



MERCED RIVER RAFTING

Itinerary



- MEETING PLACE:** “Sand Pit,” 24.5 miles northeast of Mariposa on Highway 140 (1.4 miles east of Cedar Lodge towards Yosemite)
- MEETING TIME:** 9:30 AM
- RETURN TIME:** 5:00 PM
- RIVER RATING:** Class III/IV (Suitable for aggressive beginners and intermediates)
- RIVER PUT-IN:** Indian Flat
- RIVER TAKE-OUT:** Railroad Flat
- MILES COVERED:** 18 river miles with 6 recognizable rapids
- AGE LIMIT:** Minimum age is 9 (16 at high water)
- BOAT OPTIONS:** Paddle raft (Oar rafts may be available upon request)

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

The Merced River is one of the defining characteristics of Yosemite National Park. Originating in the high Sierra Nevada, this free-flowing river tumbles into one of America’s most iconic valleys. First cascading over the spectacular Nevada and Vernal Falls, the Merced River’s crystal-clear waters then meander through the Park, past a backdrop of aspens, cottonwood and evergreens, grassy meadows and dramatic, glacier-carved mountain peaks--and then to a point just outside the Park where we are able to launch our rafts.

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 focused 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

The Merced features mile after mile of huge wave trains and long staircase drops, delivering nearly non-stop whitewater thrills. However, it is still accessible for aggressive beginners; its intensity is kept somewhat in check by a general lack of obstacles amidst the rapids and the calm, glassy pools that provide a reprieve between bursts of whitewater. One word of warning—the Merced’s free-flowing waters, dependent solely on snowmelt, keep its season short and sweet; Merced trips run from April through June or early July only.

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:

- You'll meet your trip leader and fellow adventurers at 9:30 AM—please be prompt. Once everyone's arrived, we'll board our shuttle to the river. Reaching the put-in point, you'll meet the rest of your O.A.R.S. crew and feel your anticipation build as you see the rafts waiting for you. After the guides deliver an orientation and safety talk, your adventure begins.
- The Indian Flat put-in will give the crews some time to get organized and paddle ready to hit the first big rapid of the river, Cranberry! Exciting and wet, the Cranberry rapid is a favorite among guides and a great way to start your day on the river. Each mile brings more white-knuckling thrills, more laughs, adrenaline and high fives.
- Beyond the alternating clear pools and frothy whitewater, the surrounding scenery is magnificent and the calm stretches give us a chance to enjoy it. Just outside of Yosemite, we're rafting through a picturesque canyon adorned with pine forests, colorful wildflowers, rocky ledges and sandy beaches.
- Lunchtime comes and we pull off the water for a delicious picnic. Knowing that a morning of hard paddling inspires a very hearty appetite, we make sure that our lunches are always abundant and satisfying. After feasting and relaxing on the beach, we resume our journey.
- Back on the river, Class III and IV challenges like Ned's Gulch and Gauge Hole provide our afternoon thrills as we continue down the Merced. On warm days, the slower stretches of cool water may invite us to jump in for an invigorating swim. As we reach Railroad Flat, our river trip draws to a close. At the take-out point, an O.A.R.S. shuttle will be waiting to take us back. You'll be returned to your car at approximately 5:00 PM.

What's Included?

- Skilled professional guide service
- Delicious deli lunch
- High-quality inflatable rafts and related river equipment including paddle, helmet, splash jacket and personal flotation device
- Transfers from the meeting place to the river and back

What's Not Included?

- Pre- and post-trip accommodations
- Wetsuits (available for rent)
- Items of personal nature (see suggested packing list)
- Insurance of any kind, including travel insurance
- Gratuities for the guides

SOMETHING VOLUNTARY

- In reviewing your statement, you'll note a \$1/person/day donation to Friends of the River a non-profit conservation organization dedicated to protecting California's rivers, streams, and watersheds. One-hundred percent of these funds go directly to these environmental actions, 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 if you would prefer to delete the donation from your balance.
- 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 to learn more about how your tax deductible donation can change young lives for the better.

TRAVEL ARRANGEMENTS

Rendezvous

Please note we meet at an informal area known as the “Sand Pit,” which is basically a wide parking area adjacent to Hwy 140.

- **From the San Francisco Bay Area** I-580 East to I-205, then East on Hwy 120 to Hwy 99. South on Hwy 99 to Merced, then Hwy 140 East through Mariposa for 22 miles (from intersection of Hwy 49 and 140) to Cedar Lodge. The “Sand Pit” is 1.4 miles past Cedar Lodge, on the right. Look for our O.A.R.S. vehicles!
- **From the South**, take Hwy 99 North to Merced, then Hwy 140 East through Mariposa for 22 miles (from intersection of Hwy 49 and 140) to Cedar Lodge. The “Sand Pit” is 1.4 miles past Cedar Lodge, on the right.
- **From Yosemite or El Portal**, the Sand Pit is 3.3 miles Southwest on Hwy 140 from the Shell gas station in El Portal, on the left. There is no sign to mark our meeting spot, so please carefully mark the mileage.

An O.A.R.S. representative will join you at the meeting place and shuttle you to the put-in.

Driving Times and Distances from:

San Francisco	4.7 hours	193 miles
San Jose	3.5 hours	181 miles
Sacramento	3.15 hours	183 miles
South Lake Tahoe	4.5 hours	188 miles
Reno	5 hours	216 miles
Los Angeles	5.5 hours	314 miles
Angels Camp	2 hours	94 miles

These are approximate mileage and driving times and do not take into account any delays, so please allow yourself extra time. Additional maps of the area can be found at: www.mapquest.com, www.yahoomaps.com, or in some cases www.nps.gov.

Pre- and Post-Trip Accommodations

If you are planning on spending a few extra days in the area, we recommend that you make your hotel reservations well in advance. Yosemite and its outlying areas are extremely popular, and hotels fill up quickly, especially during the summer. Please mention that you are rafting with O.A.R.S.

Pre- and post-trip lodging are not included in your trip cost.

Hotel and B&Bs

- Cedar Lodge, El Portal (209) 379-2612
- Miners Inn, Mariposa (209) 742-7777
- Tenaya Lodge, Fish Camp (209) 683-6555

Camping and Hostels

- KOA Campground, Mariposa (209) 966-2201
- Indian Flat Campground (209) 379 2339
- Yosemite Campground (209) 372-8502
- Yosemite Bug Hostel (209) 966-6666

In Yosemite National Park

- Yosemite Lodging (801) 559-5000
- Yosemite Camping (800) 436-PARK
- Or access www.yosemitepark.com

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

- Sunscreen & lip protection: waterproof and SPF 30 or higher
- Water bottle with securing clip
- Shade hat/visor
- Sunglasses (preferably polarized) with securing strap
- Bathing suit
- Shorts (long board shorts preferable for sun protection) and quick drying top
- River/tennis shoes or river sandals with heel strap
- Wetsuit (for April – early June trips only)

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.**

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 or www.wunderground.com

	<u>Low</u>	<u>High</u>	<u>Water Temp</u>
April	35	65	50
May	42	73	53
June	48	82	56
July	54	90	60

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, remember to bring a personal check or cash—ATM’s are hard to find in the backcountry!

A Few Important Details

Reservations and Deposits

- A \$30/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. We reserve the right not to accept passengers weighing more than 260 pounds or with a waist/chest size exceeding 56 inches. 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. 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. On advancement of deposit the depositor agrees to be bound by the above recited terms and conditions. Prices subject to change without notice.

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