



Twice Named
“Colorado Company of the Year”!

River: Salt River, Arizona

Trip: Upper Salt River Canyon 5-Day Whitewater Raft Trip, Class III-IV, 53 miles.

Meeting Place: The junction of US Hwy 60 and the Salt River, between Show Low and Globe, AZ

Times: Meeting time is 8:00am, trips depart daily at 9:00am. Get back to the US Hwy 60 bridge at about 5pm on the 5th day. River times outlined below are approximate.

Closest Major Airports: Phoenix (PHX)– 2 ¾ hours, Tucson (TUS)- 2 ¾ hours

Meals Provided: 5 Delicious smorgasbord lunches along the river, 4 hearty dinners, dessert and 4 full breakfasts at camp.

Season: March 1 – May 15.

Itinerary:

Five-day trips on Arizona’s Salt River are the ultimate springtime getaway, sunny warm days, desert plants in bloom, and a river swollen with snowmelt.

The Salt River is one of the most unique rivers in the U.S. Located on the southern edge of the Colorado Plateau, the Salt is at the crossroads of mountain and desert ecosystems. You’ll descend through oak and juniper woodlands into the stunning Lower Sonoran Desert – the most biologically diverse of any of the American deserts. The varieties of cacti along the river are stunning – from the teddy bear cholla to the huge, multi-armed saguaro.

The Salt River Canyon’s Geology is magnificent! The canyon walls extend thousands of feet above river level and give you the feeling of insignificance in this natural rock cathedral.

8:00 am: Our office at the “put-in” is undeniably the nicest facility available on the Salt River. Our 35’ custom-built office and equipment warehouse trailer holds everything needed to start your trip in style. Our facilities allow for proper cleaning and storage of equipment, which means you start your day out in clean and comfortable gear. Our private men’s and women’s changing room trailer has adequate benches and clean linoleum floors that are up and out off the ground. It is well ventilated and well lit. With Wilderness Aware there is no longer the need for Salt River trip preparation in makeshift facilities!

Your guides will be available to help pack your gear (camp clothing, 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. After getting changed and locking your valuables in your car, you will meet with your guides who will outfit you in a Coast Guard approved life jacket and issue you a paddle. Helmets are available and optional on this section of river. Last minute items like sunscreen, lip balm, glasses straps and waterproof cameras are available at the store in our office facility.

9:00 am: Once you are suited up, you will be whisked to the river for your five-day adventure. At the “Put-in”, 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 whitewater on this trip will not disappoint. The waves of Bump ‘n Grind rapid are sure to have your eyes as big as saucers, followed by a giant smile as you are drying off! Other rapids with names like Maytag, Grumman, and Mother Rock ensure you will challenge your coordination and muscles while you conquer the river.

In March, when the river is swollen with snowmelt, prepare for a wet and wild ride with towering waves and powerful currents – a wetsuit is a must for rafting at this time of year. During late April and May, the river changes, requiring technical maneuvers around rocks and dropping through narrow chutes. As the river warms, wetsuits disappear and are replaced by swimsuits, providing opportunities to splash fight with new friends or even swim a rapid!

12:00 pm: At lunch alongside the river, our professional guides will prepare hors d’oeuvres and a hearty lunch and may even tell a tall-tale or two. After lunch, it’s back on to the river.

1:30 pm: After lunch, the giant waves of Exhibition rapid will challenge your skill. Shortly after, there’s an opportunity to hike up Cibecue creek and take in a scenic waterfall before encountering the abrupt start to the saguaro forest. Don’t stare too long at the scenery as the grand finale of the day is just around the corner, Mezcal Falls. This rapid is the most vertical drop of this trip and will thrill the most seasoned of rafters! You will then enter the Salt Banks area, sacred to the White Mountain Apache people, and visible to outsiders only by respectfully passing by on the river. Shortly thereafter, you encounter Ledges rapid, a staircase of fun waves. The steep canyon walls frame the clear blue Arizona sky as you pass a host of desert plants in bloom from Agave and Palo Verde to Jojoba and Ocotillo.

3:00 pm: Once we arrive at our riverside campsite, 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 read a book on the beach, take a hike with spectacular views of the Salt River Canyon, or a refreshing swim in the Salt River.

7:00 pm: After unwinding for a few hours, the Guides 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 next to the campfire under a blanket of stars playing cards, telling ghost stories, and re-living your adventures from the river.

Day 2- 7:00 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. 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.

9:00 am: Now it’s time to jump back into the rafts and continue our way through the Salt River Canyon. Today’s journey takes you through the spectacular White Rock Canyon.

12:00 pm: At lunchtime, you may 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, it's back on to the river. In White Rock Canyon, you will encounter Canyon Creek, a spectacular side canyon with clear running water. The river then begins to open up into Gleason Flats, a wide plain featuring an old Manganese mine, giving an opportunity to recall the mining history of Arizona. Today we encounter some of the best rapids on the river. Shortly after leaving Gleason Flat we navigate Eye of the Needle Rapid. You had better be on your toes! Next up is Black Rock rapid, class IV. A short hike gets you to a bird's-eye view of this challenging rapid.

4:00 pm: Camp tonight will be along a beautiful sandy beach.

Day 3 - 9:00 am: Take in the unique geology of the Salt River Canyon as you travel toward Devil's Pendejo and Upper Corral rapids. Then it's on to one of America's most infamous rapids, Quartzite falls. This rapid was formed by a couple of huge Quartzite blocks, which created a dangerous river-wide hydraulic. Rafts were forced to portage this rapid. In the 1990's, a small group of rogue boaters took in some dynamite and blew up one of the blocks making this rapid passable. Their actions were however, illegal, and were prosecuted and imprisoned for destruction of federal property. You will get to see this classic drop and conquer this relatively new rapid!

After Quartzite, we get right back into the action with Corkscrew rapid, a long series of waves and turns as you exit the Quartzite formation. More spectacular scenery greets you as you confront Cliff Hanger rapid!

3:00 pm: Tonight's camp at Cherry Creek, offers a wide sandy beach perfect for sunbathing and for the adventurous, a short, but challenging hike up to some Indian ruins. These ruins, on top of a rock pillar, offer a commanding view of the entire valley. You can really imagine what it was like to live in a more primitive culture!

Day 4 - 9:00 am: Another hearty breakfast prepares you for today's journey. You'll travel through Horseshoe Bend, a great example of the river's hydrology over time. Soon after, you will pass a quiet zone and reserve for the Desert Bald Eagle. Keep an eye trained on the pinnacles to see the eagles!

1:00 pm: Coon Creek is our destination for the afternoon, which offers a small shady stream and a unique geologic formation, the Devil's postpile. This is an example of basaltic columnar jointing, which even has another set of Indian ruins at the very tip. There may be time to hike up to this tremendous view of the valley, or cool off in the shade under the trees! We may stop at one of our favorite sites, Chalk Creek, for a hike and a possible sighting of a Gila Monster! This hike affords an excellent variety of desert flowers in bloom.

Day 5 - 9:00 am: During the float out to the take-out, you can see one of the largest Saguaro cacti anywhere. You can only imagine how old this cactus is considering it takes 50 years for a Saguaro to grow one arm!

3:00 pm: At the conclusion of the trip, you will be transported back to the US Hwy 60 Bridge where you can change clothes, say good-bye to new found friends, and reflect upon this rapid-filled canyon trip. You may also choose to remember your trip with a T-shirt, hat or pair of shorts. There is no better way to spend five days!