

*All-Outdoors*

California Whitewater Rafting

# GUIDE TO CALIFORNIA RIVERS



[www.A0rafting.com](http://www.A0rafting.com)



**EASY-BEGINNER • CLASS I-II**



**Tom Sawyer Float** **page 6**  
**South Fork American**  
Float trip with gentle, easy rapids.  
Perfect for families with young children.

**BEGINNER-INTERMEDIATE • CLASS III**



**South Fork American** **page 9**  
California's most popular  
river trip. Great for first-timers,

**INTERMEDIATE • CLASS III-IV**



**Middle Fork American** **page 11**  
Scenic 2000-foot deep  
wilderness canyon with a  
taste of Class IV whitewater.



**Merced** **page 12**  
Excellent introduction to  
Class IV rafting located near  
Yosemite National Park.

**INTERMEDIATE-ADVANCED • CLASS IV-IV+**



**Tuolumne** **page 14**  
Designated  
"National Wild & Scenic River."  
One of California's best multi-day trips.



**North Fork Stanislaus** **page 16**  
Small, springtime stream  
with lots of rapids in a  
beautiful high-alpine setting.



**Kaweah** **page 19**  
Non-stop action for  
experienced rafters, in the spring.  
Near Sequoia National Park.



**North Fork American River** **page 21**  
Big, challenging drops  
through a narrow rock gorge.  
Runs in spring.

**ADVANCED • CLASS V**



**California Salmon** **page 22**  
Springtime run in a rock-walled  
gorge with difficult whitewater.



**Cherry Creek/Upper Tuolumne** **page 25**  
Considered the most  
challenging commercial rafting  
trip in the U.S.

**About All-Outdoors** **page 26**  
**River Comparison Chart** **back cover**



The Armstrongs,  
as they appeared in  
*Sunset Magazine*,  
and were chosen  
"Best of the West."

## Welcome to the All-Outdoors Guide to California Rivers

**T**HANK YOU FOR YOUR INTEREST in rafting California rivers. Like a menu at a fine restaurant, California has many great selections from which to choose. We designed this guide to help you decide which river trip is best suited to your unique needs and desires. Our hope is that after reading about each river, you'll have a clear notion of the fun that awaits you on these wonderful runs.

As one of the first original outfitters in California, All-Outdoors has been guiding people down rivers for more than 50 years. Our long history and hard-earned experience is what inspires and qualifies us to write this "Guide to California Rivers." After leading more than 30,000 trips and more than 300,000 people down these runs, we have certainly come to know each river intimately!

When you raft with All-Outdoors, you'll be rafting with one of the largest, oldest, and most experienced rafting companies in California. *Sunset Magazine* recognized this and named us "Best of the West." Our staff of more than 100 professional guides, exceptional fleet of rafts, and large and prestigious permits ensure you'll have the best rafting experience available.

So take a few minutes to read this guide and let your imagination soar. We'll see you on a California river soon.

*George Armstrong Family*

The Armstrong Family



## California, a Rafter's Paradise

CALIFORNIA HAS ONE OF THE THE HIGHEST concentrations of navigable whitewater rivers in the world. It is hard to find another place on earth with access to such a large and varied number of waterways on which to raft. The high elevation of the state's longest mountain range, the Sierra Nevada, helps create a vast river system. Winter storms moving east across the Pacific Ocean hit California first, leaving a significant amount of rain and snow.

As the rivers drain west through scenic canyons, whitewater runs are born. People from all walks of life come to be refreshed, invigorated, and amazed by what many call a *rafter's paradise*. Whether you are planning a trip with family, friends or co-workers, California has a river for you to discover and enjoy.

This All-Outdoors Guide to California Rivers is also available online in PDF format. Our website includes trip options, details, costs, discounts, virtual river tours, real-time river flows, space availability, video, reservations, photo galleries, and much more. This award-winning, dynamic site is updated regularly and is an easy way to get informed and stay in touch with California rafting. Go to [www.AOrafting.com](http://www.AOrafting.com)



Connect to our website by scanning this quick response code with your smart phone.



Look for All-Outdoors on Facebook and Twitter.





# Scale of River Difficulty

IT IS IMPORTANT TO UNDERSTAND the difficulty ratings of rivers prior to taking part in a rafting trip. If difficulty ratings are ignored, individuals may end up on a river not suitable for their abilities or expectations. Groups need to choose rivers that are appropriate for every person in their party, not just the strongest member. All participants should be able to swim.



## EASY-BEGINNER • CLASS I-II

**Class I** - Mainly slow-moving flat water with some small waves. Passages are clear and have few, if any, obstacles. Gradient is very mild (1-10 ft. per mi.). "Swimming" Class I water is relatively easy.

**Class II** - Rapids may have waves from one- to two-feet high and passages that are mostly clear with some obstacles. Gradient is mild (10-20 ft. per mi.). Falling out of the raft can result in a "swim" that may be uncomfortable.

*Class I-II rapids are appropriate for young children.*



## BEGINNER-INTERMEDIATE • CLASS III

Rapids have waves three- to four-feet high, passages can be clear and wide or narrow with obstacles. Gradient is usually 20-30 ft. per mile. A knowledgeable and capable guide is required for facilitating expert maneuvering.

*Most people feel comfortable yet pleasantly challenged on Class III rivers, and they serve as a great introduction to the sport of whitewater rafting.*



## INTERMEDIATE • CLASS III-IV

Rapids can be long, contain waves and drops four- to five-feet high and occasionally higher. Difficult maneuvering is often required between and around obstacles. Current is swift and the gradient is somewhat steep (30-40 ft. per mile). Unintentionally falling into the river may result in a strenuous "swim" back to the raft or through the rapid to the next calm section.

*Athletic, adventurous first-timers can participate if conditions are appropriate, but previous experience is preferred and helpful.*



## INTERMEDIATE-ADVANCED • CLASS IV-IV+

Rapids are abrupt, long, and can be close together. They contain waves and drops four- to six-feet high and occasionally higher. Difficult maneuvering is required between and around obstacles. Current is swift and the gradient is steep (40-70 ft. per mile). Unintentionally falling into the river will most likely result in a strenuous "swim" back to the raft or through the rapid.

*Previous experience is highly recommended.*



## ADVANCED • CLASS V

Rapids are powerful with waves and drops five- to eight-feet high. Passages are often narrow and complicated by twists and turns. Split-second maneuvering around obstacles is required to avoid capsizing or "swimming." Current is strong and gradient is extremely steep (40-200 ft per mile). "Swimming" can be very difficult and strenuous.

*Individuals experiencing these rivers should have ample Class IV & IV+ experience, and need to be athletic, aggressive, and excellent swimmers.*

**Class VI - Unrunnable:** Rapids are too difficult to navigate safely on a regular basis. Chances of injury or death are significant. If attempted with success, luck deserves the largest portion of credit.

## How Rivers and Rapids are Rated

Rivers and rapids are rated on a scale of Class I (Easy) to Class VI (Unrunnable). Rivers receive a general rating based on their most difficult rapid. Several factors determine the scale of difficulty for a river or rapid: water flow and temperature, obstacles such as rocks and trees, vertical drop in elevation per mile of river (gradient), and the consequences of a person falling out of the raft unintentionally and "swimming" in the rapids while wearing a lifejacket.

*Gradient* is a fixed measurement and is important to take note of and to understand. Steeper gradient usually means faster current, more rapids and a greater level of difficulty.

Throughout this guide, difficulty ratings assume "normal" conditions. Age recommendations are also based upon average flow conditions. They are subject to change with significant increases or decreases in water level.

**For updated information at the time of your trip, please call (800) 247-2387 or visit [www.AOrafting.com](http://www.AOrafting.com)**







# South Fork American Tom Sawyer Float Trip

**T**HE MIDDLE PORTION OF THE SOUTH FORK AMERICAN is perfect for families with young children. This meandering section welcomes all with its gentle Class II rapids and calm, relaxing pools. You'll have many opportunities to lounge on the boats and swim in peaceful areas as you wind through the gold country of the Sierra Nevada foothills. Tall oak trees line the banks, as do wild blackberry bushes bursting with juicy fruit waiting to be picked in the late summer months. Stopping to explore along the shoreline adds adventure to this special family trip.



A river is a wondrous thing to the eyes of a child.

## S. F. AMERICAN - TOM SAWYER FLOAT TRIP

**SEASON:** JUNE THROUGH OCTOBER

**USUAL MINIMUM AGE/WT:** 5/35 lbs

**TRIP OPTIONS:** 1-DAY

**MILES:** 5

**LOCATION:** 8 MILES NORTH OF PLACERVILLE,  
40 MILES EAST OF SACRAMENTO

**GRADIENT:** 17 FEET PER MILE

We use oar-rafts so you may relax and paddle as much as you wish. Oar-rafts have a professional guide that controls the raft using oars. More adventurous paddlers will also have the opportunity to navigate in your own one- or two-person inflatable kayak without a guide. The kayaks are a fun way to explore the river canyon on a more personal level. You'll feel each rapid more intensely; you'll see each current more intimately. Two-person kayaks allow parents the unique opportunity to have a one-on-one rafting experience with their kids. This is a beautiful, fun, and forgiving section of the river and is therefore the perfect place to attempt a self-guided adventure like kayaking. The oar-rafts and guides are never too far away to give any needed assistance to those in a kayak.

*For more information about the South Fork American Class I-II section and the surrounding area, go to: [www.AOrafting.com](http://www.AOrafting.com).*



MARK REINER







The mild riffles of the Class II Section on the South Fork American are a great place to introduce young children to the joys of rafting and the natural world.



Owner Gregg Armstrong and family enjoying a float trip, early 90's.



Oar rafts and inflatable kayaks are used on the South Fork Class II Section.







# South Fork American

**T**HE SOUTH FORK AMERICAN RIVER has something for everyone. It is the most popular introductory whitewater river in California, yet it also satisfies experienced rafters with its numerous Class III rapids. Tucked away in the Sierra foothills, the South Fork American is located just 40 miles east of Sacramento. This river offers diversity...classic scenery, narrow rocky gorges, calm pools, and over 50 rapids! Whitewater rafting on the South Fork draws people to the same Coloma Valley where James Marshall discovered gold in 1848.

This river has the widest selection of trip options in this Guidebook, and is divided into two sections, an Upper run and a Lower run. Both are unique and rewarding. The South Fork is a dam-controlled river with reliable water flows all year.

## One-Day Trips

**One-Day Upper "Chili Bar"** trips start in the depths of a steep, forested canyon. Rafters have just enough time to warm-up before facing the longest rapid on the river, *Meatgrinder!* The whitewater excitement keeps your attention until the last big challenge...a wild S-turn ride down a twisted chute known as *Trouble Maker Rapid*. After a scrumptious lunch, the river mellows to a peaceful float through the Coloma Valley where our trip ends.

**One-Day Lower "Gorge"** trips begin in the Lotus/Coloma area, with plenty of Class I and II warm-up rapids before the river drops out of the valley. After lunch, rocky canyon walls close in from both sides as the more demanding Class III whitewater of the "Gorge" begins. Challenges such as *Fowler's Rock*, *Satan's Cesspool*, *Hospital Bar*, and *Recovery Room* rapids carry rafts swiftly toward Folsom Lake, the trip's end.

## Two-Day Trips

**South Fork 2-Day Car Access Camp** trips typically raft the Upper Section the first day, and the Lower Section the second day. Guests enjoy a more leisurely pace, spending the evening at a beautiful, convenient riverside camp with hot showers, flush toilets, and car access. Modern facilities and hearty camp meals provide a most comfortable stay.

**South/Middle Fork 2-Day Combo** trips allow you to run two rivers in two days. The first day will be spent enjoying the Class III rapids on the Upper "Chili Bar" section of the South Fork American River. At night you have dinner and stay with us at our car-access river camp on the South Fork with warm showers and flush toilets. The next day you'll wake up early to a quick, healthy breakfast and drive to the Middle Fork of the American (50 minutes away) to challenge yourself with Class IV whitewater. You'll crash through intense rapids, testing your newfound skills. At trip's end, you'll feel the exhilaration of having conquered two rivers, traveled through two canyons, and floated a total of 25 miles!

## Express Trips

Express trips are for those watching their budget and time. These faster trips last approximately five to six hours, including shuttle. Lunch is not included. Express trips on the Upper section take place in the morning, and Express trips on the Lower in the afternoon.

**To learn more about the South Fork American River go to:** [www.AOrafting.com](http://www.AOrafting.com).

## SOUTH FORK AMERICAN

**SEASON:** ALL YEAR

**USUAL MINIMUM AGE/WT:** 8/50 lbs

**TRIP OPTIONS:** EXPRESS 1-DAY, 2-DAYS

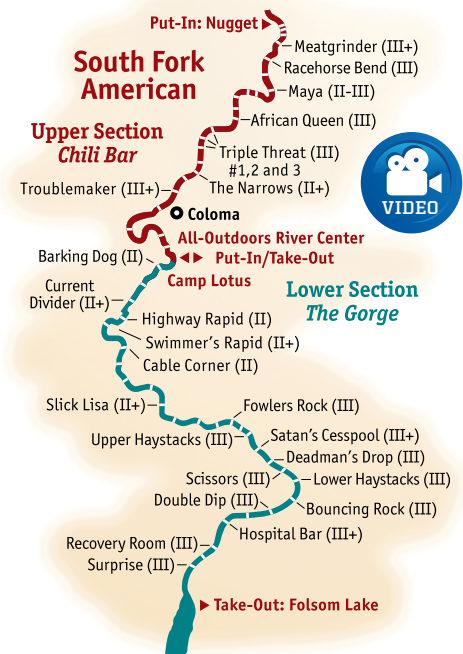
**MILES:** 9,12 9,12 21

**LOCATION:** 8 MILES NORTH OF PLACERVILLE AND 40 MILES EAST OF SACRAMENTO

**GRADIENT:** 25 FEET PER MILE

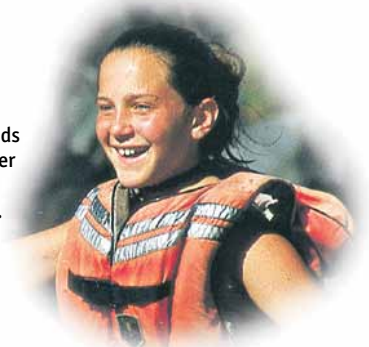


James Marshall discovered gold on the South Fork American in 1848, sparking the California Gold Rush.



**LEFT:** Happy crew forward paddling through *Satan's Cesspool*, one of the exciting Class III rapids on the Lower Section of the South Fork American.

The South Fork has over 50 rapids for both beginner and veteran rafters to enjoy.





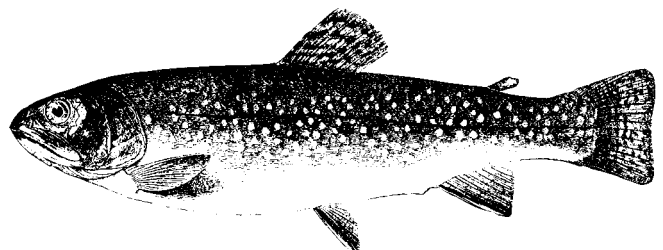


The Middle Fork of the American River. A beautiful wilderness area...an excellent place to go and get away from the daily grind.



The Middle Fork flows through a runnable 90' river tunnel! Years ago, miners blasted this passage to divert and dry up a mile of river bed for prospecting.

A healthy population of Rainbow and German Brown Trout are supported by the clean cool water of the Middle Fork.





# Middle Fork American

**T**HE MIDDLE FORK OF THE AMERICAN is a true wilderness river. In the solitude of this beautiful 2000-foot deep rugged canyon are numerous Class III and some technical Class IV rapids. The Middle Fork is a good follow-up trip to the less demanding South Fork, and is appropriate for active, athletic individuals and adventurous first-timers.

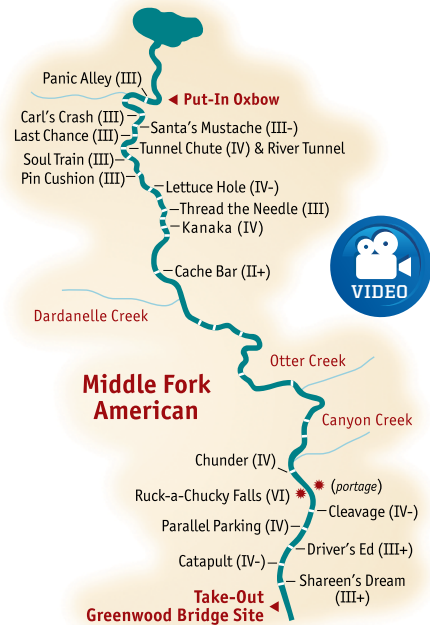
The Middle Fork offers unique scenery and great whitewater. Early in the trip, the entire river flows through a narrow, steep Class IV chasm called *Tunnel Chute* and is followed by a runnable rock tunnel 90-feet in length! Along the run, challenging rapids are encountered such as *Last Chance*, *Lettuce Hole* and *Kanaka*. A calmer section toward the middle of the day nicely compliments the whitewater excitement. Here, the swiftly moving current allows passengers to relax and appreciate the Middle Fork's scenery. Remarkably clear water swirls above glistening gravel beds and hovering trout, while thickly forested canyon walls rise high overhead. Historic gravel tailings and fern-covered mine shafts remind rafters of California's Gold Rush. Tumbling sidecreeks create cascading waterfalls and smoothly sculpted pools in which to swim.

Toward the end of the trip lies awe-inspiring *Ruck-a-Chucky Falls*. A mandatory walk around this unrunnable 30-foot waterfall allows a first-hand look at nature's beauty and power. After re-boarding the rafts, trips enter an impressive greenstone gorge filled with technical Class IV rapids. This grand finale holds some of the most demanding whitewater of the trip. *Cleavage*, *Parallel Parking* and *Catapult* are a few of the steep, thrilling drops that end each adventure.

Trip options on the Middle Fork include 16-mile, 1- or 2-Day paddle raft trips, and a 23-mile 3-Day trip. The 1-Day trip moves at a fast pace and does not allow time to enjoy off-river attractions. Both 2- and 3-Day trips afford an opportunity to venture into hidden side canyons, swim in warm pools, kayak, and relax at beautiful wilderness beach camps accessible only by raft.

The Middle Fork is dam-controlled, running April through October. Anyone considering a Middle Fork trip must be aware that all participants should be in good physical condition.

For more information and images of the Middle Fork American and the surrounding area, go to: [www.AOrafting.com](http://www.AOrafting.com).



## MIDDLE FORK AMERICAN

**SEASON:** APRIL THROUGH OCTOBER

**USUAL MINIMUM AGE/WT:** 12/90 lbs

**TRIP OPTIONS:** 1-DAY, 2-DAYS, 3-DAYS

**MILES:** 16, 16, 23

**LOCATION:** 17 MILES NORTHEAST OF AUBURN

AND 50 MILES NORTHEAST OF SACRAMENTO

**GRADIENT:** 40 FEET PER MILE

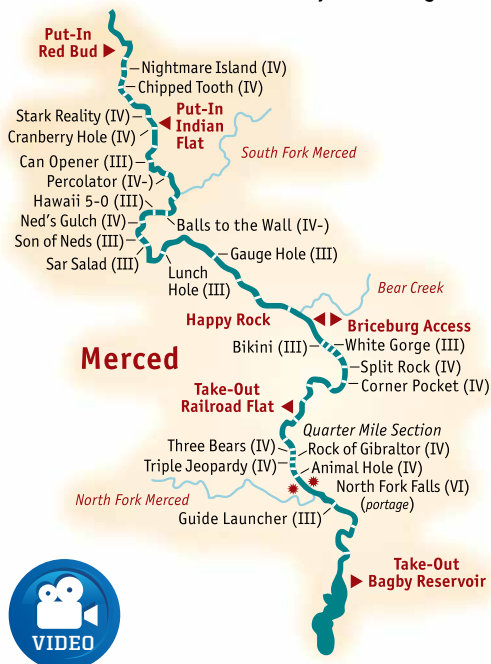


*Tunnel Chute* is one of California's most famous rapids. Some guests may choose to walk around this one.



# Merced

**T**HE MERCED IS AN IDEAL “INTERMEDIATE” RUN for those ready to graduate from a “Beginner” river. Adventurous, athletic first-timers can also enjoy this run. The Merced tumbles over Yosemite’s Nevada and Vernal Falls, meanders through the Valley, and builds into a river of pure whitewater fun. The section we raft is below the Park, and is characterized by a steep gradient, sweeping bends, and few obstacles to hinder a raft’s momentum. With long straightforward rapids and big rolling waves, “forward paddle!” is the predominant command. With its fun rapids, and proximity to Yosemite, this river brings rafters back annually.



## MERCED

**SEASON:** APRIL THROUGH MID-JULY  
**USUAL MINIMUM AGE/WT:** 12/90 lbs

**TRIP OPTIONS:** 1-DAY

**MILES:** 16

**LOCATION:** 10 MILES EAST OF MARIPOSA AND  
 4 MILES WEST OF YOSEMITE NATIONAL PARK

**GRADIENT:** 34 FEET PER MILE

The Merced’s clear waters wind through a grassy, mid-Sierra canyon dotted with oak and Gray Pine. People on early spring trips are treated to hillsides decorated in golden poppies, purple lupine, and wild iris. Since there are no dams constructed above this stretch of river, trips take place when the Sierra snowpack melts, normally April through mid-July. For the biggest waves and longest rapids plan a trip during April or May, the months of peak runoff. Although the flow lessens over the course of the season, the steep gradient of this river keeps the pace brisk. You are able to cover an impressive 16 miles in one action-packed day! Waves crash over the bow of rafts over and over again in rapids like *Percolator*, *Ned’s Gulch*, *Split Rock*, and *Corner Pocket*.

Normally, 1-Day trips run the upper 16 miles. This lively section starts off fast for the first six miles, slows down in the middle section, and speeds up again during the final miles. It is a favorite run of many whitewater enthusiasts.

Because of its exceptional qualities, a segment of the Merced was awarded National Wild & Scenic status in 1987 by the US Congress and will remain protected for future generations to enjoy.

For more information and images of the Merced and the surrounding area, go to: [www.AOrafting.com](http://www.AOrafting.com).



Acorns provided the main food source for the Native Americans who lived along the Merced before the arrival of the settlers. Ancient grinding holes are still visible in the rocks along its banks.



CHRIS RUNNER







Paddle crew finishes *Split Rock* rapid and prepares for Class IV *Corner Pocket* just 30 yards downstream! Below: The Class IV section of the Merced is only a few miles from Yosemite.



An oar-paddle combination raft, used during periods of spring-time high-water, blasting through the waves of *Ned's Gulch*, Class IV.

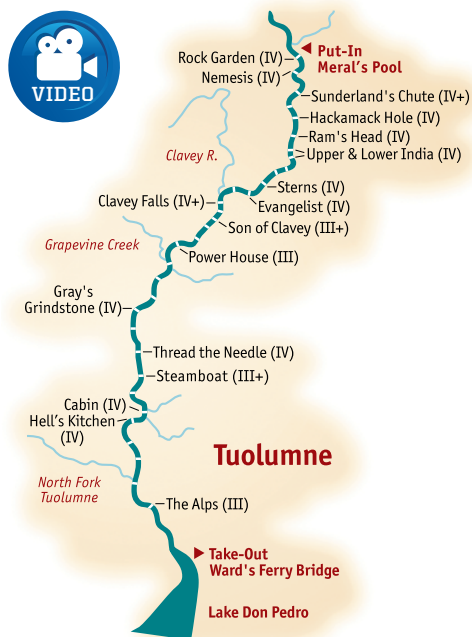


California Quail and other species of wildlife find the Merced Canyon an attractive habitat.





# Tuolumne



MARK REINER



A paddle raft entering Clavey Falls - running this challenging rapid is optional.

**L**OCATED JUST OUTSIDE YOSEMITE NATIONAL PARK, the Tuolumne River provides one of the finest all-around river experiences in the country. Spectacular scenery, thrilling Class IV rapids, great side hikes leading to deep swimming pools, and beautiful white-sand beaches are hidden inside an 18-mile stretch of pristine canyon. Golden eagles, mountain quail, rainbow trout and water ouzels provide a sampling of Sierra wildlife. No signs of modern development interrupt the splendor of this remarkable place. In recognition of the Tuolumne's value, Congress has given the river National Wild and Scenic protection. The Tuolumne is a perfect river for those wishing to experience to Class IV rafting in a wilderness setting.

The whitewater fun begins immediately with *Rock Garden* and *Nemesis*. Long, technical boulder slaloms, tight chutes, and steep drops are characteristic of the entire run. *Sunderland's Chute*, *Ram's Head*, and *Evangelist* provide a solid Class IV warm-up for the Tuolumne's most famous rapid...*Clavey Falls*! Rapids such as *Gray's Grindstone*, *Cabin*, and *Hell's Kitchen* continue to test the skills of each crew.

Springtime on the Tuolumne brings lush green mountainsides and whitewater at its very best. Continuous rapids and swift currents during high water make it important that each participant has ample rafting experience. Summer and fall trips are ideal for lounging in warm swimming holes and experiencing the Tuolumne's renowned trout fishing. During these later months, the Tuolumne's rapids become a less vigorous Class IV challenge and can be attempted by athletic first-timers.

The Tuolumne is dam-controlled, running April through September. 1-, 2-, and 3-Day trips in all-paddle rafts and oar-paddle combination rafts are available. Due to the length of the run, 1-Day trips have no time for added adventures on shore. On the other hand, 2- and 3-Day trips are an excellent way to fully experience the canyon. You will visit historic mining relics, take short hikes along tributary streams to water-slides and deep pools, and still have time to relax in the Tuolumne's spacious river camps. White sand beaches shaded by green willows and towering oaks provide the finest riverside camping. Overnight trips are Lewis and Clark expedition-style, with gear rafts carrying all provisions.

Strict government regulations limit the size of trips to just 20 people and the total number of commercial trips to two departures per day. Such regulations help preserve the high quality of this public resource and ensure solitude along this uncrowded wilderness run.

**For more information and images of the Tuolumne and the surrounding area, go to: [www.AOrafting.com](http://www.AOrafting.com).**



## TUOLUMNE

**SEASON:** APRIL THROUGH SEPTEMBER

**USUAL MINIMUM AGE/WT:** 13/90 lbs

**TRIP OPTIONS:** 1-DAY, 2-DAYS, 3-DAYS

**MILES:** 18, 18, 18

**LOCATION:** 8 MI. EAST OF GROVELAND AND 20 MILES WEST OF YOSEMITE NATIONAL PARK

**GRADIENT:** 40 FEET PER MILE

The National Wild & Scenic Tuolumne hides some of the best camping in all of California. Can you find the happy rafters at the remote river camp in the large photo on the next page?



PHOTOS MARK LEDERADAMS







# North Fork Stanislaus

**T**HE NORTH STANISLAUS RIVER IS A WELL KEPT SECRET. Only a few outfitters have been given government permission to operate river trips on this high Sierra run. Trips start in Stanislaus National Forest, at just over 4,000 feet, which is an unusually high elevation for rivers rafted in California. This run has spectacular alpine scenery — thick forests of pine and fir, mixed with old oak, maple, dogwood, incense cedar, and wild azalea. It is one of the most beautiful settings of any rafting trip in this Guidebook. The ancient Giant Sequoia Redwoods nearby add spice to this already flavorful place.

CHRIS HALL



The North Stan flows through Calaveras Big Trees State Park where Giant Sequoia Redwoods thrive and amaze.

## NORTH FORK STANISLAUS

**SEASON:** APRIL THROUGH MAY

**USUAL MINIMUM AGE:** 15

**TRIP OPTIONS:** 1-DAY

**MILES:** 5

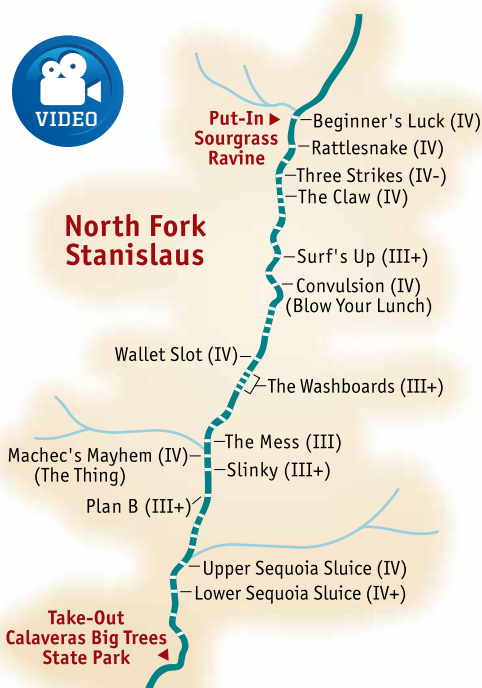
**LOCATION:** 4 MILES EAST OF ARNOLD AND 75 MILES EAST OF STOCKTON

**GRADIENT:** 70 FEET PER MILE

The steep gradient of the North Stanislaus (70' per mile) and the large number of rocks in the river create a rafting experience that is as intense and captivating as its scenery. Less than a minute from put-in lies *Beginners Luck*, a stair-stepping, four-stage 15-foot Class IV drop that will jolt you awake and prepare you for what awaits downstream. *Rattlesnake*, *The Claw*, *Convulsion*, *Wallet Slot*, and *Machek's Mayhem* are twisting, turning rapids that require deft maneuvering at high speeds. A day of back-to-back whitewater ends with a series of big drops in Calaveras Big Trees State Park called *Upper and Lower Sequoia Sluice*.

Although this run is short (5 miles), it is always satisfying because of the amazing scenery, large number of rapids, and the intense, technical paddling required for successful passage. The river runs best in springtime, mid-April through May, and requires an athletic and adventurous crew.

For more information and images of the North Fork Stanislaus, go to: [www.AQrafting.com](http://www.AQrafting.com).



MARK REINER



Centrally located, the North Fork Stanislaus is only a few hours from Sacramento and the San Francisco Bay Area.





Polished granite, magnificent alpine scenery and continuous technical rapids on the North Stanislaus. Below: Paddle crew on the North Stan in the mid 80's.









# Kaweah

**T**HIS CLASS IV+ RIVER HAS ITS HEADWATERS in the 13,000-foot peaks of Kings Canyon and Sequoia National Parks. These majestic snow-capped mountains form a scenic alpine backdrop to this continuous Intermediate-Advanced river. "Rapid-fire excitement" best describes this thrilling and keenly satisfying run. Previous rafting experience is highly recommended, as there is no time to learn to paddle!

The river starts out like a runaway locomotive and is relentless as it heads for Lake Kaweah, nine miles downstream. In fast succession the current immediately draws you into one rapid after another, until you begin to ask, "How long can this last?" *Bumper*, *Power House*, *Cyanotic*, and *Suicide Falls* are only a few of the many Class IV+ rapids that make this run an intense high-speed race to the finish. Simply staying in the raft while paddling through the drops can be a challenge!

The Kaweah put-in is located only a few miles from Sequoia National Park and very close to beautiful Kings Canyon. Snowmelt determines the season, which usually starts in April and lasts through June. Years of heavy snowpack result in later flows and excellent rafting conditions into summer.

*For more information and images of the Kaweah and the surrounding area, go to our web site: [www.AOrafting.com](http://www.AOrafting.com).*



A paddle boat powers through exhilarating Kaweah whitewater.

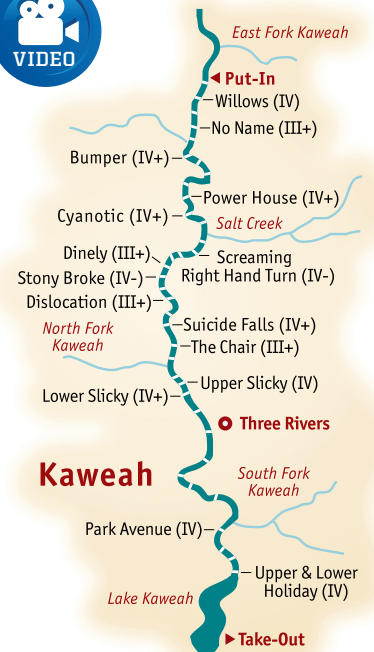


PHOTO: MARK REINER

Just outside Sequoia National Park, the Kaweah offers continuous whitewater and beautiful spring colors.

## KAWEAH

**SEASON:** APRIL THROUGH JUNE

**USUAL MINIMUM AGE:** 15

**TRIP OPTIONS:** 1-DAY

**MILES:** 9

**LOCATION:** 2 MI. WEST OF SEQUOIA NATIONAL PARK AND 70 MI. SOUTHEAST OF FRESNO

**GRADIENT:** 50 FEET PER MILE







The North Fork is runnable for a limited time in the spring. Plan ahead to enjoy this unique canyon of sculpted rock walls and lush vegetation.

Paddlers love the challenge of this invigorating river.



Wildflowers are often enjoyed on California springtime trips.





# North Fork American

**T**HE NORTH FORK AMERICAN IS THE MOST DIFFICULT of the three forks of the American River. Its proximity to the Interstate 80-Lake Tahoe corridor makes for a convenient trip from Sacramento or the San Francisco Bay Area. Every North Fork adventure gets off to a quick start with four miles of intense Class IV rapids. Giant boulders scattered throughout a steep, narrow canyon create a technical, challenging slalom. Previous experience on Class III rivers is advised.

The “heart-in-the-throat” excitement begins immediately as you enter Chamberlain Falls Gorge. *Slaughter’s Sluice*, the first rapid, is a long series of pinball maneuvers that culminates at the infamous seven-foot *Chamberlain Falls*! *Zig-Zag*, *Achilles Heel*, *Bogus Thunder*, and *Staircase* require intricate moves to negotiate. The scenery of this gorge is amazing...lush foliage extends from high on the ridges down to the whitewashed riverside cliffs while water splashes from tiny side canyons to join the incredibly clear North Fork. The second half of the run mellows to Class II-III rapids, allowing time to enjoy the canyon scenery.

The North Fork depends on snowmelt for its flows, so April and May are the best months to run this river.

For more information and images of the North Fork American and the surrounding area, go to: [www.A0rafting.com](http://www.A0rafting.com).

## NORTH FORK AMERICAN

**SEASON:** APRIL THROUGH MAY

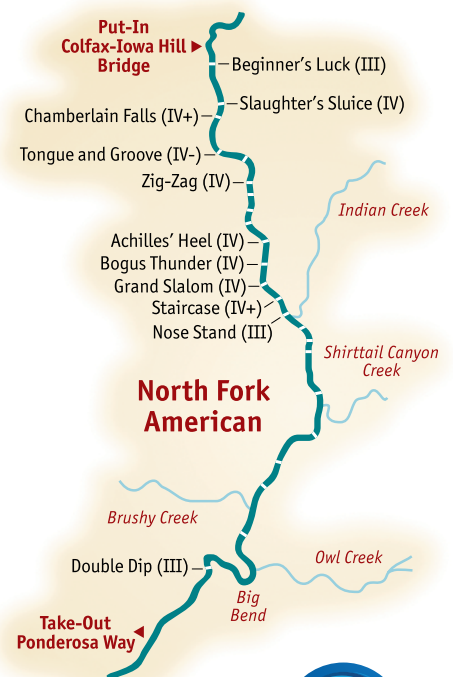
**USUAL MINIMUM AGE:** 15

**TRIP OPTIONS:** 1-DAY

**MILES:** 9

**LOCATION:** 20 MI. NORTHEAST OF AUBURN

**GRADIENT:** 34 FEET PER MILE



Raft pushes through and over 7' *Chamberlain Falls* (Class IV+), one of the first rapids on the North Fork American.





# California Salmon

**T**HE “CAL-SALMON” IS ONE OF CALIFORNIA’S best and most difficult spring runs. Experienced rafters eagerly travel to the northern corner of the state for this river’s outstanding whitewater and temperate rainforest scenery. The river plunges through a narrow, steep-walled gorge with stunning cliffs, waterfalls, and unimaginable rapids. The outstanding qualities of the California Salmon prompted Congress to include this river in the National Wild and Scenic Rivers System.

The Nordheimer Gorge run on the upper section of the river begins immediately with Class IV+ rapids such as *Bloomer Falls*, *Lewis Creek Falls*, and *Airplane Turn*. The action increases at Class V *Cascade Rapid*, which is more waterfall than rapid, and continues its pace through the likes of *Achilles Heel*, *Whirling Dervish*, and *Last Chance*. The intensity peaks at *Freight Train*, a long rapid with massive holes and huge hydraulics. There is never a shortage of rapids on the Cal-Salmon!

After the Nordheimer section the river mellows slightly at Butler Creek, it flows through a magnificent canyon with small waterfalls sheeting over sheer granite cliffs into the Cal-Salmon. The highlight of this lower section is *Gaping Maw*, a long, powerful Class IV rapid that ends in a river-wide hole of frothing whitewater!

On 1-Day trips we raft the entire river in one long day, beginning at Nordheimer. On 2-Day trips we also raft the entire run the first day and then camp along the river at a car-access camp. The next day we do the invigorating Nordheimer section again before we take-out at Butler Creek. Trips are conducted in paddle-rafts or oar-paddle rafts, depending on water levels. The California Salmon is great for those wanting to prepare for a trip on the even more challenging Cherry Creek Class V adventure!



## CALIFORNIA SALMON

**SEASON:** APRIL THROUGH MID-JUNE

**USUAL MINIMUM AGE:** 15

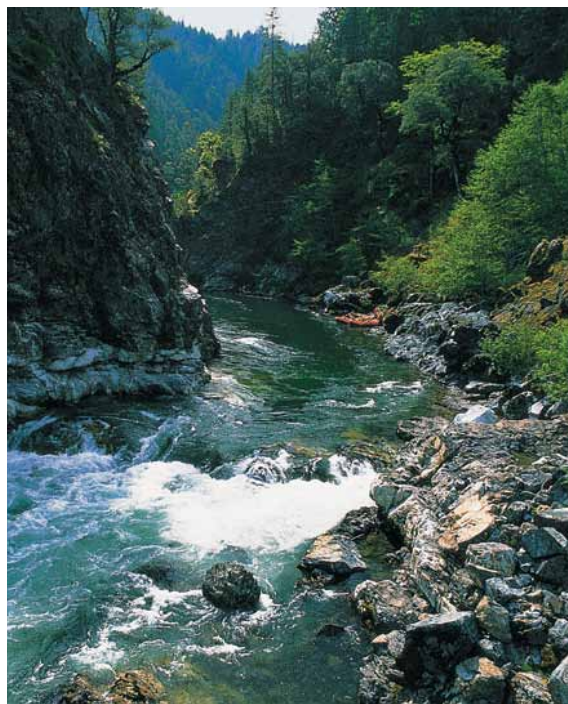
**TRIP OPTIONS:** 1-DAY, 2-DAYS

**MILES:** 12, 18

**LOCATION:** 100 MILES NORTHEAST OF EUREKA  
AND 150 MILES NORTHWEST OF REDDING

**GRADIENT:** 40 FEET PER MILE

The Cal-Salmon has great rapids and incredible scenery featuring rock walls and a temperate rainforest.







Raft crew running Class V *Cascade* on one of our first commercial trips on the Cal-Salmon in the early 80's.



Native Americans who made their home on the Cal-Salmon and Klamath rivers, built canoes of redwood logs. They hollowed the log with fire, then scraped away the soft burned wood with a shell adz.



Both paddle rafts and oar-paddle combination rafts are used on Cal-Salmon trips.

MARK REINER







# Cherry Creek

**C**HERRY CREEK IS THE MOST CHALLENGING commercial river trip in California, and perhaps the entire United States. With a phenomenal twelve Class V rapids and many unnamed Class IV drops, this 9-mile run is incomparable.

Cherry Creek is more than superlative whitewater. The canyon's rare beauty creates a backdrop for both group unity and personal experience, while the limited number of commercial outfitters fosters a unique level of privacy.

Guests on Cherry Creek are an integral part of each trip, helping navigate, portage, and scout rapids. This level of participation requires previous Class IV-V whitewater or other water sport experience, adequate physical condition, and good swimming ability. Swimming practice and Class V education are part of each trip.

The whitewater adventure starts immediately with Class IV "warm-up" rapids. Then the Class V begins: rapids like *Jawbone*, *Mushroom*, *Toadstool*, and *Unknown Soldier* kick off an unforgettable morning. After re-grouping in one of the river's many calm pools, trips enter the infamous *Miracle Mile*, which drops 200 feet in a single mile and boasts back-to-back Class V whitewater: *Smokey's Hole*, *Blind Faith*, *Gar's Lunch*, *Eulogy*, *Coffin Rock* and *Lewis's Leap*. Before the trip ends we portage *Flat Rock* and *Lumsden Falls*, finishing with two miles of Class III-IV rapids. At take out, guests have experienced it all: natural beauty, camaraderie, and exceptional whitewater.

*For more information about our combination trips with the Main Tuolumne river and to view images of Cherry Creek and the surrounding area, go to: [www.AOrafting.com](http://www.AOrafting.com).*



**SEASON:** MID-JULY THROUGH SEPTEMBER

**USUAL MINIMUM AGE:** 17

**TRIP OPTIONS:** 1 DAY **MILES:** 9

**LOCATION:** 15 MILES EAST OF GROVELAND

AND 15 MI. WEST OF YOSEMITE NATIONAL PARK

**GRADIENT:** 105 FEET PER MILE



PHOTOS: MARK REINER

Left: Class V *Lewis' Leap*; Raft crew runs the leap while another raft waits in the pool above. Cherry Creek, as a classic "pool/drop" river, offers technical whitewater separated by calm pools." Above: Dropping into *Toadstool* rapid (Class V) on Cherry Creek.





An historic "basket boat" negotiates "Razorback" rapid, Main Stanislaus, Camp Nine run, 1963.

TYLER CHILDRESS

## All-Outdoors

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Extended Summer Office Hours  
8 am-7 pm M-F & 9 am-4 pm S-S  
Regular Hours 9 am-5 pm M-F



# ..More Rivers...More Fun!

## River Trips and Reservations

### Choosing a River Trip...

Choose a river that suits your experience level. Most first-timers start with a "Beginner" river (pg.6-9) before advancing to an "Intermediate" river (pg.10-21). Call our office for helpful advice. When planning a group trip, always consider the abilities of the least experienced member.

### Who Can Participate...

From a lazy day of summer on the Class I-II Easy Section of the South Fork American, to the adrenaline rush on Class V Cherry Creek, this Guidebook offers a river trip to satisfy most everyone. Participants should be able to swim and feel comfortable in the water. Unfortunately, persons with a chest or torso size over 52" (life jacket maximum size) cannot take part in an All-Outdoors trip. People with special health considerations should call our office and consult their physician for recommendations.

### Making a Reservation

You can call our office at (800) 24-RAFTS or go online at [www.AOrafting.com](http://www.AOrafting.com) to reserve space on the rafting trip and date you desire. Usually, payment is due at the time of your reservation.

### We Provide...

All-Outdoors provides professional instruction preceding your trip, a Coast Guard approved life jacket, professional rafting equipment, a professional guide in each raft, river shuttles, and deluxe food from the first to last lunch.

### You Bring...

You bring personal clothing for the trip. A sleeping bag, tent (if desired), and toiletry items are also needed for overnight trips. A detailed "What To Bring" list will be sent to you, or may be obtained online from our website. Transportation to and from the meeting place is your responsibility.



### Delicious All-Outdoors River Cuisine

Our meals are prepared with a variety of wholesome, fresh ingredients, to provide a healthful and appetizing menu for our guests. Lunches on 1-Day trips consist of our spectacular build-it-yourself gourmet sandwich bar, along with fresh fruit, salsa and chips, beverage, and dessert. A typical 2-Day trip dinner includes hors d'oeuvres, fresh tossed salad, pasta with vegetables, camp french bread, chicken, steak, beverages, and a fresh baked dutch oven dessert. Breakfast varies from custom omelets, camp hash browns, and bacon, to fancy continental cuisine when time is limited. Each meal is a delight, served in a river setting with a natural ambience a restaurant can never match.

### AOrafting.com...

#### Find this Guidebook & More!

Our award winning, comprehensive website is an invaluable tool for planning your first, second, and hundredth rafting trip. At your finger tips lies additional information including rafting [videos](#), real-time [river flows](#), space availability, reservations, trip options and details, [costs](#), [discounts](#), and extensive photo galleries. This dynamic site is updated regularly and is an easy way to get informed and keep in touch with California rafting. Start your river trip by going to [www.AOrafting.com](http://www.AOrafting.com).

**Reserve Space Now**  
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# All-Outdoors California Whitewater Rafting • River Comparison Chart

| RIVER  | ★LEVEL OF DIFFICULTY | NO. OF DAYS | RIVER MILES | GRADIENT VERTICAL DROP | SCENERY   | ✚ SOLITUDE | USUAL MIN AGE | ✚ WETSUITS             | DRY YEAR     | RAFTING SEASON NORMAL | WET YEAR     | DRIVING MI FROM SF | SAC | LA  |
|--|----------------------|-------------|-------------|------------------------|-----------|------------|---------------|------------------------|--------------|-----------------------|--------------|--------------------|-----|-----|
| <b>EASY BEGINNER • CLASS I-II</b>  |                      |             |             |                        |           |            |               |                        |              |                       |              |                    |     |     |
| <b>TOM SAWYER FLOAT TRIP*</b><br><b>SOUTH FORK AMERICAN</b><br><i>Great for families with young children</i>           | I-II                 | 1           | 5           | 17'/MI                 | GOOD      | FAIR       | 5             | TYPICALLY NOT REQUIRED | JUN-OCT      | JUN-OCT               | JUN-OCT      | 130                | 40  | 425 |
| <b>BEGINNER-INTERMEDIATE • CLASS III</b>   |                      |             |             |                        |           |            |               |                        |              |                       |              |                    |     |     |
| <b>SOUTH FORK AMERICAN*</b><br><i>Most popular whitewater river in California</i>                                      | III                  | 1,2         | 9,12,21     | 25'/MI                 | GOOD      | FAIR       | 8             | APR-MID. MAY           | ALL YEAR     | ALL YEAR              | ALL YEAR     | 130                | 40  | 425 |
| <b>INTERMEDIATE • CLASS III-IV</b>   |                      |             |             |                        |           |            |               |                        |              |                       |              |                    |     |     |
| <b>MIDDLE FORK AMERICAN*</b><br><i>Remote, scenic 2000' deep canyon with a taste of Class IV whitewater</i>            | III-IV               | 1,2,3       | 16,16,23    | 40'/MI                 | EXCELLENT | VERY GOOD  | 12            | APR-MID. MAY           | APR-SEP      | APR-OCT               | APR-OCT      | 140                | 50  | 435 |
| <b>MERCED</b><br><i>Excellent introduction to Class IV white-water; only a few minutes from Yosemite</i>               | III-IV               | 1           | 16          | 34'/MI                 | GOOD      | FAIR       | 12            | APR-MID. JUN           | APR-JUN      | APR-MID. JUL          | APR-AUG      | 180                | 150 | 310 |
| <b>INTERMEDIATE-ADVANCED • CLASS IV-IV+</b>  |                      |             |             |                        |           |            |               |                        |              |                       |              |                    |     |     |
| <b>TUOLUMNE*</b><br><i>Designated "Wild &amp; Scenic" by Congress<br/>Considered California's best multi-day trip</i>  | IV-IV+               | 1,2,3       | 18,18,18    | 40'/MI                 | EXCELLENT | EXCELLENT  | 13            | APR-JUN                | APR-AUG      | APR-SEP               | APR-OCT      | 140                | 115 | 370 |
| <b>NORTH FORK STANISLAUS</b><br><i>Beautiful high-alpine setting with lots of whitewater action</i>                    | IV-IV+               | 1           | 5           | 70'/MI                 | EXCELLENT | VERY GOOD  | 15            | APR-MAY                | APR-MID. MAY | APR-MAY               | APR-OCT      | 160                | 125 | 410 |
| <b>KAWEAH</b><br><i>One rapid after another, near Sequoia National Park</i>  | IV-IV+               | 1           | 9           | 50'/MI                 | GOOD      | FAIR       | 15            | APR-MID. JUN           | APR-MAY      | APR-JUN               | APR-JUL      | 260                | 240 | 210 |
| <b>NORTH FORK AMERICAN</b><br><i>Springtime run through a narrow rock gorge with intense rapids</i>                    | IV-IV+               | 1           | 9           | 34'/MI                 | EXCELLENT | VERY GOOD  | 15            | APR-MID. MAY           | APR          | APR-MAY               | APR-JUN      | 150                | 55  | 420 |
| <b>ADVANCED • CLASS V</b>  |                      |             |             |                        |           |            |               |                        |              |                       |              |                    |     |     |
| <b>CALIFORNIA SALMON</b><br><i>Steep, rock-walled gorge in a temperate rainforest with very challenging whitewater</i> | IV+-V                | 1,2         | 12,18       | 40'/MI                 | EXCELLENT | VERY GOOD  | 15            | ALWAYS                 | APR-MAY      | APR-MID. JUN          | APR-MID. JUL | 395                | 320 | 680 |
| <b>CHERRY CREEK*</b><br><i>Considered the most challenging commercially run whitewater river in the U.S.</i>           | V                    | 1           | 9           | 105'/MI                | EXCELLENT | EXCELLENT  | 17            | ALWAYS                 | JUN-AUG      | JUL-SEP               | AUG-SEP      | 140                | 115 | 370 |

\* Dam release from upstream man-made reservoirs/fairly predictable flows. **The South Fork American has guaranteed weekend water for all season types from wet through dry years.**

★ Based on the International Scale of Difficulty (see page 4 inside this Guidebook)

✚ While rivers with "excellent" ratings have solitude 7 days a week, the level of solitude on other rivers improves during early and late season, as well as midweek during the summer.

✚ Wetsuit requirements can vary so please call our office for details. Wetsuits may be rented directly from All-Outdoors at the meeting place the morning of your trip.



All-Outdoors belongs to a number of organizations dedicated to river protection and conservation. We donate a portion of your trip fees to **Friends of the River**, one of the top river preservation organizations in the U.S. To learn more about Friends of the River, go to [friendsoftheriver.org](http://friendsoftheriver.org). Brochure design: [daviddesign.com](http://daviddesign.com) • Photos by [picturethisimaginethat.biz](http://picturethisimaginethat.biz) unless noted.

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All-Outdoors operates under the permits and approval of U.S. Forest Service, Calaveras Big Trees State Park, Auburn State Recreation Area, and the Bureau of Land Management. Notice: Water flows on the South Fork American River result from releases from hydroelectric facilities located upstream. Such water releases are not subject to the control of El Dorado County or commercial rafting companies operating under permits from the County of El Dorado. All-Outdoors is an equal opportunity service provider. Please pass this guide on to a friend or recycle.



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