

MIDDLE FORK AMERICAN RIVER

Class: 3-4, 17, 23 or 25 mile trips in 1-3 days, May-September, Elevation: 1100 ft
Location: Meeting in Auburn, California. Off I-80, between Sacramento and Truckee

The Middle Fork American River is one of the most reliable Class 4, all summer California whitewater rafting trips. It is a suitable raft trip for the active, fit and adventurous first-timer or a great choice for those seeking a step-up from the more crowded South Fork American River. It is a beautiful wilderness river rafting trip that is eligible for Federal Wild & Scenic status. From its headwaters in the Granite Chief Wilderness, it flows through steep, rugged and forested canyons within the Tahoe National Forest and into the Auburn State Recreation Area. This is one of our guides favorite California white water rafting runs (best for 2-3 days!), as they appreciate escaping into this pristine road-less area. This Middle Fork American Class 4 rafting adventure is close to civilization, yet it is possible to feel that you are the only people on the river.

The trip begins with an early rendezvous in Auburn after breakfast. If you are lucky enough to be scheduled for one of our multi-day wilderness camp-outs, you will transfer your overnight gear into waterproof bags. Usually, your vehicle is left at the meeting location, but sometimes you will follow our vehicles and your car will be left at the top of the take-out road (Drivers Flat). We then continue through Foresthill to the put-in location just below Oxbow Reservoir and the guides will ensure that you are correctly equipped with life jackets, helmets and a safety talk. You will be told about what you may expect to happen on the river and also any necessary environmental protection procedures.

The infamous "Tunnel Chute" is one of the first big rapids encountered, but clients have the option of walking around this fierce looking cataract. There are numerous Class 3-4 rapids in the first 6 miles, such as Last Chance, Submarine Hole and Kanaka. For the next 7 miles, the pace is mellower, allowing time to appreciate the solitude and beauty of the lush, forested canyon. You may get a glimpse of some wild-life and spot trout swimming in the incredibly clean & clear Sierra mountain water (originating from the snow pack on the back side of Squaw Valley & Alpine Meadows). We stop for lunch and possible side-hikes and plenty of excitement lies ahead.

The Ruck-a-Chucky rapids start just below the entrance of Canyon Creek (a possible lunch spot). A 20' drop through a sieve of huge boulders makes the middle of these 3 rapids a mandatory portage, but the Class 4 drops of Upper & Lower Ruck-a-Chucky are usually raftable. A 2 mile gorge laced with Class 3-4 rapids such as Parallel Parking and Catapult follow.

On a 1 day trip, our rafting finishes after 17 miles, at the old Greenwood Bridge site. The bridge was demolished in the 1954 floods by a 50' wall of water that surged down the canyon after the old Hell Hole Reservoir failed. Cold beverages are available at the take-out, and photographers will have slides available showing numerous shots of your raft as it maneuvers the rapids. You should be on the road home by 5:00 pm.

On 2-3 day trips, you get the chance to enjoy the beauty of this river canyon in a more leisurely way. Many outfitters' only offer this run in combination with the South Fork American, due to the logistics of offering a wilderness camp-out. The only option on the Middle Fork American River is to take all the gear down the river by raft and set-up camp, so facilities are very basic. On the plus side, we have the choice of some incredible and truly get-away-from-it-all camps spots, and great side-hikes. Our favorite spots afford the luxury of smooth, sculptured plunge pools and cascading waterfalls. On these multi-day trips, there is time to swim, play, hike, fish (need a license!) or simply relax in seclusion.



A unique offering from Tributary - we may be one of the only companies that offers 3-day trips or the option of running the little traveled section of river downstream from the Greenwood Bridge take-out. Though only Class 2 rapids are found in the 7 miles to Mammoth Bar, there is a wonderful hike up the American Canyon to some incredible waterfalls and cool and shady pools. You have to know the river to find the spot and this hidden treasure is particularly welcome in the hot summer months. We usually share this part of the river with just a few kayaks and the resident wildlife. The last 2 miles from Mammoth Bar to the confluence of the North Fork American, are only suitable for very adventurous & experienced paddlers who are capable of tackling the Class 5 Murderers Bar rapid.

Our meals, though they cannot be officially claimed as gourmet, always consist of plentiful, fresh and wholesome ingredients.

Lunch usually consists of a deli-style spread with a selection of breads, meats, cheeses, tomatoes, avocados, lettuce, sprouts, chips and salsa, fresh fruit, cookies and vegetables with dip. Other lunches offered may be pita bread with chicken or shrimp salad or river burritos.

Dinners will start with appetizers of vegetables, dip, cheese and crackers. The main entrée may be marinated tri-tip steak or barbequed chicken, Dutch-Oven lasagna or any alternatives that may be requested in advance of the trip. We also serve plentiful side dishes of mixed salad, fresh vegetables, baked potatoes and garlic bread. Leave room for our Dutch oven baked or other delectable desserts. A moderate amount of wine & beer is available and also coffee, tea & soda.

Breakfast will be eggs and hash-brown potatoes or pancakes served with sausage or bacon. You can also feast on fresh fruit, pastries, muffins, orange juice, milk, tea and coffee.

The Auburn Dam: This project has been threatening this canyon for more than 20 years; otherwise it would have rightfully received its wild & scenic status. Though the growth of our foothill communities is un-avoidable, there is obviously a demand for these recreational areas to remain unspoiled for our future generations and us. We can provide further information and we encourage you to become members of Friends of the River or Protect American River Canyons so we all may continue to enjoy its beauty.



Distances/Times for travel:

- ¾ hr E. of Sacramento (36 miles),
- 1 ½ hrs N of Stockton (82 miles)
- 1 ¾ hrs SW of Reno (95 miles),
- 1 ¾ hrs SE of Chico (86 miles),
- 2 hrs W of South Lake Tahoe (87 miles)
- 2 ¼ hrs NE of San Francisco (120 miles)
- 2 ½ hrs NE of San Jose (149 miles),
- 3 ¼ hrs SE of Redding (159 miles)

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