

Colorado Rivers for Rafting

Whitewater Rafting Class I - VI Rating Scale

Class I: Moving water with small waves that tug at the boat - it's a relaxing way to spend the day. Each trip has some stretches of calm class I water, creating a pleasant break between rapids.

Class II: Easy rapids, waves up to three feet tall that are readily seen, and wide channels that can be discovered without scouting. Some maneuvering is required during this little rock and roll.

Class III: Waves up to four feet and narrow passages that send the boat shimmying and water gushes over its sides. Plenty of excitement.

Class IV: Long, difficult rapids, narrow passages, turbulent water that requires precise maneuvering and sends hearts racing.

Class V: All of the above and then some - large, complex, gushing rapids, twisting, and spinning to deliver the consummate adrenaline rush.

Class VI: The ultimate extreme, only the most expert should attempt this. Raft trips don't go here. There's too much other water to enjoy.

Colorado Rivers

Animas River:

Lower Animas:

Relax and enjoy a different view of historic Durango as you bounce through fun filled rapids like Smelter, Sawmill, Santa Rita and Pinball. Your guide will share history of the region and stories of local traditions. Trips from 2 hrs – full day.

Upper Animas:

Conquer one of the toughest commercially run trips in the U.S. with its unique continuous pounding whitewater. Enthusiasts travel from around the world to challenge the rivers steep drop of 85 per foot mile and non-stop rapids. Concluding this quintessential whitewater experience, shuttle out of the canyon on the famous historic railroad for a unique and rewarding end to your trip. Trips 1-3 days.

Arkansas River:

The Arkansas River is the most popular whitewater river in America. With over 80 miles in 4 major sections, the Arkansas provides whitewater adventure for all ages and skill levels. Trips range from short 1/4 and 1/2 day introductory trips for the whole family to adrenaline-pumping Class IV+ full day trips. You can combine sections to spend 2 or 3 days rafting America's favorite river. The Arkansas River flows through spectacular Brown's Canyon between Buena Vista and Salida, Bighorn Sheep Canyon between Salida and Parkdale and through the world-famous Royal Gorge by Canon City. The Arkansas is a short 1-2 hour drive from Colorado Springs or Summit County resort towns.

Blue River:

The Blue River is Summit County's only whitewater river. Conveniently located below Lake Dillon to provide Class II-III action in an alpine setting.

Cache la Poudre River:

The Cache la Poudre River, northwest of Fort Collins, is Colorado's first and only designated National Wild and Scenic River. You get a thrilling whitewater rafting experience in a pristine and protected environment. The sections we raft are just a little over one hour drive from either Denver or the town of Estes Park, which is just outside Rocky Mountain National Park.

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Clear Creek River:

Clear Creek River provides a fun and challenging whitewater experience. The river traverses past Ponderosa Pine, Juniper, and Douglas Fir trees before tumbling through the old mining town of Idaho Springs. Wildlife such as river otter and big horn sheep can be observed along the way. The occasional bear may also appear. Located 30 minutes west of Denver and 30 minutes from the Summit County ski resort towns.

Colorado River - Central Section:

The Central Section of the Colorado River offers an abundance of history, wildlife and whitewater. Here the Colorado River helps produce power to Denver and other nearby towns by pumping some of its water through the Shoshone Power Plant turning turbines that produce electricity. The town of Glenwood Springs was one of the first towns in the country to be powered by water. As you traverse the whitewater of the Colorado River through Glenwood Canyon you will see remnants of the old mining villages and learn of the history of the area. Once out of the Canyon you will experience one of the great phenomenon's of the area - Glenwood Springs is known for its geothermal activity and its natural hot springs. Right here on the banks of the Colorado you will find 'hot pots' that you can stop at along your trip and enjoy!

Colorado River - Upper Section:

Located near the headwaters of the Colorado River and Rocky Mountain National Park, the Upper Colorado River is ideal for those who want beautiful canyon scenery and non-intimidating whitewater. Red Eye, Screaming Left Turn, and other intermediate Class II and III rapids offer enjoyment for all ages. These river rafting trips are great for first-time boaters and families with children. Outfitting on this river is conducted under special permit from the U.S. Bureau of Land Management. The beauty of this river canyon is due to the abundant wildflowers, the sheer granite canyon walls, and the blue spruce and Douglas fir trees. Weather in this alpine environment is variable with afternoon temperatures ranging from 70 to 90 degrees. Although there is usually plenty of sun, afternoon thundershowers can occur.

Colorado River - West Section:

Hidden away in western Colorado and eastern Utah is an exceptional stretch of the Colorado River through Horsethief, Ruby and Westwater Canyons. Trips in this section begin with a leisurely float allowing you to unwind and enjoy the beauty and quiet of the desert canyon country. Side canyon stops allow for a tasty riverside lunch and short hikes to explore hidden splendor. As you float down the river the multicolored shades of red sandstone give way at river level to the area known as the "Black Rocks". These formations are Precambrian; they are the oldest exposed rock in Colorado and Utah. As the Colorado River begins its decent into Westwater canyon, the channel narrows, the Canyon walls climb and water quickens its pace. It is here that the rapids of Westwater offer the thrill of running some of the best whitewater in the region. Colorful names and exciting stories accompany these challenging rapids, especially "Sock-it-to-me", "Funnel" and "Skull". Rapid Classification: II-IV Floating Season: April-October —charter trips available year round

Dolores River:

Whitewater rafting on the Dolores River, one of the Southwest's best-kept secrets, offers a unique combination of solitude, scenery, wildlife, plant life and ancient rock art. Named by early Spanish explorers, the river begins at the base of the 14,000-foot San Juan Mountains, about 25 miles north of Cortez, Colorado. Carving its way through two canyons of pink Navajo and red Wingate sandstone, the Dolores flows past rocks with a geological history spanning 250 million years. Ponderosa Gorge and Slickrock Canyon combine to form one of the finest wilderness multi-day trips in America.

Green River:

A magnificent towering canyon marks the start of the Green River trip at the "Gates of Lodore". This trip is known as one of the most beautiful stretches of river anywhere. Fed by dam-controlled flows from Flaming Gorge Reservoir, the Green River through Lodore Canyon provides rafting throughout the summer. The trip follows part of the route taken by Major John Wesley Powell on his epic 1869 exploration of this continent's last uncharted wilderness. In the calm stretches wildlife abounds. As the oar rafts quietly float through the canyon we often see deer, waterfowl, beaver and desert bighorn sheep. Several challenging rapids lie hidden between the sheer cliffs of this spectacular canyon; participants eagerly indulge themselves in rapids known as "Disaster Falls", "S.O.B." and "Hells Half Mile". The trip starts at the northern boundary of Dinosaur National Monument in Colorado and floats to the west edge of the Monument near the Dinosaur quarry site near Jensen, Utah.

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Gunnison River:

The Gunnison River begins in the Crested Butte area when the East and Taylor Rivers join at Almont. The river in the Gunnison, CO area provides accessible, introductory rafting for families and 1st timers. Just downstream of the Black Canyon National Park, the Gunnison Gorge offers exclusive 2-3 day wilderness trips with fun Class III whitewater and exceptional fly fishing for small groups looking for an intimate river experience.

Lake Fork River:

The Lake Fork is a branch of the Gunnison River tumbling past the town of Lake City on its way to Blue Mesa Reservoir. Class II-IV rapids punctuate this spring run-off trip.

North Platte River:

A whitewater rafting journey on the North Platte River begins in the remote northern portion of the area known as North Park in Colorado at an elevation of 8,000 feet, about 20 miles west of the town of Walden. This rolling valley, famous for its spectacular scenery, fishing, cattle ranches and wildlife, ends abruptly in a mass of Precambrian metamorphic rock. The swift North Platte River has steadily eroded a narrow section of the ancient deposit, forming what trappers first called Northgate Canyon. During early spring launches, the water of the North Platte is quite cold. Daytime highs range from 50 to 85 degrees, and overnight lows range from 35 to 55 degrees. Afternoon rain showers can be common.

Piedra River:

Paddle through pristine 1000 ft deep box canyons, lush alpine rain forests, heart pounding whitewater and then relax in soothing riverside natural hot springs. Experience this true Rocky Mountain jewel.

Roaring Fork River:

With its headwaters in Aspen, just south of Glenwood Springs, the Roaring Fork River is a beautiful, peaceful river that flows into the Colorado River. It is a clear, pristine river that has a short rafting season because all the water in the river comes from snow melt and rain. The snow that was skied on all winter in Aspen and Snowmass now becomes river water for rafting season. Because the water is produced from snow that melted the day before, the Roaring Fork is quite a cold river. It has fun class II and III rapids. The Roaring Fork River is also a Gold Medal fishing river! Rapid Class: class II and III Rafting Season: May and June Elevation: 6080

San Miguel River:

Immerse yourself in a world of contrasting green-forested/red rock walls, constant fast paced splashes and outdoor adventure. The San Miguel's narrow, winding waterway leaves you with memories of smiling faces, and towering red rock walls, rolling rapids and deluxe camping. Trips 1-3 days

Taylor River:

The Taylor River flows through a high alpine canyon to join the East River to form the Gunnison River. Easy access provides river recreation varying from 1/2 day to full day adventures ranging from easy to challenging Class II to IV rapids.

Yampa River:

The last of the wild ones! When the Yampa is running the whole Colorado Plateau is alive with whitewater. See the headwaters of the Colorado River system and ride the crest of one of the best river trips in the world. The water level depends completely on run-off from the snowmelt during the first part of the season. These famous waters are compressed between the canyon walls creating unforgettable rapids such as "Tepee", "Big Joe" and "Warm Springs". Be sure and make reservations for this very special run.

The Yampa trip starts at the eastern edge of Dinosaur National Monument and flows west to Split Mountain Canyon at the western portion of the Monument near Jensen, Utah. Trip lengths: 4 & 5-day Rapid Classification: Class II-IV Floating Season: May, June and early July Elevation: 5,676 feet at launch point Meeting Place: Steamboat Springs or Craig, Colorado.