

Tributary Whitewater Tours LLC

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BURNT RANCH GORGE (on the Trinity River)

Class 5, 10-18 miles, 1-2 days, late May to mid-July
Location: Off Hwy. 299, between Redding and Eureka

Burnt Ranch Gorge is a classic pool and drop river and one of the few Class 5 rivers available in the summer months. The action on Burnt Ranch is swift and intense, with the Trinity River dropping 200 feet in two miles and five Class 4-4+ rapids in the first 2.5 miles. Rapids like China Slide, Pearly Gates, Tight Squeeze and Jaws have 8'-10' drops and chutes just barely wide enough for the raft to slip through. Then two Class 5 rapids (Upper Burnt Ranch and Middle Burnt Ranch Falls) must be negotiated before any escape is possible.

Just after Middle Burnt Ranch Falls A steep trail heads up the canyon leading to Burnt Ranch Campground and the highway. On some 2 days trips, the gear is left at rivers edge and you hike out to camp. Right after this trail, the most difficult rapids in the canyon are encountered, and the Class 5 rapids of Lower Burnt Ranch Falls, Hennessy Falls, Origami, Table Rock and Gray's Fall await. The few miles of Class 2 following, allow a welcome chance to swim the rapids and relax before the take-out at Hawkins Bar.

The Trinity River circles the southern boundary of the Salmon-Trinity Alps, and suddenly changes from its more mellow Class 2-3 whitewater, as the river cuts through this remote, formidable, sheer gorge. The riverbed is nearly blocked by a maze of boulders and there are countless falls, holes and waves to negotiate. Only paddle boats are used because of the narrow and intricate passages and all participants must be experienced, physically fit and competent swimmers. Paddlers are required to show their abilities to handle the pace, and the rafting trip starts a few miles upstream of Burnt Ranch Gorge where a Class 5 paddlers test is conducted primarily in the river. At a minimum, participants must be able to swim under the raft from one side to the other, climb back in the boat unassisted and swim across a swift current. Once in Burnt Ranch Gorge, the guides and clients will scout all the major rapids so rugged footwear is required. Soft-soled wet-suit booties and water socks are inadequate.

The first raft descent was accomplished in 1982 and prior to this, the gorge was considered unrunnable. The introduction of the more maneuverable self-bailing raft, paved the way for commercial trips down such challenging whitewater.

For suitably qualified paddlers (previous Class 5 experience usually required), the full run from Cedar Flat to Hawkins Bar is possible in 1 day and on 2-day trips the Gorge may be run twice.

Airport pick-up can be arranged from Redding (frequent flights with United), or from Weaverville (private or charter flights).

Distances/Times for Travel: ¼ hr E. of Willow Creek (12.5 miles) ¾ hr W. of Weaverville (34 miles), 1 ¾ hrs W. of Redding (77 miles), 1 ¼ hrs E. of Eureka (56 miles), 5 hrs N. of Sacramento (243 miles), 6 hrs N. of San Francisco (298 miles), 6 hrs NW of Reno (277 miles).

Safely guiding California rafting trips for more than 25 years
Check out our web site at www.whitewatertours.com