Typically they *do not* have the ball inside.

## Stuff Sacks

Using a variety of stuff sacks to sort and store your gear and clothing is essential in maintaining sanity and organization. Sometimes color coding is greatly helpful (if you remember what your color code is). Some are super lightweight, and are, for the most part, waterproof, made of siliconized nylon, and are available in a variety of sizes and colors. There are also a variety of lightweight styles, sizes, and colors that are *guaranteed* waterproof.

## Extra Stuff Sacks

Add a few extras. You will soon find a need, and will be glad you have them.





## Gear Lists & How To Pack

**M**ost Outfitters provide a list of suggested clothing and supplies prior to your trip. However, a more comprehensive list is included here. Tailor this list to your personal needs, desires, and budget. These items are not in any specific order—their relative importance is up to you.

The keys to effective and essential packing are:  
(1) defining your needs, (2) organization, and  
(3) following your checklist.

It is extremely difficult to advise as to the exact number of any item you will need—especially clothing. So much depends on the weather, the season, length of your trip, and your personal comfort requirements. Remember, you do not need (and do not have the space for) complete changes of clothing everyday! I will suggest, for example, maybe two long-sleeved sun shirts for trips *based on a one-week trip*. You want to be prepared for temperature extremes in the Canyon.

As you begin to gather your gear, clothing, and equipment, stay organized. Set aside your trip selections in a designated place, and consult your checklist. The checklist is divided into sections and columns. The header: “Want/Need” means you plan on including those items you have checked, and may need to purchase or borrow. “Have,” means you checked those items to include—you already have them, no need to purchase. ”Set Aside,” means those items you have checked have been set-aside *in* your designated collection spot. “Packed,” denotes you have *actually* packed them—no risk of forgetting these items at home.

## Honey, have you seen my . . . ?

If two or more from your household are packing for this trip, don't comingle your gear piles, everyone needs to know exactly what they have chosen, where it is, and be able to keep explicit track of their stash. Each person should have his or her own gear/clothing checklist from which to work.

Since you will have a limited amount of space, plan to bring the absolute minimum necessary and, when feasible, share with others to avoid waste or duplication. Specialty items used only once or twice during your trip probably are best left at home. Small size and compactness are critical criteria because everything *HAS* to fit in your pack and dry bags—a volume between 4000 and 7000 cu. in., or roughly 12 - 18 gallons.

Plan long ahead if you need to special-order anything. Have a back-up plan if a special order never materializes, or a wrong item is delivered, doesn't fit, is not what you expected, or if anything else goes awry. Remember Murphy?

Keep your specific River trip clothing as separate as possible from your “general traveling clothing,” so that when you arrive, everything you need on the River is sorted and nothing is left behind. While I was enroute to one of my two month long High Arctic trips, I somehow lost track of my rain pants. When the bush plane delivered us to our destination, and then took off in the perpetual rain, I discovered I had no rain pants! Talk about *shock!* I was so fortunate that one of my two pairs of pants were of a superior fabric that shed wind and water amazingly well. I wore them the entire time. Modern fabrics can be lifesavers.

Sort and pack according to “most essential,” and “less essential.” If something has to be purged as you pack, the choice is easier.





## Camp Comforts – How to Prepare for Camp and Camp Life

### **The Art of Camping**

It is truly an art to live *comfortably* for an extended period of time outdoors, exposed to the elements without a permanent structure. Modern camping technologies have progressed far beyond just throwing a bedroll on the bare ground, and using your boots as a pillow, or a dinner plate. All it takes is some creativity, decent gear, and a positive attitude.

### **Arriving in Camp – Dressing for Camp Comfort**

Arriving in camp is exciting, and at the same time, can offer up some apprehension, especially if you are new to this.

If you happen to arrive at camp after stormy, cold, and blustery weather, assess your own, and your companions' physical condition. Hypothermia can occur in weather that doesn't seem extreme. It is surprising that summertime often is when many cases of hypothermia are experienced. Put off other camp chores until you have changed out of any sweaty, damp, soon-to-be cold clothing.

### **Rehydrate**

It's very easy to either put off or just not think about keeping well hydrated. I just can't stress it enough; drinking water continually throughout the day *and* night is essential to ward off muscles cramping, headaches and grumpiness.

## **Caring for Your Feet – Blisters – Ouch!**

After making sure you are warm, dry, and hydrated, don't forget the critical need to take care of your feet.

Feet swell during the afternoon, and particularly when exposed to the Canyon heat and side-canyon hiking. Even with the best fitting boots, you may experience some stiffness and achy feet by the end of the day.

Change out of wet boat shoes or hot, encrusted hiking boots, and damp, odoriferous socks, into something more comfortable for kicking around camp. Let those tired “dogs” dry out, cool off, and breathe! Rinsing your feet in the cool, refreshing waters is like being reborn. Rinse out dirty, stinky socks early in the evening allowing them as much time as possible to dry.

Keep toenails well groomed. Attend to hotspots as soon as detected. If you notice at any time while hiking—even a smallish place anywhere on your feet that gives the slightest inkling that it could become a “hotspot”—STOP. Remove your boots and socks, and attend to your feet immediately. Cover the area with moleskin or molefoam to protect from further irritation. Even waiting 10-15 minutes, in most instances, is too long.

The best way to prevent blisters is to stop their formation in the first place. Most folks put this off because: 1) they think the growing discomfort will go away—it won't! 2) they don't really pay attention to their body signals. Be super aware. If your feet begin to “shout” at you—it's too late and a blister has already formed or, 3) they don't want to inconvenience trail mates by stopping to attend to a foot issue. Do it anyway. Most likely, all will enjoy a rest. Once you have developed a blister, you will probably have to deal with it for the rest of your trip. Don't underestimate the pain, “inconvenience,” and incapacitation blisters can deliver!

## **The Portable Toilet**

The portable toilet, commonly called the “Rocket Box,” is used to deposit solid human waste. Toilet facilities are set up shortly after arriving at camp, situated in a secluded area, and are the last things taken down in the morning before departure. The toilets are dry, meaning that everyone urinates directly in the River, or in the *wet* shore, to reduce odors and

prevent damage to the shorelines, beaches and campsites. All other “business” is taken care of at the toilet. More about the toilet in Chapter 17.

### **Tent Site Selection – Your Home Away From Home**

Usually you will set up your tent before dark. On the shores of the Colorado River, are designated campsites strategically located to lessen the impact of human occupation. Setting up your campsite requires careful planning. You will want to make sure that your tent is positioned near the higher area of the campsite to keep water from entering your tent in case of rain.

You will be making camp—typically, on sandy beaches, which are easy to maintain in terms of Leaving No Trace. (Refer to Chapter 15 for more information about this very important topic). The down side: sand is extremely difficult in which to anchor your tent stakes securely, if at all. This is the reason tents need to be of the free-standing design.

If privacy is your primary concern and you would just as soon sleep under the stars, ask your guide for directions to a more private sleeping site. Most camps have a few locations that are somewhat more private than others—this may not be obvious upon first landing.

Tent poles are delicate. Treat them carefully. Make sure the joints are fully seated during assembly before bending poles while setting up of a dome tent. The joint ends may split, especially with fiberglass poles. Spraying the tent with insect-repellent will damage the fabric or the waterproof coating.

After setting up your tent, (with the protective ground sheet under it), weight it down with some of your gear to keep it in place. Any breeze can easily turn a tent into a colorful kite and be blown into the River, sometimes lost forever. Sand beaches tend to be more exposed to wind and rain.

Lie down in the tent to check any possible lumps and bumps you might want to smooth out. If there is even a gentle slope, try to re-situate your tent to minimize the slant as much as possible. Your head should be toward the “uphill” tilt. Next, secure the guy lines, tying them to rocks, burying them to form an anchor. Anchoring your tent securely is imperative—remember





## Activities to Enjoy Along the Way

In addition to experiencing some of the most exhilarating and memorable times of your life, there will be those special interludes to gather with your new-found comrades, or to savor time just being alone along the River.

Some fun stuff or toys you might want to bring, as well as activities you already enjoy or may want to try for the first time are:

### **Hiking**

Undoubtedly hiking is the first extracurricular choice of activities for most River runners in the Canyon. Much of the splendor and magic of the Grand Canyon resides in its many side streams and canyons leading you into whole other worlds. Many opportunities are available to do a “walk about” in the vicinity of camp for those unable, or choosing not to engage in anything longer or more strenuous.

Short hikes from half an hour, or half a day, and possibly some full-day excursions into spectacular side canyons, to secluded pools and waterfalls, up slope along the River, and to archeological and geological places of special interest are all adventures to look forward to along the length of the River. The hikes are varied, some being easy and others strenuous. Encouragement and support from your guides are always generously offered especially for those stepping out of their comfort zone. More information on hiking is also found in Chapters 15, 16 and 17.

### **Just Hanging Out**

This includes absorbing the spirit of the Canyon, meditating and introspection, contemplation, napping, journaling, quiet conversation,

attending to menial camp or personal comforts; the list goes on. Taking advantage of quiet pauses in your day of persistent activity is rejuvenating and healing on many levels.

Take a stroll away from bustling camp activities during early evening hours to sample the silence of the wilderness. You may spot resident wildlife foraging quietly. Those solitary, profound moments are the ones you'll remember for years to come.

### **Interpretive Activities**

The guides are emotionally attached to the Colorado River and the Grand Canyon. All are strong advocates for its continued preservation through public education and awareness about the Canyon's fragility. Their detailed education and training (many are trained and educated as natural scientists) about the Canyon's natural and political history, geology, biology, anthropology, and other related specialties constitute a perfect melding with their River-running expertise. As natural features, critters, or ancient sites present themselves along the way, your guides will share their personal stories (many humorous) and knowledge, deepening your own perspective and appreciation for this wondrous place.

### **Photography**

The Canyon is great place to get "bitten" by the shutterbug. You won't want to put your camera down! You can't take a bad photo in a wondrous place like the Grand Canyon.

### **Writing, Journaling**

If you are into writing or journaling, I can't think of a more inspirational place to sit down with pen and paper, or to begin if you haven't done so before. Even a short daily narrative goes a long way to add to your photos, you just won't remember everything. The flavor of your word's, as you freshly experience each day, will color and enliven your memories as you recall those amazing days and nights on the River.

## **Birding**

With over 400 species of birds found in the Canyon, your River trip will give you an excellent opportunity to see many of them.

## **Guidebooks, Field Guides, and Maps**

Since you will become saturated and absorbed with the many aspects of the Canyon, specific reading about the flora, fauna, archeology, geology, and history of the River and River runners, are wonderful topics with which to become more acquainted. Most guided trips will have a “traveling library” aboard for your reference.

## **Observing/Study Local Flora and Fauna**

This is another great activity during a lull in the day and early evening.

## **Geology Study**

Undoubtedly the Grand Canyon is one of the most fascinating places in North America to study formations seen nowhere else. Your guides will offer a wealth of information.

## **Archeology Study**

The Canyon offers incredible evidence of ancient dwellers, another fascinating aspect of this remote region.

## **Reading**

Pack your favorite reading material. Note: most books will show extreme wear by the end of a River trip. Avoid bringing hardcover books!

## **Mutual Foot Massages**

If you want to be the envy of everyone around, exchange foot massages with your Canyon companion: a delicious way to refresh those poor, tired, dogs. Even a mediocre foot massage can enliven one’s spirits and paste a

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