



Twice Named
"Colorado Company of the Year"!

River: Dolores River

Trip: 6-Day Ponderosa Gorge / Slickrock Canyon Whitewater Raft Trip, Class II - IV, 100 miles.

Meeting Place: TraveLodge in Cortez, CO

Times: Meeting time is 8:15am, trips depart at 9:00am. Get back to the TraveLodge in Cortez at about 5pm. River times outlined below are approximate.

Closest Major Airports: Durango – 2 Hours, Denver (DIA) – 6 hours.

Meals Provided: 6 Delicious smorgasbord lunches along the river, 5 hearty dinners, dessert and 5 full breakfasts at camp.

Season: May - Mid June

Itinerary: Come explore the Dolores River on a great multi-day trip and experience the fun of self-contained overnight camping by the river. Wilderness Aware has specialized in running multi-day rafting trips since 1976. This experience gives us the competitive edge when it comes to organizing your adventure. The Dolores River is one of the last remaining unspoiled river trips in the West. The Ponderosa Gorge trip is not to be missed.

Day 1 - 8:15 am: You will meet your guides at the TraveLodge in Cortez, CO, where they will check you in and give you a pre-trip briefing. The guides will be available to help pack your gear (camp clothing, toiletries, sleeping bag and pad) in a water-tight overnight bag. Everyone gets their very own souvenir insulated coffee mug to keep after the trip. Tents are packed away separately.

9:00 am: We'll hop on the bus or van and you will be transported across the high desert and down into the Dolores River Canyon near Bradfield Bridge, about 10 miles below the McPhee Reservoir dam. You will immediately feel the serenity and seclusion of the canyon.

9:45 am: After stretching out and unloading your personal bags, you can change into your river clothing in the new facilities provided by our government host. We'll make last minute adjustments to the gear boats and add your overnight bags to the load. 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. Next, the guides who will outfit you in a Coast Guard approved life jacket and paddle. Helmets are optional on this section of river.

10:30 am: As we round the first couple of bends, we will begin passing large benches filled with towering Douglas fir and Ponderosa pines that line the shallow washes coming off the canyon walls. These stands of virgin forest give the upper canyon its name - Ponderosa Gorge.

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12:00 pm: At lunchtime alongside the river, our professional guides will prepare hors d'oeuvres and a hearty deli-style lunch. After eating, we have the option of pulling out the inflatable kayak or “ducky”. Paddled with a two bladed kayak paddle, the “ducky” allows you to take on the rapids individually. We have both one-person and two-person “duckies” available on our trips. After a short training demonstration by the trip leader and donning a helmet, you will be ready to take on the rapids of the Dolores.

1:00 pm: Fast and rollicking water keeps everyone on their toes and give the duckies time to adjust to piloting their own boats. The brilliantly colored canyon walls deepen and the scenery becomes even more breathtaking.

4:00 pm: Once we arrive at our riverside campsite nestled amongst the tall pines, we unload all the rafts and have an opportunity to change into camp clothes and set up tents. Guides will be on-hand to assist with setting up your camp. After a brief camp orientation where you'll become acquainted with the “Groover”, our solid waste toilet system and the camp routine, you will be free to take out your fishing pole, enjoy a refreshing swim, or hike.

7:00 pm: After unwinding for a couple of hours, the Guides will have put on their chef's hats and have a hot dinner ready for you. Some of the dinner entrees we offer are: Grilled Chicken, Steak and Salmon, Stir-Fry, Lasagna, and Enchiladas, followed up with a Dutch-oven cake. This is not pork-and-beans camping! After dinner you can relax with a cup of cocoa or tea under a blanket of stars playing cards, telling ghost stories, and re-living your adventures from the river.

Day 2 –7 am: In the morning, you'll wake up to the aroma of freshly brewed “Cowboy” coffee delivered to the door of your tent. When you get up, you'll see that camp is nearly in full swing and an array of fresh fruit, juice and other goodies available for you to nibble on. The smell of bacon in the air tells you breakfast is nearly ready. Our breakfast entrees may include blueberry pancakes, French toast, or Veggie eggs.

9:00 am: After you eat, it's time to pack up your tent and overnight bags and re-load the rafts for the day's river adventure. As you pass through this exceptional wilderness, it's not hard to imagine why the Anasazi Indian culture chose this location in which to live. In fact, we actually stop and take a look at some of the remains of the Anasazi – including a granary – evidence of a culture that lived here centuries before.

2:00 pm: We begin a series of some of the toughest rapids on the Dolores River today. The first river runner of the Dolores, Otis “Doc” Marsten, named the wildest rapid on this section Old Snaggletooth. This rapid is one of the most famous river runs in Colorado. A series of holes must first be navigated before threading the needle in-between the rocks of the Snaggletooth. You will be sure to get your adrenaline pumping before attempting this rapid!

Day 3 – On the third day, you'll be able to recall the mining history of Colorado as we pass by two abandoned uranium mines. The action doesn't stop though, as the Mile Long Rapids are still to go. After conquering these fun rapids, the river flattens out providing excellent opportunities to swim or jump in the “ducky” for those who would not be comfortable in rapids. We will pass the one and only highway bridge on the trip. Those that are joining us for only three days can leave the trip at this point. If you are one of the lucky ones, we'll keep going and really remove ourselves from the world in the canyons to come.

Day 4 – We enter the Slickrock Canyon section of the river. This canyon is also named Little Glen Canyon, as it features some of the same rock layers as Glen Canyon of the Colorado River – now buried under Lake Powell. Although Class III rapids pepper this run, Slickrock's allure is in its majestic beauty, a kaleidoscope of red, orange and white sandstone cliffs nearly 1200 ft. high. We come across more evidence of the Anasazi Indian culture. We stop and take a look at some pictographs and petroglyphs of the Anasazi.

Day 5 –As you raft through the heart of the Colorado Plateau, a high desert environment, you will notice pinion pine and juniper scattered around sage and several varieties of cactus. In the riparian zones along the river, Box Elder and Cottonwood trees provide some welcome shade in the afternoon. Our camp tonight is near Coyote Wash, which is an excellent evening hike.

Day 6 – On the last day, we pass through Muleshoe bend – a meander where the river nearly meets itself and then tackle Corner rapid. After conquering these fun rapids, the river flattens out providing excellent opportunities to swim or jump back in the “ducky” for those who would not be comfortable in rapids.

2:00 pm: We will arrive at the Bedrock Store in mid-afternoon where we will unload the rafts, change out of your river clothes, and head back to Cortez.

5:00 pm: Once back to Cortez, It’s time to unpack your bags and say good-bye to new found friends and reflect on this rapid-filled wilderness canyon trip. You may also choose to remember your trip with a T-shirt, hat or small souvenir. There is no better way to spend 6 days!