

Chapter 3

River Program Trips

Phases of an ETC River Trip

A. Trip Preparation:

The ETC Program Staff (River Program Manager & seasonal Program Associate) is responsible for the majority of pre-trip preparation. The Program Manager will book a trip with the agency or individual, a process that includes selecting a specific trip type and length, deciding on a date, and initially discussing the special needs of the group or individual. ETC offers trips on a sliding scale fee for service depending on the type of group. If this price still makes the trip out of the financial means of the individual or agency, they may apply for an additional scholarship that is evaluated and awarded by the ETC Program Staff.

Once a trip is booked it is posted on the online schedule available on the ETC Guide Website. The number of Guides and Assistant Guides varies greatly between trips and depends on the group size and the nature of special needs. Volunteers have access to this schedule and sign up for trips by contacting the River Program Manager.

One week prior to the trip, the Program Manager or Program Associate will contact the agency leader to discuss the upcoming trip. This conversation is partly logistical, confirming the number of participants, assessing the need for adaptations to accommodate special needs, and discussing food and travel details. This call is also an opportunity to discuss the groups' goals and intentions for the trip and begin developing a trip itinerary to accomplish them. From this information the Program Manager or Program Associate will create a Trip Packet for the Trip Leader. Before the trip, the Program Manager or Program Associate will conduct a briefing with the Trip Leader to discuss trip logistics, the groups' goals, and an overall trip itinerary. After reviewing the trip packet and a briefing with Program Staff, the Trip Leader may contact the Group Staff Member to discuss the trip more or gather additional information.

One week prior to the trip River Program Staff will send a Guide Confirmation Email to share details with all the Guides and Assistant Guides on the trip. This email provides information on the group, overall trip flow, the guide meeting time and approximate end time. This email chain is a valuable resource to arrange carpools to the ETC River Camp with fellow Guides.

B. Guide Meeting

Guides are to arrive at camp 1½-2 hours prior to the groups' arrival, typically between 8:00AM and 9:00AM (exact time is confirmed in Guide confirmation). Trips begin with a Guide Meeting, which is an opportunity for Guides to check-in about how they are doing, meet their fellow Guides, assign Guide roles and responsibilities, and discuss the group and their specific goals/intentions for the trip. Guide meetings are an integral part of executing a high quality and safe experience for participants. As a result, it is important that all Guides arrive on time and prepared for their day on the river (River Ready). Guide meetings typically last about 15-30 minutes.

C. Equipment Preparation

The remaining time between the end of the Guide Meeting and group's arrival is spent preparing the equipment for the trip and attending to other logistical needs. During this time, rafts are pulled from the containers and inflated or taken from one of the platforms in camp. Additional boating related equipment is readied and rigged into the rafts. During this time, Guides will then prepare their individual raft as needed, including topping it off and rigging any equipment and/or frames. This time also allows Guides the opportunity to complete any tasks required of their specific Guide Role and responsibilities assigned during the Guide meeting. Using this time effectively is important as it enables Guides to focus on the group when they arrive.

D. Group Arrival and Expectation Setting

The first interaction the Guides have with a group is important for setting participants' expectations and the tone for the trip. A friendly and well-prepared Guide team builds trust, displays professionalism, and may ease potential apprehensions. Conversely, a flustered and disengaged Guide team may make participants uncomfortable and anxious during their time on the water with ETC.

Aim to have all the Guides ready to greet the group at the scheduled arrival time. When the group arrives there is the potential for things to get disorganized and chaotic as folks unload, need to use the restroom, and the drivers park their vehicles. Announce to the group where the restroom is and where in camp the group will be meeting. During this time, Guides will likely spend time in a circle waiting for the entire group to assemble. This is a great time for a quick game or icebreaker. Remember, starting the trip on a fun note sets high expectations and puts people at ease.

E. Group Preparation

Once the group is assembled in a circle, the Guide team will share the following information with participants:

- **Trip Introduction:** Typically the Trip Leader will welcome the group, provide a trip overview, and share a brief overview of ETC.
- **Name Game:** A Guide will lead a name a name game, which is a valuable opportunity for the Guides and participants to meet one another.
- **Camp Orientation:** One Guide will orient the group to camp, describing the different areas and providing ground rules.
- **River Ready:** One Guide will describe to participants how to prepare for rafting, specifically addressing proper clothing.

Though it will also be addressed later in the Safety Talk, this is a very important time to remind participants to put on sunscreen and drink water regularly.

If the participant vehicles will be used for shuttle, during the time following the Opening Circle, the Guide assigned to shuttle will coordinate travel logistics.

The time between the Opening Circle and getting on the river can be used for logistical tasks including: unloading food from the participants' vehicles and moving it into the pantry, setting up the group camping area, packing lunch, and ensuring all participants have the necessary clothing/personal items for rafting. However, these tasks often do not require the entire group or guide team. This is a great time to play games or lead activities that help accomplish the groups' goals/intentions (See Chapter 6 for suggested activities).

Depending on the groups' arrival time, any special needs, the boat plan, and group size, the group will either eat lunch at the ETC River Camp before rafting The Gorge or will eat lunch on a beach during their trip down the river. If the group is eating in camp, they will typically eat in the main kitchen before the Safety Talk. During the Safety Talk, the guides that are not actively participating will help clean up lunch.

If the group is eating lunch on the river, the Guides will help the group pack the lunch into coolers and load it on the rafts. The Safety Talk will take place in camp, then the group will put in and raft down to the pre-determined lunch spot.

The Safety Talk is critical for ensuring participants are prepared with the knowledge necessary to be safe on the river. One Guide will lead the Safety Talk. It is important that all Guides be present (if not cleaning up from lunch) to answer questions and support the group. Here is the general flow for the Safety Talk:

- Collect Valuables to be stored in the River Camp office (one Guide will take care of this during the Safety Talk)
- Give Talk
- Assign Boat Groups (using pre-assigned list or random assignment)
- Fit PFDs and Helmets
- Distribute Paddles
- Load Dry Bags (either personal gear or with splash jackets and warmies from ETC)

Once the Safety Talk is complete and group prepared, the Guides will lead the participants to the boat and give their crew a Boat & Paddle Talk to orient them to the raft and teach them how to paddle. Each Guide does this differently, though typically part of this talk is done at the shore and part is done in the large pond below the ETC put in so groups can adequately practice.

F. On-Water Management

Safety on the water is the primary responsibility of every Guide and Trip Leader. It is critical that every Guide feel confident in their skills to guide a raft on the stretch of river at the current water flow with the participants assigned to his or her boat. Additionally, each Guide must have training in Swiftwater Rescue.

Once each Guide has completed a Boat & Paddle Talk with his or her crew, the pod will pull out of the eddy (typically directed by the Trip Leader) and proceed down river. Pod awareness is critical for the safety of any raft trip. Guide should be aware of boat order (discussed at the morning Guide Meeting) and maintain this throughout the day.

Additionally, Guides should always be aware of the boat ahead and behind them, regularly looking over their shoulder to check-in with other Guides. When entering rapids, it is imperative that the group be together and prepared, such that if there were an incident or a swimmer the Guides would be able to support one another.

Communication on the water is critical. River signals and whistles are a valuable tool for communicating in loud environments where voices typically do not carry well (See Page 68 for more information on communication). During the Guide Meeting, Guides are advised to review river and whistle signals to ensure everyone is in agreement. While on the water, avoid yelling to communicate unless safety depends upon it. Yelling puts groups on edge and may give them the feeling that something is unsafe.

Depending on time, trips may stop once or twice during the river trip to use the bathroom, eat snacks, or have lunch. Typically these stops are planned at the Guide Meeting, though if a Guide has a need to stop during the trip they should communicate this to their fellow Guides and the Trip Leader. When stopping, it is important to remind participants of the following:

- General plan for stop
- Potential on-land safety considerations (ex. poison oak)
- Guidelines for swimming

G. Take Out

When arriving at Salmon Falls Commercial Take Out, it is important to pre-plan who will get the gear vehicle from the parking lot and back it into the loading area (if the trip is not assigned a shuttle driver). When the equipment vehicle is ready for loading, instruct one or two participants to carry the soft gear and paddles to the vehicle. The rest of the group will then help carry the raft to the trailer and load it into place. Then participants should take off their PFDs and helmets and be led to their vehicles or bus. For safety and efficiency, it is critical that participants do not wait in the loading area. Some groups, either due to special need, body size, or maturity will not be able to help with loading equipment. In this instance, simply have the group take off their PFDs and helmets at the back of the equipment vehicle and proceed to the parking lot.

Below are some additional ground rules/suggestions for using Salmon Falls Commercial Take Out:

- Group rafts together at the waters edge to allow other companies space to land and unload their passengers
- Do not put equipment in the dirt. Gear should be moved from the boat to the back of the equipment vehicle or trailer.
- Participants should use the stairs (unless they have a special need) to access the parking lot rather than walking up the ramp.
- One person, typically the Trip Leader, should always stay with the group.

H. Off-Water Management

Some of the best times to connect with participants are during the time the group is off the water, either at lunch or at camp during an overnight. The Trip Leader and Guides should work with the Agency Group Leader to plan activities that are stimulating and fun and will help accomplish the groups' goals and intentions. While some groups will simply want to "hang out," it is often best to organize some activities to encourage participants to get the most out of their ETC trip and avoid potential behavioral issues that typically arise with lack of structure.

Behavioral management is the responsibility of the group leader. As a Guide, it can be important to remind participants if they are doing something inappropriate or against the rules. Generally, larger behavioral issues should be discussed with the Agency Group Leader and he or she should be responsible for addressing it with the participant. ETC leaves the bulk of behavior management to the Agency Group Leader because the group is often accustomed to a certain style of leadership and authority. Additionally, the agency leader is often in a better place to manage problematic behaviors based on his or her more extended relationship with the participants.

Trips are often a great time for Guides to re-connect with one another and build friendships. This is highly encouraged, though be aware of isolating the Guide team from the participants. At meals and during other activities make sure to intersperse participants with Guides to allow for conversation and an opportunity to connect. Also, while Guides are allowed to have cell phones and technology on trips and at the ETC River Camp, Guides should only use them only when it is absolutely necessary and when they are away from the group.

I. Two Day Trips

Some trips include a second day of rafting on the Chili Bar (Upper) section. In this case the majority of the equipment will remain loaded in the vehicle from the trip on The Gorge, ready to drive to the put in on the morning of the second day. The lunch cooler (if used on the first day), water bottles, and snack bags should be removed and replenished. The electric pump and extension cords or additional hand pumps should be loaded in the equipment truck in preparation for rigging at the put-in.

On the morning of the second day, the group will have breakfast in camp then prepare to drive to the put-in. Typically, the equipment vehicle and several guides will leave 30 minutes to one hour prior to the groups' departure to allow time to rig the boats at put in. When the guide team arrives at the put in they will select one of the small beaches and begin inflating boats (if needed) and rigging. Because space is limited at the put-in, it is critical the trip only uses what is necessary and that vehicles do not block the access road.

When the group arrives participants should unload at the top of the stairs and participant vehicles (if not using a bus) driven to the upper parking lot. Unless participants have special needs, participant vehicles should not be driven into the loading area. One of the Guides will then provide a refresher Safety Talk, reviewing much of the content covered in the previous day. Participants will then get outfitted with a PFD, helmet, and paddle and each Guide will

lead his or her crew in a refresher Boat & Paddle Talk. Once all rafts are prepared, the pod will begin their trip downstream.

Trips on the Chili Bar section typically stop at Marshall Gold Discovery State Park for lunch, before boating the remaining section back to the River Camp for Take Out. The first section of the Chili Bar stretch includes fun Class III rapids. The stretch after lunch has Class I and II rapids, so this is a great stretch to play games with the boat crew and allow participants the opportunity to guide the raft in flat water, if time allows.

Upon arriving at ETC all the equipment will be brought to the containers and boats stored on the platforms. Typically, participants will help with this process unless they have special needs.

J. Trip Clean Up

At the end of a trip it is the responsibility of all Guides to ensure equipment is properly cleaned and returned to its proper location.

K. Trip Closing

All ETC trips end with a closing circle: a valuable time for participants and Guides to connect one last time and reflect on their recent ETC adventure. A closing circle begins with a Guide (usually the Trip Leader) reflecting on the trip and thanking the participants for embracing the experience and stepping beyond their comfort zone. Then a Guide (again, usually the Trip Leader) will ask participants to share their “Kodak Moment.” A Kodak Moment is one thing that a person will remember from this trip, which can be something beautiful they saw, a challenge they overcame, something they might share with someone who was not along on this trip, or anything else that comes to mind. One person is asked to volunteer to start and then the group goes around the circle sharing their moments.

The Trip Leader should then remind participants that they are now a part of the ETC community and are encouraged to come back on individuals trips in all three programs. Additionally, for youth groups, it is important to share about the Youth LEAD Program and encourage staff leaders and participants to be in touch with the ETC Office if they are interested in learning more. Brochures for ETC, upcoming individuals trips, and the Youth LEAD Program as well as business cards for the River Program Manager are kept in the River Camp office.

Lastly, thank the participants again for coming along on the ETC trip. Some Guides like to take this opportunity for one last activity, like a Jelly Roll Squeeze or group “Pat on the Back.” Ensure the Group has all of their belongings and send them on their way.

L. End of Trip Guide Meeting

Once participants have left and all the equipment has been cleaned and re-stored, the trip closes with a final Guide meeting. This meeting is very important for a number of reasons:

- Allows Guides to reflect on what they did well and what they could improve upon
- Provides important information for risk management purposes
- Provides important information on equipment needs or repairs
- Provides the River Program Manager insight into the trip

The Trip Leader will use the ETC Guide Trip Evaluation/Report form to guide this meeting and record what was discussed in as great of detail as possible. This form should be packaged with the Health and Liability Forms in the container and turned into the River Camp office.

M. Post Trip

Following a trip, the River Program Manager will follow up with the Trip Leader to discuss the trip went including what went well, what could have gone better, and any topics important for risk management. Next, the River Program Manager or Program Associate will contact the Agency Group Leader to discuss their experience and create a plan for their next ETC trip. Lastly, Agency Group Leaders are sent an online survey to allow them to give feedback on the trip as well as a request for a letter of support that will later be used for fundraising purposes.

South Fork American River Mile By Mile

0 Put-In: Chili Bar River Access. Fees charged.

0.6 Meatgrinder Class III+

1.3 Racehorse Bend Class III

1.5 Maya Class II-III.

2.0 African Queen Rapid. Class II.

3.1 Triple Threat Rapid Class III.

Miner's Creek, on river right, is a recommended lunch stop with rest room facilities.

4.4 Indian Creek enters on river left. Beginning of Quiet zone.

5.2 Troublemaker Rapid. Class III+

5.2 American River Resort River Access and Campground. Fees charged.

5.5 Coloma Resort River Access and Campground. Fees charged.

5.6 Coloma Bridge. Built in 1917.

5.7 Sutter's Mill site.

6.0 Marshall Gold Discovery State Historic Park - North Beach River Access Area. Fees charged. Picnic and rest room facilities. Take-outs are prohibited.

7.1 Old Scary Class II.

7.4 Highway 49 Bridge River Access. Parking under bridge is prohibited.

8.0 Henningsen-Lotus County Park River Access (funded by the Dept. of Boating and Waterways). Fees charged. Upstream and downstream from this park are small parcels of BLM public lands.

9.0 Camp Lotus River Access and Campground. Fees charged.

9.1 Barking Dog Class II.

10ish- ETC River Camp

10.6 Current Divider Class II+.

11.2 Highway Class II.

11.5 Greenwood Creek on river right. End of the Quiet Zone.

12.0 Cable Corner Class II.

12.2 BLM public land on river right is a recommended lunch/camping area with rest room facilities.

12.8 There are several lunch/camping sites (no facilities on BLM public lands between Hastings Creek and mile 13.4.)

- 15.8 Fowler's Rock Beginning of the Gorge. Class III-
- 16.2 Upper Haystack Canyon Class III
- 16.9 Satan's Cesspool Class III+
- 17.0 Deadman's Drop or Son of Satan's Class II+
- 17.6 Lower Haystack Canyon Class II+
- 17.7 BLM land to mile 18.1
- 18.1 Weber Creek enters on river left
- 18.2 Bouncing Rock Class II+
- 18.6 Hospital Bar Class III
- 18.7 Recovery Room Class II+
- 19.4 Surprise Rapid. Class III
- 20.5 Salmon Falls Bridge take-out on the right bank upstream of the bridge.

Emergency Exits from the South Fork American River

Chili Bar (Upper) Section

1. Meatgrinder Foot Trail: from the bottom of Meatgrinder, this trail runs on river RIGHT all the way back to Chili-bar put-in.
2. Red Shack Trail: at the bottom of Racehorse Bend Rapid, at the eddy on river LEFT, there is a trail/4WD road that leads up to HWY 49.
3. Serenity Lane: After Triple Threat, and the short gorge that follows, exit river RIGHT when you see the first private property and houses, just above “Swimmer’s Rapid”
4. After “Swimmer’s Rapid” at the start of the Quiet Zone, there is a road and houses on river Left, Johnson Ranch Road.

The section above Trouble Maker rapid and Camp Lotus has easy access to public roads and private property, both which may be used in the event of an incident needing egress.

Gorge (Lower) Section (After Camp Lotus)

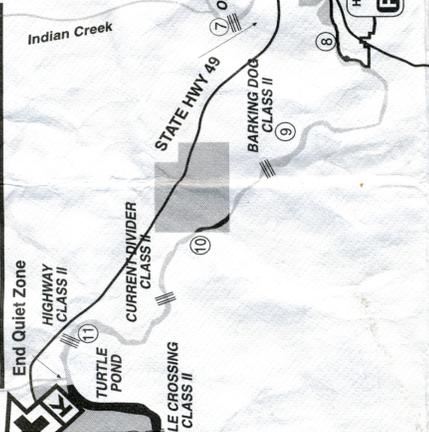
1. Greenwood Creek: is a trail on river RIGHT, just below Swimmer’s Rapid and above Turtle Pond, $\frac{3}{4}$ mile above the BLM lunch Spot. It leads to HWY 49
2. Bacci Ranch: On river RIGHT, $\frac{1}{2}$ mile after Gorilla Rock, is a road that goes through the rafting lunch sites, leading to HWY 49
3. Satan’s: on river RIGHT, just above Satan’s Cesspool, is Equestrian Way, leading to Salmon Falls Road. The road also starts after Son of Satan’s.
4. Satan’s: on river LEFT, below Son of Satan’s, Luneman Road leads up towards Lotus.
5. Kanaka Valley Road: on river LEFT, in the eddy above Bouncing Rock, there is a 4WD road that leads out towards Kanaka Valley Road. (Webber Creek)
6. Salmon Falls Parking Area: there is a pay phone in the commercial takeout parking lot

South Fork American Emergency Egress

- Emergency Egress
- Access Location
- River Mile from Chili Bar
- River Right
- River Left
- Back Board Location



ACCESS TO:
R
K Greenwood Creek
 Hwy 49
 Downstream side of
 Greenwood Creek
 Trail to Hwy 49



ACCESS TO:
R
A Serenity Lane
 A private road from eddy at
 top of Swimmer's Rapid

ACCESS TO:
L
A Johnson Ranch Rd
 (Kidder Corner)
 At start of Quiet Zone, road
 approaches river downstream
 from first house near river or .5
 miles to American River Resort
 above Trouble Maker Rapid

ACCESS TO:
R
A Meatgrinder
 Foot Trail
 From bottom of
 Meatgrinder Rapid
 back up to Chili Bar

ACCESS TO:
L
E Red Shack
 Hwy 49
 From large eddy below
 Racehorse Bend Rapid.
 4WD road with steep ascent

PLEASE be
 respectful of
 rights and
 privacy of
 private
 elders who
 provide
 emergency
 access thru
 their land.