Arkansas River Tips

- Launch windows for outfitters in most sections are from 8:30 am – 3:30 pm with the heaviest use between 10:00 am and 2:00 pm. Beat the crowds! Try launching before or after these times.
- In the Numbers section from Granite to Railroad Bridge, all commercial trips must launch before 11:00 am at Granite and before 2:00 pm at the Numbers.
- In the Royal Gorge all commercial trips must launch between 8:30 am and 4:00 pm.
- If you are boating through Browns Canyon, we suggest launching from the Ruby Mountain Recreation Site. No commercial launches allowed at flows above 700 cfs at Wellsville.
- Float fishing and whitewater boating can co-exist. Launch early or late to avoid crowds and consider utilizing less traveled sections of river.
- Pull in behind the last boat. Commercial river trips are run in 10 boat maximum groups.
- Private boats do not have launch windows.

Have a great time on the Arkansas!

Arkansas Headwaters Recreation Area
307 W. Sackett Avenue  •  Salida, CO 81201
(719) 539-7289  •  E-mail: ahra@state.co.us
cpw.state.co.us

For current information on all of your Colorado State Parks visit us online at www.cpw.state.co.us
Visit Bureau of Land Management at www.blm.gov

River Safety

- The river is powerful and always changing. Be familiar with current conditions.
- Know the section of river you are boating.
- Your skills and experience must equal the river and its conditions.
- Don’t be bashful – if you want to scout a rapid, scout a rapid if possible.
- Know and be aware of river “signs” – both natural and man-made: holes, wrap rocks, undercuts, rock sieves, horizon lines across the river, low head dams as well as significant rapids and “strainers” (trees in the river).
- Watch your surroundings, this includes the weather.
- Be aware of your limitations and those of your fellow boaters and of your equipment.
- Always consider the consequences – an accidental swim is always a possibility.
- Boating alone is not recommended. Two or more boats are safer.
- You and everyone in your party should know first aid and CPR. What if you get hurt?
- Be prepared for self-rescue and the rescue of others should an accident occur. It is up to you and everyone in your boat to be able to help each other.
- If you are involved in an accident, please report it to:

Safety Gear

- Wear a properly-sized personal flotation device (PFD) designed for whitewater river use.
- Helmets are a must for all canoeists, kayakers and river boarders. They are recommended for rafters.
- Equip your kayak with broach loops in addition to existing grab loops.
- Always use good, quality equipment. Carry a first aid and patch kit, an extra PFD, a spare oar or paddle, a pump, a bailing device and bow-stern line. Have rescue gear: rescue ropes/throw lines, a knife, carabiners and a whistle.
- Dress for a possible cold water swim and changing weather. Wear pile or fleece (no cotton). Protect your feet with sturdy footwear that won’t come off in the river. Carry extra clothing, food and water.
- Bring a wetsuit or drysuit – and wear it when conditions merit. Hypothermia is a risk any time of the year while boating on the river.

Colorado Law Requires

- All occupants of inner tubes, air mattresses and similar devices to wear a U.S. Coast Guard approved type I, III or V PFD.
- All persons under the age of 13 swimming in the Arkansas River within the AHRA must wear a U.S. Coast Guard approved type I, III or V PFD.
- All boats must be labeled with the owners name and address. In addition please add your phone number.

Please Report all Accidents to:
Arkansas Headwaters Recreation Area
(719) 539-7289  ahra@state.co.us
307 West Sackett Avenue, Salida, CO 81201

In case of emergency, call 911
River Ethics

- The river draws many different kinds of people. They are enjoying what they are doing as much as you are enjoying what you’re doing. Be respectful of others.
- At low flows, boaters should alert anglers to their presence in a quiet and courteous manner. If possible avoid floating through the water being fished by an angler.
- Please keep noise to a respectable level – for wildlife, nearby homeowners and others enjoying the river.
- The river passes through areas of private property including railroad tracks and right-of-ways. Don’t trespass! Be considerate of the river’s neighbors!
- Keep a safe distance between your boat and others when approaching rapids.
- You can help minimize the damage rafts and feet do to the shoreline by stopping only at well used sites or rocky areas.
- Trash? Bring it out with you. Someone else left it? Bring it out too!
- The use of fire pans and human waste containers is required when camping in undeveloped areas along the river.
- The put-in and take-out sites are often busy places. Please launch and load your boat as quickly as possible. Most boat ramps have a 15 minute load and unload limit. Separate rigging and deflating areas are available at many boat ramps.

Following the River Ethics ensures we can all have an enjoyable time!

Watch for These Signs...

Respect Private Property and Railroad Right-of-Way

PLEASE DO NOT TRESPASS

Rating the Rapids

I  Moving water, riffles, small waves
II  Easy rapids, waves, clear channels
III  Large waves, obstacles, narrow passages
IV  Long rapids, unavoidable waves, many obstacles
V  Violent rapids, extremely difficult, unseen hazards
VI  Unpredictable, dangerous, nearly impossible to run

*River conditions and ratings change with flow levels. Whitewater boating has risks at all ratings and levels.
Universal River Signals

Help! Emergency
Wave the paddle in a circular motion and/or give three long blasts on a whistle.

Go This Way
Use paddle to point toward direction of travel.

Are You Okay?
Tap the top of your head three times and point to the person whom you are questioning. If they tap their head three times they are okay. Otherwise assistance is needed.

Stop
Hold paddle horizontally overhead.

All Clear
Hold paddle vertical and stationary.

Water Talk at 303-831-7135, is a computerized phone service maintained by the Colorado Division of Water Resources. It provides recent flows in cfs for most rivers across Colorado. Users must listen to all phone prompts. Press: 2 to access the Arkansas River in Division II. Then: Granite Gage is 65. Numbers (Below Granite) Gage is 59.4. Browns Canyon (Near Nathrop) Gage is 59.2. Salida Gage is 65.1. Wellington Gage is 65.4. Parkdale Gage is 65.1. Cañon City Gage is 65.1. Portland Gage is 65.4. Find online flows at http://cpw.state.co.us/parks/arkansasheadwaters/riversafetyandflows/riverlevel/

Lake Fork ~ Granite
Total length of section is 14.4 miles

Granite ~ Buena Vista
Total length of section is 17.9 miles

Buena Vista ~ Stone Bridge
Total length of section is 19.9 miles

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Arkansas Headwaters Recreation Area has the following standing advisements regarding high flows:

### Pine Creek Rapid
- It is recommended that Pine Creek Rapid (within Section 1B) not be run at flows over 1250 cfs at the Numbers/Below Granite Gage.
- Bridge hazards exist at mile 3.7. Portage may be necessary at some flows.
- Bridge hazard exist at mile 7.2. Portage may be necessary at some flows.
- Railroad bridge abutments at mile 12 may be a hazard at some flows.
- The primary use of this section is fishing. Boaters please respect anglers and avoid crossing fishing lines.

### The Numbers
- It is recommended that the Numbers (Section 1C) not be run at flows over 2400 cfs at the Numbers/Below Granite Gage.

### Royal Gorge
- It is recommended that the Royal Gorge (Section 5) not be run at flows over 3200 cfs at the Parkdale Gage.

### Important Safety Information
- **Lake Fork ~ Granite**
  - Flows for this section are measured at the Below Granite Gage. Flows may be significantly lower above the confluences of Clear Creek and Lake Creek.
  - Bridge hazards exist at mile 3.7. Portage may be necessary at some flows.
  - Bridge hazard exist at mile 7.2. Portage may be necessary at some flows.
  - Railroad bridge abutments at mile 12 may be a hazard at some flows.
  - The primary use of this section is fishing. Boaters please respect anglers and avoid crossing fishing lines.

- **Pine Creek Rapid**
  - It is recommended that Pine Creek not be run above 1250 cfs and that the Numbers not be run above 2400 cfs at the Below Granite Gage. Self-bailing rafts and wetsuits are recommended above 900 cfs.
  - Helmets are always recommended!
  - Frog Rock Rapid has a significant entrapment hazard on the river right side, especially at flows below 1000 cfs. Portage is recommended when the left channel is impassable.

- **The Numbers**
  - It is recommended that the Numbers (Section 1C) not be run at flows over 2400 cfs at the Numbers/Below Granite Gage.

- **Royal Gorge**
  - It is recommended that the Royal Gorge (Section 5) not be run at flows over 3200 cfs at the Parkdale Gage.

### Stone Bridge ~ Rincon
- Shavano Fish Hatchery Dam exists at mile 59. Scout and run boat chute on river left.
- The Salida Whitewater Park begins at mile 61.5. Expect to encounter hanging slalom gates and congestion around the play hole at the Salida Boat ramp.

### Rincon ~ Pinnacle Rock
- The primary use of this section is fishing. Boaters please respect anglers and avoid crossing fishing lines.
- If you are fishing from a boat, please respect private property and avoid contact with the river bottom.

### Pinnacle Rock ~ Cañon City
- Royal Gorge - It is recommended that self-bailing rafts and wetsuits be used at flows above 2800 cfs and that this section not be run at flows over 3200 cfs.
- Helmets are always recommended!
- Low head dam exists at mile 118.3. Scout and run boat chute on river left.
- Railroad Right-of-Way extends throughout the Royal Gorge. Please keep off the railroad tracks when scouting or portaging. Trespassers may be prosecuted.

### Cañon City ~ Lake Pueblo
- Minnequa Dam exists at mile 124.5. YOU MUST PORTAGE on river right.
- STRAINERS (downed trees and log jams) exist throughout this section.
- Take Outs above Lake Pueblo are suitable for smaller crafts only. Rafts and larger vessels should plan on taking out at Lake Pueblo boat ramps.
- Land Ownership in this section is largely private. Public Lands exist from mile 139.6 to 140.6. Watch for Entering and Leaving Public Lands signs.