



John Day River Trip Planner 3-Day Camp Trip *(Service Creek to Clarno – 40 Miles)*

Thank you for choosing Ouzel Outfitters. This trip planner contains detailed information designed to make you prepared for your trip. When you make a reservation you will receive a personalized planner with invoice information and specific meeting instructions. Don't hesitate to call or email if you have any questions.

Table of Contents

| | |
|--|-----------------|
| Invoice, Payments & Cancellation Policy | Page 2 |
| Meeting Location & Time | Page 2 |
| Transportation & Accommodations | Page 3 |
| Orientation, Itinerary & Fishing | Page 4 |
| Weather Conditions & Special Notes on Clothing | Page 5 |
| Packing Lists | Page 5-7 |
| Recommendations for Kids | Page 6 |
| Camping Equipment & Bathing | Page 7 |
| Meals, Dietary Restrictions & Hygiene | Page 8 |
| Environmental Concerns, Toilets & Raft Types | Page 9 |
| How Strenuous is the Trip & Risk | Page 10 |
| Gratuities & Area Attractions | Page 10 |
| About the John Day & Suggested Reading | Page 11 |
| Assumption of Risk Form <i>(Return by Fax or bring it with you)</i> | Page 12 |

Ouzel Outfitters

PO Box 817 Bend, OR 97709 / Toll Free: 800-788-7238
Fax: 541-385-0461 / info@oregonrafting.com / www.OregonRafting.com

Invoice, Payments & Cancellation Policy

Multi-Day Trips

John Day River: A \$250.00/ person deposit is due within 10 days of making your reservation. 50% of the deposit is refundable up to 60 days prior to your trip. The balance is due 30 days prior to your trip. No refunds for cancellations received after 30 days prior to your trip.

Cancellation due to Insufficient Bookings

Trips with insufficient bookings may be cancelled. In this case full refunds will be offered. For multi-day trips with insufficient bookings we will inform you 30 days prior to the trip date.

Trip Cancellation/Travel Insurance

We highly recommend insurance to protect your vacation investment. Travel Services offers a wide variety of affordable plans that cover cancellation and medical emergencies. Click [here](#) for more information or ask us to send you a brochure.

Meeting Location & Time

All trips meet at the [Service Creek Stage Stop](#) at 8:00 a.m. (Pacific Time). Most trips launch at Service Creek, but if water levels are low we will launch at Twickenham, a short drive from Service Creek. Your vehicle will be shuttled from our launch location to our take-out at Clarno during the trip (included in your trip fare). PLEASE DO NOT BE LATE. Service at the Service Creek restaurant is slow and is the most common reason for guests being late. **Late Arrivals:** If you need additional directions or will be late to the meeting location, please let us know. Orientation and packing takes about an hour. If we have not heard from you the trip will depart when ready.

Ouzel: 800-788-7238, After Hours: 541-815-4273, Service Creek Store: 541-468-3331

Take me to [MapQuest](#) and Directions to Service Creek, OR.

Transportation Information

Airport Information

If flying, make connections to Redmond, OR. Rental cars available at the airport.

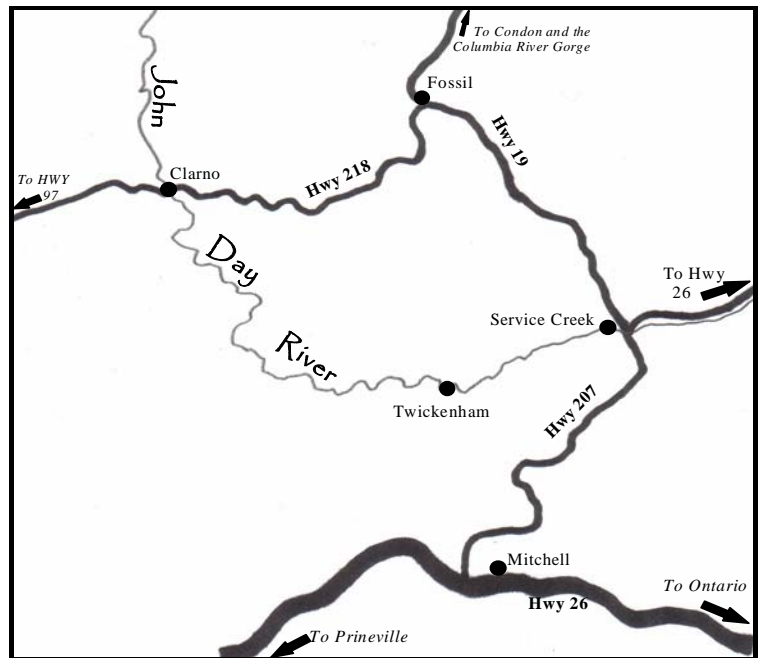
Driving Directions

To Service Creek approaching from the West (Bend & Madras) on Hwy 26: Head east from Prineville and just before Mitchell, turn left on State Hwy 207. Service Creek is 24 slow miles. Turn left just after crossing the river.

To Service Creek approaching from the north (Columbia Gorge & Portland): From I-84 take Hwy 97 south and turn left (east) on State Hwy 206 to Condon. From Condon, take State Hwy 19 south to Service Creek.

To Service Creek approaching from the east (Baker City & Ontario) on Hwy 26:

From Hwy 26, turn north on State Hwy 19 just east of Dayville to Service Creek.



Driving Times to Service Creek

The Dalles — 2 hrs 20 min; Ontario — 4 hrs; Boise — 5 hrs; Madras — 1 hr 45 min; Bend — 2 hrs 15 min; Portland — 3 Hrs 45 min.

Fuel & Other Services

Keep in mind that services in this area's tiny rural towns often close early so plan accordingly.

Mitchell – fuel and small store. Spray – Fuel & small store. Fossil – Fuel and small store. Service Creek – Bed & Breakfast, restaurant, tiny store (no fuel). Clarno – No services. Make sure to fill up as close to Service Creek as possible.

Shuttles & Vehicle Security

During the trip your vehicle will be picked up from Service Creek or Twickenham and shuttled to Clarno. We use a local shuttle company that has provided dependable and professional service for us and many other outfitters and recreational rafters for many years. We have never had a problem with theft or damage to any vehicle but there is always a first time and we cannot guarantee the safety of your vehicles and valuables during the trip. We recommend leaving valuable items such as jewelry and laptop computers at home and packing wallets, keys and other valuables in your overnight dry bag. Please bring an extra set of keys.

Local Accommodations

Service Creek

[Service Creek Stage Stop B&B](#): 541-468-3331. Store, restaurant, also our meeting location.

Fossil

[Bridge Creek Flora Inn](#): 541-763-2355 (Recommended)

[Wilson Ranches Retreat B&B](#): 9000 Acre working cattle and dude ranch. 866-763-2227.

Madras

[Best Western Madras Inn](#) 800-528-1234

Prineville

[Best Western Prineville Inn](#) 541-447-8080

Redmond

[Best Western Rama Inn](#) 541-548-8080 or 800-780-7234

Bend

[Shilo Inn Suites Hotel](#) 800-222-2244

Condon

[Hotel Condon](#) 18 room boutique hotel with historic charm and modern amenities. Nice dining. 800-201-6706

Trip Itinerary

Orientation & Morning Itinerary: Our day begins at 8:00 a.m. at the Service Creek Stage Stop, right off Hwy. 19. You should have eaten breakfast before this time. Look for your trip leader outside near the entrance to the store. Once everyone is assembled, your trip leader will give each guest an overnight dry bag and provide instructions on how to pack your belongings and seal your dry bag. The dry bag provides 3.8 cu. ft. of storage. When closed the bag is 16 inches in diameter and 33 inches tall. Your sleeping bag will already be packed in the dry bag.

Packing your Dry Bag. Most guests find it useful to separate clothes and belongings into smaller bags for easier packing and better organization. Small duffels, laundry bags and even pillowcases work well. Large duffel bags are often difficult to work into and out of your dry bag. Pack toiletries and liquid items in a Ziploc or waterproof container in case they leak inside your bag. Once your trip leader has reviewed how and what to pack you will have a limited amount of time to pack your dry bag and make last minute purchases. Your overnight dry bag will not be accessible during the day, but additional dry bags and waterproof boxes will be available on the rafts for things such as sunscreen, cameras and extra clothing that you'll want accessible during the day. Your trip leader will help you decide what to keep out. Carry these items with you until we reach the launch location. If you have special photography equipment or unusual items please call our office for packing suggestions. Many guests find that owning their own personal dry bag for day use is very handy.

Getting Ready to Launch. Once your bag is packed bring it to your trip leader along with any other items that need to be stowed on our equipment rafts - this includes personal soft drinks, beer or other items that do not go into your dry bag. When all the bags are packed, you will follow the trip leader in your vehicle to the launch point. This is usually just a quarter mile down the road from Service Creek, but if water levels are low, we will travel approximately 20 miles to our alternate launch site at Twickenham. From our launch location, your vehicle will be shuttled to our take-out at Clarno. We try to depart the Trading Post by 9:00 a.m. Once we arrive at the launch location, your overnight dry bags will be loaded on to our equipment rafts and the items you want accessible can be packed into the smaller bags and boxes available on each raft. The orientation continues as we discuss safety, the environment and what to expect on the trip. We try to be on the river by 10:00 a.m.

Once on the River. We will float for 45 miles from Service Creek or 37 miles from Twickenham to Clarno over the next three days. During each day we'll float the river, enjoying the scenery, running a few small rapids, and make short stops for hikes and lunch. Our equipment raft will go ahead of the group each day to select a good camp and get things set up before our guests arrive. There will be time each afternoon for hiking, fishing, games or just relaxing in camp. Early in the trip we'll encounter the John Day and Clarno geological formations where searching dry streambeds is often rewarded with fossil finds. Later on we'll see relatively young columnar basalts that characterize most of the geology of north-central Oregon. Old homesteads and Indian pictographs remind us of pioneer and Native American history and hiking at Rattlesnake Canyon or Big Bend lets us explore the geology and desert flora of the area. There are few rapids on the river, so the trip is focused more on the scenery, camping, hiking and natural history of the area.

Fishing

Introduced to the river in recent times, small-mouth bass have thrived in the John Day River. Many say that the next record small-mouth will come from the John Day. Without a dam to control flows, the best time to fish the John Day from a boat is hard to determine from year to year. Clear warm water produces far more fish than cold, sediment filled water. Heavy snow melt in spring and early summer makes the river cool and cloudy, but as the weather begins to improve and the snowmelt lessens, the river becomes warmer and clearer – and the bass begin to bite. It is not uncommon for groups to catch over 100 fish a day if the conditions are right. With few rapids there is plenty of time to drift and fish.

For families, the John Day can offer easy and fun fishing. No dangerous wading, expensive equipment or technical know how is required. If the conditions are right, bass will bite on almost anything. A combination of plugs, spinners and live bait, using small and simple spinning reels or closed-faced, push-button reels for kids works fine. Our guides are there to teach and assist, eagerly helping the enthusiast chase the big ones and patiently helping a six year old learn to cast. If possible, please pack rods in unbreakable cases. You must have the proper fishing license if you intend to fish. Licenses are not available at Service Creek so get it before you come. Information on fishing licenses and regulations can be found at the [Oregon Department of Fish & Wildlife](http://www.oregon.gov/DFW/).

Weather Conditions

This free-flowing desert river provides a narrow seasonal window for rafting the canyon. During this time weather conditions can vary from a sunny 95 degrees to a cold and windy 40 degrees. While most trips have good weather overall, it is imperative that you be prepared for any conditions. Please pay close attention to the special information about preparing for cold days, especially if your trip is happening in the spring. While we provide tarps, personal camping gear and additional rafting wear to make you comfortable on and off the river, being adequately equipped with the appropriate clothing is essential for your overall enjoyment. [Check John Day River Weather.](#)

Special Notes about Clothing for the John Day

It is not uncommon to experience wet & dry conditions and wide temperature fluctuations within a given day on the John Day River. Being prepared on the John Day means being able to adapt to rapidly changing conditions. Common outdoor wisdom tells us that layering is the key. You should have several layers of NON-COTTON tops and bottoms made from synthetic materials such as polypropylene or fleece which maintain warmth even when wet. Clothing should vary in thickness from lightweight to mid-weight and we recommend having at least two layers.

We always have a supply of splash pants and tops, but these garments are not the best for very cold days. We recommend that you have a windproof/waterproof jacket and pants to complete the layering. Protecting your head and feet are extremely important and often overlooked. You should have an insulated and water-shedding hat for wearing on the river. The options for protecting your feet include neoprene booties, neoprene socks or layering with synthetic socks as described above. Neoprene booties have soles and do not require shoes or sandals, while neoprene socks require footwear (either sandals or shoes). Finally, keep in mind that any of the items you choose to wear on the river (with the exception of your waterproof/windproof shell) may be wet when you reach camp (not from rapids, but from rain). A complete change of clothes should be waiting in your large dry bag (including hats, gloves, socks and shoes).

Even when it's raining, our camps are comfortable with large tarp shelters and campfires to keep you warm and dry. As such, comfortable cotton and wool garments are perfectly acceptable in camp. It is our hope that most of your cold weather gear will remain packed in the bottom of your dry bag for the entire trip. Our goal is for you to enjoy the scenery, the hikes, the river and the campsites without being distracted by the weather. Don't hesitate to call us if you have any questions about weather or clothing. And don't forget the sunscreen! There is a very useful tutorial on how to layer and dress for a river trip at [Cascade Outfitters River Traveler website.](#)

What to Pack for Wearing on the River

You should have the following items available each day

- Visor, Cap, or Sun Hat
- Sunglasses (w/strap)
- T-Shirt & shorts or swimsuit (we recommend wearing shorts over swimsuit bottoms)
- Rafting Shoes: Sandals w/heel strap, sneakers or neoprene booties
- Lip Balm (with spf) & Sunscreen (spray sunscreen runs out quickly).
- If you are sensitive to the sun, you might consider wearing pants and a long-sleeve shirt made from a lightweight, quick-drying material.
- Polypropylene long johns – tops and bottoms (in case of cold weather)
- Neoprene or polypropylene socks (optional – for cold weather)
- Warm & waterproof hat (can serve as your sun hat)
- Rain/wind shell (top & bottom)

Having the above items available each day allows you to layer your clothing, making it easy to adjust to changing conditions. Your guide will help you decide what to keep out each day. We'll have plenty of extra dry bags to handle extra fleece and raingear that needs to be accessible during the day. Many customers prefer owning their own dry bag for day use. If conditions warrant, wetsuits will be made available for inflatable kayakers. **AVOID COTTON on the river!!!!**

What to Pack for Camp

- T-Shirts and Shorts
- Long sleeve shirts (cotton okay)
- Long pants (cotton okay)
- Sweatshirt or fleece top
- Warm jacket (your wind/rain shell works when included with warm liners/garments)
- Plenty of warm socks
- Warm hat (for chilly mornings)
- Long Underwear (synthetic long underwear can also be worn on the river on cool days)
- Sneakers or light hikers (light hiking boots are fine for hiking on the Owyhee)
- Small Towel & Toiletries (Don't forget a moisturizing lotion as the area is typically very dry)
- Flashlight or headlamp
- Insect Repellent
- One Article of Attire for "Dress-up" Night. It is a tradition on our trips to have some fun on our last evening. Ties, cummerbunds, costume jewelry, funny hats, etc. - think Halloween. You may be as creative and crazy as you want.

Optional Items to Pack for your Trip

- Camera and Film (disposable waterproof cameras work great)
- Extra batteries for camera, flashlight, etc...
- Soda, beer, wine or your favorite spirits – we'll keep your drinks on ice if desired. (Please avoid glass containers if possible)
- Binoculars
- Small pillow (travel or backpack kind) or pillow case that you can fill with clothes.
- Small personal dry-bag (handy for incidentals and avoids having to share during the day)
- Trekking pole or walking stick (only if needed for stability)
- Personal amenities such as cards, books, cribbage board, journal, Frisbee, etc...
- Kayaking gloves. If you plan to spend a lot of time in the inflatable kayak, fingerless neoprene or cycling gloves will keep your hands from chaffing.
- Extra sunglasses
- Sarong
- Small first aid kit with Band-Aids, ibuprofen, etc... All trips carry major and minor kits and each guide has their own supplies, but it can be handy to have your own "ouch pouch".

Recommendations for Kids

- A pair of river shoes or river sandals (designed for water sports) that wrap around the toes and provide extra protection for the feet. Avoid slip-on water socks and crocs.
- Hydrosilk or rashguard tops. These fabrics are warm and comfortable when wet, help avoid chaffing from the life jacket and are "cool".
- Hat & sunglasses with a strap. Kids can tire easily in the sun and protecting the eyes and face helps avoid over-exposure. Since kids often lose or break sunglasses, two inexpensive pairs are recommended.
- Games. While there are plenty of activities for kids on our trips, we recommend bringing diversions that your kids or family can enjoy. Card games, compact board games, books, paints and other activities can provide occasional evening entertainment. Our game bags usually include bocce, horseshoes and other games, but if your family enjoys throwing a football or Frisbee around you should consider bringing one. We highly discourage electronic games and gadgets as they can be easily damaged and run counter to the wilderness experience.
- Bring plenty of sunscreen for kids and encourage them to drink lots of water.
- On colder trips make sure that the kids have neoprene footwear, a warm and waterproof hat and plenty of polyester/fleece tops and bottoms for layering.

What Ouzel Outfitters will Provide

- Tent (Sleeps two). Family-sized tents (sleeps 4) are available upon request.
- Sleeping Bag & Paco Pad
- Souvenir T-shirt and water bottle with the Ouzel logo (water bottles are BPA free)
- Beverages include: Water, Lemonade, Iced Tea, Coffee, Hot Chocolate, Tea & an assortment of wines served with dinner (we plan for 2 glasses per adult per evening). You are welcome to bring your favorite sodas, beers, wine or spirits. We bring extra coolers and containers and can keep your drinks cold if required. Please avoid glass containers where possible (that special bottle of wine is okay).
- Splash Jackets & Pants (does not replace the need to bring good rain/wind shell)
- Library with books and information about the area
- All meals from lunch the first day to lunch on the last. Healthy snacks are always available.
- All group camp gear including tarps, tables & chairs, toilets.

Where to Purchase Items on the Packing List

Items listed in the packing list such as fleece and polypropylene tops and bottoms can be purchased at most local sporting goods stores. Neoprene socks and gloves are also available at sporting good stores and dive shops. Don't hesitate to call us if you have questions. You can also find a useful tutorial on layering for a river trip as well as order clothes and equipment at www.rivertraveler.com . Or call Cascade Outfitters at 888-748-3717 for a free catalog.

Camping Equipment

Tents: Our tents are Alps brand outfitter model tents designed for durability. They are spacious for two (7ft x 8ft on average) and can accommodate more in a pinch. Special family-sized tents that accommodate up to four are available upon request. Please indicate your request for a family-sized tent on the Guest Information Form.

Sleeping Bags: Our sleeping bags are 3 or 4 pound square bags with a flannel or polypro lining. Sleeping bags are professionally cleaned by commercial launderers after each and every trip. You will find your sleeping bag packed inside your large overnight dry bag when this is issued during orientation. Letting you pack and unpack your sleeping bag each day insures that you won't get anyone else's during the trip. Our bags are of standard length (75" to 80") and will sleep a 6'0 person comfortably. If you need a larger bag it may be advisable to bring your own. Please call us for options. If bringing your own sleeping bag, please indicate this on the Guest Information Form.

Pads: The pads we use are called "Paco" pads. These pads are used by river rafters and guides their comfort and durability. They are 1-1/2" poly foam in a heavy duty PVC shell. They are waterproof, do not roll up and are carried flat on our equipment rafts. If you feel you need additional padding you are welcome to bring an additional pad. Please bring only a closed-cell foam "backpacker" pad or compact thermarest. If the pad you bring cannot get wet, it will need to be packed into your large dry bag along with your sleeping bag and personal items. If you bring a small air mattress make sure you have a pump and patch kit.

Setting up Tents: The riverside campsites we select most often have a variety of options for tent sites. We find that most guests enjoy selecting their own personal site and setting up our easy-to-set-up tents on their own. Our guides will be happy to teach you how to set up your tent at the first campsite and are always available for "troubleshooting" during the trip. If you find that setting up your tent is difficult and don't mind the guides selecting your site, feel free to let your trip leader know that you would like your tent set up for you each night. We will be happy to accommodate your request.

Bathing

While swimming regularly will reduce the need to bathe, we understand that there is nothing like a refreshing wash and shampoo at the end of an active day. The most current "leave no trace" ethics encourages us to discard suds and wastewater into the river as opposed to on shore so bathing takes place near the river's edge. Please bring a biodegradable soap and use it sparingly. For showers we carry solar showers – a special bag with a small showerhead that heats water during the day. It works pretty well even on cloudy days. The bag is suspended on a tripod. Privacy is often difficult so bathing in your swimsuit is common practice. Please let the guides know in the morning if you are interested in a shower that evening. Total hot water capacity is limited, but our guides will make every effort to make you comfortable.

Meals & Dietary Restrictions

Our menus are designed to be flexible in order to accommodate vegetarians and those with dietary restrictions. Since our meals are largely made from scratch, it is easy for us to prepare portions on the side without garlic, meat or other ingredients you may be allergic to. While we will know your preferences and allergies in advance, it is ESSENTIAL that you remind the guides of your preferences PRIOR to meal preparation. When appropriate, dishes and utensils are not used to prepare or serve more than one dish. Utensils used to prepare dishes with meat are not used to prepare vegetarian options. Here is a breakdown of what we are able to provide:

Vegetarians/Vegans – Plenty of fresh fruits and vegetables (including avocado and bell peppers) will be supplemented with Hummus, Tofu, Bocca Burgers, Pates and other protein sources. Meals that have ingredients containing animal products and/or dairy products will have portions that can be prepared on the side without these ingredients.

Nut Allergies - Since we don't use a lot of pre-made and processed ingredients, it is not difficult for us to check for oils and extracts, avoiding them altogether or preparing portions on the side.

Wheat/Gluten Allergies – While we cannot guarantee your favorite brand we will have gluten free products such as breads, tortillas, snacks and pastas.

Non-Dairy – While we cannot guarantee your favorite brand, we can provide soymilk and will prepare dairy-free portions of meals where necessary.

Guest Information Form - Please record any dietary allergies or restrictions on the Guest Information Form. We purchase food for our trips the day before departure and do not have the ability to significantly adjust menus or add alternate dishes once the trip has begun. Please keep in mind that "preferences" are different than "restrictions". We often find that "preferences" become less important as most guests find they are burning more calories than they're used to during the course of a day. As an example, folks on low-carb diets often appreciate the "extra calories". It is also common for kids to eat foods that they may not eat at home. Don't hesitate to call or email if you have any questions. Download a [Sample Menu](#) here.

Hygiene Information

Safety on a river trip doesn't just mean wearing your life jacket and never diving into the river, it also includes washing your hands! We are very careful when it comes to contaminants on a trip. Our food coolers are "triaged" and drained daily and ice is carefully managed. Our dish washing and kitchen cleaning systems include a sanitizing bleach solution and hand washing stations are always set up near the kitchen and toilet. Please help us keep everyone healthy by washing your hands prior to each meal and after using the toilet.

For Women: Most of our river trips have female guides on them so it is easy to ask questions. Our male guides are also fully aware of issues specific to women, so if you are comfortable speaking with them, they are comfortable addressing your concerns. Sometimes, however, they need to be reminded that you may need more "stops" than they might have anticipated.

A helpful hint from past guests—having a comfy, casual skirt or wrap-around sarong handy makes urinating in the wet sand much more comfortable. You can wear it over your swimsuit during the day and/or rap it around you in the evening. Frequent stops for urination are common and locations are selected to maximize privacy. Don't hesitate to ask your guide for a "potty stop". If you are expecting your period during the trip, we suggest that you pack a small amount of toilet tissue, a few Ziploc bags (small and large sizes), a few small paper bags, a small bottle of hand sanitizer and your napkins/tampons into one large Ziploc bag. Each day, pack a day's supply of tissue, pads/tampons, small Ziplocs and a paper bag in a large zip lock and put this in your day-bag or in one of the watertight boxes that is available during the trip. During the day when you change a napkin/tampon, place the used one in a small Ziploc bag and put that in the paper bag with everything going back into the large zip lock. You can dispose of used products in the garbage set up by the toilet each afternoon. Do NOT put used products in the toilets. Feel free to ask any of your guides for assistance. We carry extra feminine supplies on each trip as well as zip locks and plenty of toilet paper to help restock your kit.

Environmental Concerns

While on the John Day you may be exposed to a wide variation of temperatures and weather conditions. Sun exposure is always a concern but cold days are just as common. Pay special attention to the clothing suggestions in your trip planner and [CHECK THE WEATHER](#) before your trip.

The John Day River is home to a few pesky plants and insects. Poison oak is present, so keep on the lookout. Our guides will help you identify it if you're not sure what to look for. While most guests never encounter them, scorpions, black widow spiders and rattle snakes are present in the John Day River Canyon. It is important while hiking and in camp to watch where you put your hands and feet. Don't leave items lying around on the ground that critters will want to crawl under. Ticks are present during the rafting season and it is important to check yourself after hiking through grass or brush. Mosquitoes, when present, are not abundant, but we recommend bringing insect repellent.

Toilet Facilities

For many, the most feared and apprehensive aspect of a river trip is the "toilet situation". When we arrive at a campsite on a wilderness river, we don't expect to find the traces of previous visitors. Despite the fact that we arrive with tons of equipment and up to 16 people, we intend to depart leaving only marks in the sand. "Leave No Trace" means we take everything with us, from food scraps from the cutting board to garbage left by others. Like everything else, human waste must be transported out of the river canyon. We use the state-of-the-art "River Bank" toilet system on all of our trips. The River Bank system offers a large, double-hulled container with a molded seat that is slightly smaller than a normal household toilet. The toilet is set up away from camp in a private area. An "occupied indicator" insures privacy. One of the most difficult aspects of the portable toilet is the fact that capacity restrictions do not always allow urination in the chamber – the toilet is for defecation only. If this is the case on your trip, users must urinate in the river or the separately provided "urinal" chamber nearby. Don't forget to use the hand-washing system after every use. In some respects, this is the price we pay for seeing and experiencing the beautiful and dramatic settings our wilderness river canyons have to offer. Don't despair! Our guides will take you through the procedures with sensitivity and humor. Be sure to ask them why we call it the "groover".

Raft Types

Oar Rafts, Inflatable Kayaks, Oar-Assisted Paddle Rafts.

Given the relaxed nature of our John Day trips, the long stretches of flat water and the general interests of our guests, paddle rafts are replaced by Oar-Assisted Paddle Rafts on all John Day River trips. Oar rafts may not be present on some trips. Get a description of our [Types of Rafts](#).

Assumption of Risk

Whitewater rafting is an outdoor activity that requires moderate physical exertion and exposure to the elements. There are risks associated with whitewater rafting and trip-related activities that are impossible to eliminate. While we take all reasonable steps to minimize the risks associated with the activity, it is vitally important for our guests to understand what is required of them and to appreciate and assume the risks of participation. Each participant is required to sign an "Assumption of Risk" prior to departure. **Only parents or legal guardians can sign for minor children.** Please let us know ahead of time if there will be minors on your trip who will **NOT** be accompanied by a parent or legal guardian. A copy of our "Assumption of Risk" form is included for your review. To read our participation requirements in detail – [CLICK HERE](#) or you may call our office for a copy. Please don't hesitate to call or [email](#) if you have any questions or concerns.

How Strenuous is the Trip

Our John Day trips include [oar-assisted paddle rafts and inflatable kayaks](#). Oar rafts are only available on a limited number of trips. In an oar-assisted paddle raft, all participants are expected to assist with paddling. Paddling is required only occasionally and only moderately strenuous as there are very few rapids. Optional inflatable kayaks require a little more upper body strength and endurance (mostly to counter the wind). Camping involves sleeping on the ground (we provide pads) and negotiating rocky or uneven ground on hikes and around camp. The only lifting required is what you have packed in your bag. Days on the river can be long, and so preparing for extended exposure to the elements is vitally important.

Gratuities for Guides

If you have enjoyed your trip and feel that your guides have done an outstanding job, it is customary to thank them with a gratuity. A gratuity of between 15% and 20% of your trip fare is common from our guests. The amount is up to you but anything will be greatly appreciated by your guides. The guide staff typically shares gratuities. [Meet our Guides.](#)

Area Attractions-

[John Day Fossil Beds National Monument](#)

Composed of three separate units, the John Day Fossil Beds exposes brilliantly colored volcanic deposits ranging from 30 to 40 million years old and contains one of the world's greatest collections of early mammal specimens. Interpretive hikes will reveal plant and animal fossils from tropical rainforests to savanna life forms.

Rock hounding

Countless varieties of gemstones and fossils can be found in the immediate area, including Oregon's state rock, the Thunder Egg. Several private, dig-for-a-fee mines are located in and near [Fossil, OR](#), such as [Richardson's Rock Ranch](#); call 541-475-2680 for info (no calls after 5 pm).

[Kam Wah Chung & Co. Museum](#)

Owned by 19th century gold miner "Doc" Ing Hay, the museum previously housed a Chinese herbal clinic and opium room. Contains a wide variety of tools, furniture, business papers, canned goods, bootleg whiskey, religious objects, herbs and medicines of the era. In John Day, OR.

[Columbia River Gorge National Scenic Area](#)

Scenic vistas, a fantastically designed historic highway, windsurfing, deserts to rainforests, and one of the greatest concentrations of waterfalls on the continent combine to make this river corridor one of the most inspiring and diverse places in the West.

[View our Area Links Page](#) to find accommodations, more area attractions, maps and much more!

The John Day River

Born in the Blue Mountains of northeastern Oregon and flowing west then north to the Columbia River, the John Day River is distinguished as one of the longest undammed rivers in the United States. Over millions of years the river has carved a beautiful and twisting canyon through the hard basalts of central Oregon's high desert plateau, revealing geologic wonders and providing a quiet and out-of-the-way setting for those seeking to escape the crazy pace of everyday life. Home to Native Americans for thousands of years and later for pioneers arriving on the Oregon Trail, the John Day offers opportunities for exploring old homesteads and examining mysterious Indian rock art. Excellent bass fishing and ample opportunities for hiking also exist in a landscape that is still sparsely populated. With very few rapids, the John Day is the perfect river for those who believe that whitewater gets in the way of a perfectly good river trip. Go to our [John Day River Photo Gallery](#).

History

A wintertime residence for Tenino Indians, the John Day River Valley has produced artifacts from over 150 sites, and pictographs are common. Also resident in the nearby Deschutes River drainage to the West, the Tenino were master salmon fisherman, employing weirs, dams, funnel and hoop traps, baskets, nets hooks, harpoons and even poison. The Tenino were fortunate to live near what is today The Dalles on the Columbia River. The Dalles was at the crossroads of trade in early times and the tribe controlled a fair amount of trade in the form of buffalo robes and horses from the east, elk skins and beads from the south, goatskin, slaves and berries from the northwest and marine products from the west. Native American history lasts well into the 19th century with the marauding activities of the infamous Chief Paulina.

During early immigration a fort was established at The Dalles to protect wagon trains on the Oregon Trail. Lost wagon trains in the eastern Oregon desert were the source of many legends including the Blue Bucket Mine party who reportedly located and marked a promising mine location with a blue bucket. While the Blue Bucket Mine has never been found, miners begin flocking to central and eastern Oregon where gold was eventually discovered on a tributary of the John Day River. With the great influx of whites, The Dalles Military Road along the John Day as well as others was built to facilitate traffic. All of this activity attracted the unwanted attention of the Northern Paiute who began conducting raids to the north of their homelands. Many settlers and miners were killed until Chief Paulina and his band were ambushed at Trout Creek in 1867. Development and activity continued in the area, but dropped off sharply at the turn of the century, leaving the John Day to dispersed ranchers.

Geology

Our float traverses the uplifted and incised Blue Mountain Anticline. Some of the exposed core rocks are more than 250 million years old. Early on, Columbia River lava flows give way to the 30 million year old John Day Formation, famous for its beautifully preserved fossil leaves and mammal bones. An hour of combing small streambeds that drain out of the rocks in certain places is often rewarded with finds of fossilized teeth and bones from past inhabitants. A little further on brings us to the startling reds, tans and even deep green of the Clarno Formation. The Clarno Formation also produces a wide variety of plant and animal fossils.

Suggested Reading List for the John Day River

John Day River Recreation Guide, Bureau of Land Management, Prineville District. Call 541-416-6700 to order.

Roadside Geology of Oregon, David D. Alt & Donald W. Hyndman, Mountain Press Publishing, 1978.
Sagebrush Country – A Wildflower Sanctuary, Ronald J. Taylor, Mountain Press Publishing, 1992.

Section 1 I, the undersigned, as a participant on an Ouzel Holding, Co., Inc. (dba) Ouzel Outfitters (hereafter referred to as "Ouzel") trip, have been informed that Ouzel makes every reasonable effort to safeguard me, my family, and my (our) belongings. However, by reading and signing this document, I acknowledge and appreciate that during the river trip or tour and related activities in which I am participating with Ouzel and its agents, employees or associates, certain risks and dangers exist which are inherent in river running, associated activities and wilderness travel. I acknowledge and appreciate that these risks include but are not limited to loss or damage to personal property, personal injury or fatality to myself, my spouse, family members or friends. **Damage to or loss of property, personal injury or fatality may occur due to** the capsize of a raft, kayak or other water craft; collision of a raft, kayak or other water craft with a vehicle, bridge, other water craft, rock, log, tree, or other object in the river or on shore; falling into or from a raft, kayak or water craft, or falling while hiking or walking on shore on and off established trails and paths; water damage due to leaking bags or other containers; illness caused by waterborne parasites or insect or animal borne bacteria and viruses; exposure to temperature extremes or inclement weather; immersion in cold water and hypothermia (significant loss of body heat); prolonged submersion or entrapment in or under the water due to a rock, tree, water craft, loose equipment, river current or other object in the water; collision while swimming in swift or calm water with a rock, tree, water craft or other manmade or natural object in the water or on shore. Damage to or loss of property, personal injury or fatality may also occur due to vehicle accident while riding in vehicles operated by Ouzel, its agents, employee or associates. I also acknowledge and appreciate that delay of advanced medical care in the event of accident or illness in remote places without medical facilities, physicians or nurses is inherent in the activities in which I am participating with Ouzel. I further acknowledge that emergency electronic communication devices (satellite phones) are **NOT** carried on **Deschutes, McKenzie and North Umpqua River trips.**

In consideration of and as part of payment for the right to participate in Ouzel trips or tours and the services and meals arranged for me by Ouzel and its agents and associates, I certify that I have the necessary skills and ability to participate in this activity, and do voluntarily participate in this river trip and the related activities with knowledge of the dangers and risks involved, as stated above. By my signature below, I accept and assume responsibility for myself or a minor for whom I have legal guardianship, for injury, death and/or loss of or damage to personal property and expenses thereof as a result of my participation in this activity except to the extent such damage or injury may be due to the gross negligence of Ouzel. I hereby agree to assume all responsibility for myself, my property and those for whom I have legal custody and hereby release and discharge Ouzel and its officers, directors, stockholders, employees, representatives, sub contractors and agents from all claims, demands, and rights or causes of action for injuries or damages of any description which may occur as a result of my participation on this Ouzel trip. If I am signing this agreement on behalf of another person, I certify that all representations are true with respect to the participant and that I am the participant's legal guardian with full authority to bind that person to the terms of this agreement.

Section 2. Ouzel and/or its associates and employees act only as agents for the client in making arrangements for trips and/or travel services with common carriers or other outfitters and/or guide services, for vehicle shuttle services, and for carpools among various trip members, and accepts and assumes no liability or responsibility whatsoever for any damages, injuries, fatalities, losses, or delays due to any cause whatsoever, whether to person or property in connection with such services and/or arrangements. Ouzel shall not be held responsible for any act, omission, or event during the time participants are aboard airlines, trains, buses, vans, or other common carriers or private passenger cars which are not operated by Ouzel and each trip member hereby agrees to release Ouzel from any and all liability in connection therewith.

Participants are strongly advised to have personal medical insurance, along with baggage and camera insurance. It is understood that if emergency evacuation should become necessary, the expenses are the sole responsibility of the participant and not that of Ouzel. Ouzel is not responsible for the safety and security of client vehicles or personal property left in vehicles during the course of any Ouzel trip or related activity. Ouzel reserves the right to accept or decline service to any person.

Section 3. I hereby agree to permit Ouzel employees and other guests to take photographs and make film records of the trip without further recourse or compensation to me. I understand and agree that such photographs and/or film records may be used for commercial and/or promotional purposes.

I HAVE CAREFULLY READ ALL SECTIONS OF THIS DOCUMENT AND FULLY UNDERSTAND THE CONTENTS OF EACH. I AM AWARE THAT THIS AGREEMENT CONSTITUTES AN ASSUMPTION OF RISK AND CONTRACT BETWEEN OUZEL AND/OR ITS AFFILIATED ORGANIZATIONS AND MYSELF. I SIGN OF MY OWN FREE WILL ON MY BEHALF OR ON BEHALF OF PARTICIPATING MINORS FOR WHICH I HAVE LEGAL CUSTODY.

NAME OF PARTICIPANT _____ D.O.B. _____ TRIP DATE _____

SIGNATURE _____ DATE _____

Minor participants should sign here, but parent or legal guardian must sign below.

NAME OF LEGAL GUARDIAN SIGNING FOR MINOR LISTED ABOVE _____

SIGNATURE OF GUARDIAN _____ DATE _____