



# SOUTH FORK / MIDDLE FORK AMERICAN RIVER

*Itinerary*



<b>MEETING PLACE:</b>	<b>Mother Lode River Center (6280 Hwy 49)—2.3 miles north of the bridge and opposite County road marker 26.51</b>
<b>GPS LOCATION:</b>	<b>38.825846, -120.940646</b>
<b>MEETING TIME:</b>	<b>11:00 AM</b>
<b>RETURN TIME:</b>	<b>Approximately 5:00 PM on the second day</b>
<b>RIVER RATING:</b>	<b>Class III-IV (Suitable for aggressive beginners to intermediate)</b>
<b>SOUTH FORK SECTION:</b>	<b>Mother Lode to Salmon Falls Bridge</b>
<b>MIDDLE FORK SECTION:</b>	<b>Oxbow Reservoir to Driver's Flat</b>
<b>MILES COVERED:</b>	<b>26 river miles with 24 recognized rapids</b>
<b>AGE LIMIT:</b>	<b>Minimum age is 14 (15 at high water)</b>
<b>BOAT OPTIONS:</b>	<b>Paddle raft (Oar rafts may be available upon request)</b>
<b>TRIP LENGTH:</b>	<b>2 Days/1 Night</b>

*\*\*Please fill out your Guest Registration form and return it to our office as soon as possible\*\**

Join O.A.R.S. for a premier adventure in the Sierra Nevada foothills that combines two of California's classic whitewater runs: the South Fork and Middle Fork of the American River. The American River—flowing through the heart of California's Gold Country—was the birthplace of the state's gold rush in the late 1840s. The grassy foothills of the Sierra Nevada hid a great wealth along their streams and rivers until James Marshall discovered the first gold on the South Fork of the American in 1848. By the end of the following year, hundreds of thousands of hardy souls from all over the world—now known as the "49ers"—flocked to the Sierra foothills to find their fortune.

Today, many outdoor enthusiasts discover a different treasure on this stretch of river: a wealth of excellent Class III and IV rapids in a river corridor of rolling hills, granite walls and forests of oak and pine.

## **AWARD-WINNING NATURE-BASED ADVENTURES SINCE 1969**

O.A.R.S. has been in business for over 40 years and that is no accident. Great trips on some of the world's best rivers and coastlines are the recipe for this success. Always focus on our clients and their vacations, it is our genuine belief that river trips and nature-based adventures are extremely valuable life experiences. With that as our foundation, we have committed ourselves over the years to providing the best trips available, always with an eye on improvement.

## WHITEWATER

Water levels sufficient for rafting on the South and Middle Forks of the American River during the summer months are a result of releases from hydroelectric facilities located upstream. Such water releases are not subject to the control of El Dorado County or commercial rafting companies. It is important for our guests to understand that the water flow on the American is directly related to demand for hydropower. Fortunately, there is a relatively predictable flow schedule in place so we can maximize the whitewater excitement. We run the river in 12- to 14-foot inflatable rafts—each craft under the direction of a professional river guide.

### Sample Itinerary

We pride ourselves in running a relaxed and always flexible schedule. Every trip is different depending upon the group, other trips on the water and sometimes the weather. The following is a sample of what your trip might be like:

- Meeting time at the Mother Lode River Center is 11:00 AM. The roads around here are winding, so please be sure to allow for plenty of travel time. From the parking lot, follow our signs to the check-in desk.
- We'll point you toward our picnic area, where you can dig into our deluxe BBQ lunch. At noon, your guides will present a thorough river orientation and safety talk, and then your adventure begins. After practicing your paddle-strokes with your guide, your day begins with Highway Rapids and plenty of opportunities to go swimming. Miles of Class II rapids allow you to warm-up before your rafts enter the ever-exciting Gorge.
- The South Fork's Gorge begins at the base of the Lollipop Tree, where the canyon walls constrict the flow of the river and help create a half-dozen enjoyable Class III rapids. Such memorable torrents as Fowler's Rock, Satan's Cesspool and Hospital Bar are sure to get the whole family's pulse racing. Be sure to smile for the photographers' cameras! Rolling waves, boulder gardens and thrilling drops keep you busy paddling as you plunge through rapid after rapid.
- Soon after returning to Mother Lode, you'll be enjoying pleasing hors d'oeuvres and a cold drink—delicious as these treats are, they always taste better after a day on the river! Take a swim or a shower, join a game of volleyball or horseshoes, or sit back and relax as your guides prepare dinner. You'll see that your guides aren't only talented in their whitewater skills but their culinary ones as well.
- We rise in the morning to fresh coffee and a Continental breakfast, eager to begin a new day on the Middle Fork American. You may follow the guides in your own vehicle up to Auburn, where there is a place to park your car or you may ride with them in their van and return to Mother Lode that evening.
- Not a minute from launching, we encounter our first whitewater. Aptly named Good Morning, this big-wave Class III rapid will get our blood flowing and our hearts pumping, eliminating any remaining sleepiness. The next mile and a half brings several Class II-III rapids in quick succession, giving us a chance to sharpen our paddling skills for the mother rapid of the Middle Fork: Tunnel Chute.
- We hear the ominous roar as we approach Last Chance, a thrilling Class IV drop that positions us for entry into Tunnel Chute, a long, growling stretch of whitewater that paws us back and forth through its frothing channel, down through the famous underground stretch of river. One hundred yards later we float back into the sunlight, with our hearts still pounding with laughter and cheers. For the next mile and a half, we happily negotiate more adrenaline-pumping Class II-IV rapids with highlights like First Flip and Kanaka Falls.
- After plummeting through Kanaka, the river changes considerably, meandering over several miles of calm water. We are now in the heart of beautiful Auburn State Recreation Area in the American River Canyon. Lunchtime arrives and we pull off the water for a delicious deli spread picnic. Back in our boats, we'll finish paddling through the flat-water section, then prepare for another long stretch of continuous whitewater action.
- An intense Class IV drop, Chunder gets us back in the swing of things just before we make a hard right and pull off the river above the roaring Ruck-A-Chucky Falls. This 35-foot waterfall is classified an un-runnable Class VI, which means that we must get out of the boats and portage the rapid. Back on the river, we finish with a mile and a half of premium rapids like Parallel Parking, Texas Chainsaw Mama and Final Exam.
- As we reach our take-out point at Driver's Flat, our river trip draws to a close. An O.A.R.S. shuttle will be waiting to give us a 30-minute ride back to Auburn and our vehicles. For those who rode with the guides, you will be returned to your vehicle at The Mother Lode River Center.

## **What's Included?**

- Skilled professional guide service
- 1 night catered camping
- Meals from lunch on day 1 through lunch on day 2, with limited beer & wine at dinner
- High-quality inflatable rafts and related river equipment
- Transfers from the meeting place to the river and back

## **What's Not Included?**

- Pre- and post-trip accommodations
- Wetsuits (available for rent on early season or cold weather trips)
- Items of personal nature (see suggested packing list)
- Insurance of any kind, including travel insurance
- Gratuities
- Sleep kits (available for rent)
- Tents (available for rent)

## **SOMETHING VOLUNTARY**

- In reviewing your statement, you'll notice a \$1/person/day donation to American Rivers, a non-profit conservation organization dedicated to Wild and Scenic Rivers. One-hundred percent of these funds go directly to protecting Wild and Scenic Rivers and your contribution is tax-deductible. This donation is voluntary and may be removed from your invoice if you choose not to participate. *Please notify our office to delete the donation from your balance if that is your choice.*
- The O.A.R.S. Foundation is a not-for-profit 501 (c) 3 organization with the express goal of providing opportunities for young people to experience the magic of a river trip. Visit [www.oarsfoundation.org](http://www.oarsfoundation.org) to learn more about how your tax deductible donation can change young lives for the better.

## **TRAVEL ARRANGEMENTS**

### **Rendezvous**

- We'll meet you at 11:00 AM at our camp at the Mother Lode River Center located at 6280 Hwy 49 just north of the town Coloma. Please allow plenty of travel time.

### **Getting to the Mother Lode River Center**

#### **By Auto**

- **From Sacramento on U.S. Hwy 50:** Follow Hwy 50 east toward Placerville and South Lake Tahoe. Take the Ponderosa Road exit (Exit #37), turn left onto Ponderosa/S Shingle and cross over the freeway. At the second stop, take the first right turn on N. Shingle Road toward Coloma/Lotus. After six miles N. Shingle turns into Lotus Road—continue going straight. Pass through the first stop sign and continue on to a dead end intersection with Hwy 49 (the Sierra Nevada House will be on your right). Turn left onto Hwy 49 North and cross the bridge over the South Fork American. Mother Lode River Center is on the left side of Hwy. 49, **2.3 miles from this bridge** and opposite County road marker 26.51. Our physical address is 6280 Hwy 49.
- **From South Lake Tahoe:** Take Hwy 50 West to Placerville. Turn right on Hwy 49 (North) and follow the directions from Placerville listed below.
- **From Placerville:** Proceed north on Hwy 49 through the town of Coloma. Just past Coloma, cross the bridge over the South Fork of the American. The Mother Lode River Center is located on the left side of Hwy. 49, **2.3 miles from this bridge** and opposite County road marker 26.51. Our physical address is 6280 Hwy 49.
- **From Reno/North Lake Tahoe:** Take Hwy 80 West to Auburn. Take Hwy 49 South from Auburn. Approximately 9 miles past the town of Cool, you will arrive at Mother Lode River Center. Mother Lode is on the right side of the highway, opposite County road marker 26.51. Our physical address is 6280 Hwy 49.

**Mileage and Driving Times:**

- From San Francisco 3 hours 140 miles
- From San Jose 3.5 hours 175 miles
- From Sacramento 1 hour 50 miles
- From South Lake Tahoe 2 hours 62 miles
- From Reno 2.5 hours 130 miles



**By Air**

- The closest major airport is in Sacramento (SMF), which is served by most major airlines and car rental companies. Oakland (OAK), San Francisco (SFO) and Reno (RNO) are within a 3-hour drive.

**By Van Shuttle from the Sacramento Airport:**

- [www.folsomlakeexpress.com](http://www.folsomlakeexpress.com) 916-984-3046
- [www.folsomairporter.com](http://www.folsomairporter.com) 916-983-7257

**Pre- and Post-Trip Accommodations**

- We recommend that you make reservations well in advance in order to guarantee lodging
- Riverside camping is available with O.A.R.S. at the Mother Lode River Center

For more information, call 1-855-541-4792 in the USA and Canada or 1-530-626-5600 outside the USA and Canada, or e-mail [info@oars.com](mailto:info@oars.com)

### Motels

- Gold Country Inn, Placerville (530) 622-3124 [www.goldcountryinnplacerville.com](http://www.goldcountryinnplacerville.com)
- Mother Lode Motel, Placerville (530) 522-0895 [www.placervillemotherlodemotel.com](http://www.placervillemotherlodemotel.com)

### Bed & Breakfast Inns

- American River Inn, Georgetown (800) 245-6566 [www.americanriverinn.com](http://www.americanriverinn.com)
- Coloma Country Inn, Coloma (530) 622-6919 [www.colomacountryinn.com](http://www.colomacountryinn.com)
- The Sierra Nevada House (530) 626-8096 [www.sierranevadahouse.com](http://www.sierranevadahouse.com)

### RV Camping

- Camp Lotus (530) 622-8672
- American River Resort (530) 622-6700

## PACKING FOR YOUR TRIP

### Footwear

The best choice is an amphibious shoe that drains water, won't come off in swirling current and protects your toes from stubbing and the tops of your feet from sunburning. An old pair of tennis shoes will work almost as well. Sport sandals with a heel strap are OK. "Water socks" are not a recommended option and flip flops or "Crocs" are not acceptable. For trips in the spring, we recommend wearing shoes along with wool or neoprene socks to keep your feet warm. Wetsuit booties with a reinforced sole are also a good option.

### Clothing

We recommend starting with bathing suit/swim trunks and a lightweight synthetic shirt, then adding layers of synthetic long underwear and fleece as needed. It can be cool in the morning even during mid-summer.

### Sun Protection

Protecting yourself from the sun should be taken very seriously. A hat, sunscreen, lip balm & sunglasses are a must.

### Suggested Packing List

- Sleeping bag, pad, ground cloth
- Small tent
- Flashlight
- Large plastic bag (for dirty or wet clothes)
- Insect repellent
- Sunscreen & lip protection
- Water bottle with securing strap
- Toiletries
- Hand towel & washcloth
- Sunglasses with securing strap
- Tennis shoes or river sandals (on river)
- Dry footwear for camp for early season/high water trips
- Wool, polypro, neoprene or fleece socks (for spring and fall trips)
- Sun visor or tie-on hat
- Lightweight, quick drying top and shorts (long board shorts preferable for sun protection)
- T-shirt
- Sweater or jacket
- Swimsuit
- Synthetic long underwear (for spring and fall trips)

### Rentals

- **Wetsuits:** With advance notice, wetsuits may be rented for \$10 per person (**only necessary on some early-season trips**). It is important for you to advise the office of your size if you are renting a wetsuit. Please indicate your request on the Guest Registration form. Wetsuit rentals must be paid for prior to your trip. **Wetsuit rentals do not include "wetsuit booties" – please bring your own, or wear wool socks with tennis shoes as a good alternative.**

### Reminders

- **ALWAYS BE PREPARED FOR CHANGEABLE WEATHER!** Especially during the months of April, May and early June, California can experience extreme changes in weather.

- **To avoid being cold:** Synthetic long underwear is a must-have on river trips in the spring and fall. It can be worn under shorts, rain gear, T-shirts, etc. and keeps you warm even when wet.
- **Wearing cotton items on a river trip is only appropriate when the weather is hot. Wet cotton will chill your body temperature.**

### Commercial Photographs

There are several professional companies taking photos of each raft at some of the South and Middle Fork's larger rapids, which provide some great action shots. Your guides will be happy to point out their locations. These companies are not affiliated with O.A.R.S. and you will need to contact them separately to purchase these pictures. Hot Shot Imaging is one of them based in Lotus, visit them after your Middle Fork of the American trip at their storefront on Hwy 49 to order pictures and check out the Tunnel Chute runs: (530) 621-0400 If you would like to bring your own camera, we suggest a waterproof one.

### Extra Gear

We recommend that you leave your valuables at home or in your private vehicle and take on the river only what's absolutely necessary. We recommend that you leave dry shoes and clothing in your car as well to ensure a comfortable drive home.

### Weather

You may want to check one week prior to your trip for an up-to-date weather forecast. We recommend you check the following web sites: [www.weather.com](http://www.weather.com) or [www.wunderground.com](http://www.wunderground.com)

	<u>Low</u>	<u>High</u>	<u>Water Temperature</u>
April	42	69	58
May	47	77	60
June	52	84	66
July	57	92	68
August	55	90	67
September	53	85	66

### Gratuities

Guests often ask whether gratuities are appropriate, and in what amount. If you feel your guides have provided a very special trip for you, a gratuity may be left with the trip leader and will be shared among the crew. Entirely discretionary, anything between "Thank you" and 10% of trip cost is a general tipping guideline. If you plan to tip, please remember to bring a personal check or cash, since Mother Lode River Center does not have an ATM.

### A Few Important Details

#### Reservations and Deposits

- A \$60/person deposit is required at the time of reservation. The balance is due 30 days prior to departure.

#### Cancellations and Refunds

- If you find it necessary to cancel your trip, notify us as soon as possible. All payments are nonrefundable and we regret that we cannot make exceptions for personal emergencies. For this reason, we strongly urge our participants to investigate trip cancellation insurance (see Insurance).
- If you transfer from one trip to another, there is a \$15/person charge up until 30 days before the trip. Transfers made after this time will be treated as cancellations.

#### Medical

- Under most circumstances, if you are of an adventurous spirit and in reasonably good health, you should have no problem enjoying an O.A.R.S. trip. People with medical conditions, including pregnancy, should have a physician's approval before taking an adventure travel trip.

#### Insurance

- Although every effort is made to insure a safe trip for all, we strongly recommend that you protect yourself, your belongings, and your vacation through the purchase of a short-term traveler's policy. A trip cancellation policy covers your non-refundable payments in most cases, should you have to cancel your trip at the last minute due to illness or injury. Trip participants should realize that in the event of illness or injury on an adventure travel trip, evacuation can be prolonged, difficult and expensive. Personal belongings and cameras are carried entirely at the owner's risk, and O.A.R.S. accepts no responsibility for lost, damaged, delayed or stolen property.

**Liability Waiver**

- Everyone is required to sign a standard release before the trip, acknowledging awareness that some risks are associated with the trip. Safety is of the utmost concern on our trips. However, due to the nature of the activities, a condition of your participation is that you will sign this form and return it to our office before the trip begins. Anyone who refuses to sign the form will not be allowed to participate, and consistent with O.A.R.S. cancellation policy, there will be no refund of the trip fees at that time.

**Responsibility – An Important Notice**

- O.A.R.S. West, Inc. and cooperating agencies act only in the capacity of agent for the participants in all matters relating to transportation and/or all other related travel services, and assume no responsibility however caused for injury, loss or damage to person or property in connection with any service, including but not limited to that resulting directly or indirectly from acts of God, detention, annoyance, delays and expenses arising from quarantine, strikes, theft, pilferage, force majeure, failure of any means of conveyance to arrive or depart as scheduled, civil disturbances, government restrictions or regulations, and discrepancies or change in transit over which it has no control. Reasonable changes in itinerary may be made where deemed advisable for the comfort and well being of the participants, including cancellation due to water fluctuation, insufficient bookings (this trip requires a minimum of 4 guests), and other factors. There is risk in whitewater rafting, particularly during high-water conditions. Rafts, dories and kayaks do capsize. You could be swept overboard. Your guide will make every attempt to assist, but you must be strong and agile enough to “self-help” and “float-it-out” without further endangering yourself or others. Please be advised our U.S. Coast Guard approved personal flotation devices (PFD) are rated to accommodate persons no heavier than 260 pounds and with a chest size no larger than 56 inches. We are experienced at accommodating people with various disabilities. Please give us an opportunity to make you feel welcome. We need to discuss any special requirements ahead of time. We may decide, at any time, to exclude any person or group for any reason we feel is related to the safety of our trips. On advancement of deposit the depositor agrees to be bound by the above recited terms and conditions. Prices subject to change without notice.

©2011 O.A.R.S. West, Inc. 3/11/11 SS