



Twice Named
“Colorado Company of the Year”!

River: Arkansas River

Trip: 3- Day Inn to Inn Whitewater Raft Trip. Class III-V. 70 miles.

Meeting Place: Wilderness Aware Headquarters, in Johnson Village near Buena Vista, CO.

Times: Meeting time is at 8:15am, trips depart daily at 9:00am. Get back to the office on 3rd day at about 4:30pm. River times outlined below are approximate.

Closest Major Airports: Colorado Springs (COS) – 2 hours, Denver (DIA) – 3 hours.

Meals Provided: Continental breakfast, 3 delicious smorgasbord lunches, evening happy hour & hors d’oeuvres, 2 dinners at local restaurants or family style at the Inn, 2 breakfasts at the Inns, light snack each afternoon

Season: May 1- Labor Day

Itinerary: This guided trip is a unique opportunity to raft the Arkansas River and stay at local Bed and Breakfasts along the way. You will be rewarded with some of the most continuous and exciting whitewater in Colorado, fantastic views of 14,000’ peaks, and the charm of the Upper Arkansas River. This is the Colorado Rockies at their finest! It is a perfect trip if you are seeking adventure and excitement with all the comforts of home. On this top-quality trip our senior guides cater to your individual requests. All three days offer you something different to experience and enjoy. This trip offers you the experience of a lifetime!

8:15am: You will meet at our 7200 sq. foot facility right along the banks of the Arkansas River. Enjoy a free continental breakfast after checking-in with our office staff for a pre-trip briefing. Then you can change into your river gear in our spacious and clean indoor changing rooms. Next, you will meet our guides who will outfit you in a Coast Guard approved life jacket and paddle. Helmets are optional on this section of river.

9:00 am: Once you are suited up, you will be whisked to the river for your three-day adventure. Your trip leader will give you a comprehensive orientation and safety talk with plenty of time for questions. You will have the confidence needed to handle anything that comes up during the trip.

10:00 am: The Narrows, which doesn’t allow much warm-up time as you jump right in to the big stuff. The Class IV Miracle Mile begins just a short time after you launch and really tests your skills with fast moving water and tight moves. The Narrows features a continuous gradient keeping the action moving fast. Other Class IV drops include Frog Rock Rapid, The Silver Bullet, and House Rock where split-second timing is required to avoid a gigantic boulder blocking the channel. Along the way, you will be reminded of Colorado’s mining past as you see the Historic Midland Railroad Tunnels, an old miner’s cabin or even someone panning for gold!

12:00 pm: A well-deserved lunch break gives you time to stretch your legs and soak in the sweeping mountain views. Enjoy some tasty hors d’oeuvres while the guides set out a make-your-own deli-style sandwich lunch. Because lunch is by the river adjacent to our office, a clean restroom is available and you have access to your car for adjustments to your attire for the trip. On cool days, hot drinks are also available at the breakfast bar.

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1:00 pm: After lunch, the afternoon is free for you to relax at the Inn, join us for a gentle scenic downhill mountain bike ride on the old Midland Railroad Grade, or a horseback ride in the heart of the Rocky Mountains. These activity options are included in your trip cost!

If you select the mountain bike option, you will get a mountain bike custom-fitted and equipped for this off-road adventure. After being fitted with bike and helmet, you will be taken up Trout Creek pass, where you will meet the Midland Railroad Grade trail. This old railroad bed has been converted into a biking and hiking trail and features a wide, gentle downhill slope. You will bike through the pinion-juniper forest high above the Arkansas River Valley, providing ample opportunities to stop and smell the wildflowers in bloom or photograph the majestic vistas of the Sawatch mountain range.

Many of our guests choose the horseback ride. This two-hour ride through the pinion-juniper forest provides a unique perspective for viewing the plants and animals of the Arkansas Valley. Stunning views of the Sawatch mountain range are the norm during your ride. This horseback ride is suitable for beginners and experienced alike.

3:00-4:00 pm: After finishing your mountain bike or horseback riding tour, you will make your way to the inn. You will have some down-time after check-in to take an afternoon siesta or a well-deserved shower before dinner.

6:00 pm: Your guide will meet you at the inn for happy hour and hors d'oeuvres. We do our best to find the drink of your choice. Each guide will also prepare a delicious selection of hors d'oeuvres before dinner.

7:00 pm: After enjoying happy hour snacks and drinks at the inn, your guide will take you to our favorite local restaurant for dinner.

Day 2: 8:00 am: The innkeepers take special pride in preparing a genuine Colorado breakfast. After joining you for breakfast, your guide will bring you back to our headquarters and you will continue your rafting trip. You'll need it as you will be rafting through Brown's Canyon today.

9:30 am: The morning is perfect for viewing wildlife along the river as you weave your way through the Arkansas Valley. Mt. Princeton dominates the valley in this section of river. Keep an eye out for trout as this is some of the best fishing water on the Arkansas River.

12:00 pm: Today's lunch will be served on the river near Brown's Canyon. You will be able to take a short hike to explore the unique geology of the Canyon or cool off in the river. Your guide will prepare another fantastic lunch from one of our many menus.

1:00 pm: After lunch you will tackle the rapids of Brown's Canyon. The character of this section is challenging for seasoned rafters, yet forgiving for beginners. Most of the large rapids are followed by a calm pool of slow moving water allowing an opportunity to either catch a quick breath of fresh mountain air or take a picture of the unique Granite rock formations set off against the clear blue Colorado sky. Don't look too long – Browns Canyon will demand both your attention and muscles as you challenge rapids like Widow-maker, Zoom Flume, the Staircase and Seidel's Suck-hole.

3:00 pm: After the day's trip, you will enjoy complimentary drinks and snacks on the ride to the next inn near the quaint town of Salida, CO.

4:00 pm: Our destination for the night is the town of Salida, home of Colorado's largest historic district. Many of the Inns in Salida are beautifully restored Victorian homes where we transport you back to the early days of Colorado. The evening's entertainment is up to the group; go for a quick round of golf, bowling, a tour of Salida's many galleries, or spend a quiet evening going for a walk or fishing in the river.

6:00 pm: Your guide will meet you at the Inn for happy hour and hors d'oeuvres.

7:00 pm: A family style meal is served at the Inn, or we will visit the group's choice of one of the many fine restaurants in town.

Day 3: Depending on the group's preference, we offer 3 choices for the third day: A scenic float trip rafting Upper Bighorn Sheep Canyon, class II-III, with opportunities to paddle our inflatable kayaks or "duckies". A whitewater oriented rafting trip similar to Brown's Canyon through Lower Bighorn Sheep Canyon, class III-IV. And for those wanting difficult whitewater, we can raft through the Royal Gorge, class IV-V.

Option 1: Upper Bighorn Sheep Canyon. This scenic trip starts right in Downtown Salida and features the gentlest section of the Arkansas River, perfect for bird watching along the river or trying out an inflatable kayak, or "ducky". This section features long periods of floating mixed with some fun class III rapids like Spider, Badger Creek and Tincup. Take in the sights from the pygmy pinion-juniper forest, to the limestone caves and even a natural arch along the river. This section can be done either as a half-day, 9 miles or as a full-day, 18 miles.

Option 2: The Lower Bighorn Sheep Canyon trip features class III-IV rapids. This trip starts 30 minutes from Salida at the Lone Pine river access point. Lower Bighorn Sheep Canyon offers the best opportunity to view herds of Bighorn sheep grazing up on the craggy hillsides straddling the river. The morning portion of the trip has some of the most beautiful scenery anywhere along the Arkansas River, and features fun rapids like Gosh Awful, Texas Creek and Maytag. The afternoon is packed with class III-IV rapids similar to those in Brown's Canyon. Some of the highlights are Three Rocks, Spike Buck, Shark's Tooth and Double Drop. The water here is warmer than in Brown's canyon and has a higher volume creating bigger splashes and a thrilling ride.

Option 3: The Royal Gorge, class IV-V. The Royal Gorge is one of Colorado's Classic Whitewater adventures. Affectionately known as "The Gorge", this trip combines the bigger rapids of Lower Bighorn Sheep Canyon with the steep 1200-foot vertical canyon walls of the Royal Gorge. This trip is an adrenaline rush! Just an hour from Salida, the morning's rapids are a warm-up for the Grand Finale of the Royal Gorge. Big waves and holes require strong paddling and aggressive attitudes. Your hard work is paid off by the incredible views while passing under the famous Royal Gorge Bridge. There is no better way to see the Gorge than by the river!

3:00 pm: After the trip, you will enjoy complimentary drinks and snacks on the ride back to the office from the take out.

4:00 pm: When you return to the office, professionally taken 8x10 photos from your trip will be available for purchase or you may choose to remember your trip with a T-shirt, hat or pair of shorts. There is no better way to enjoy the Rockies!