

Forks of the Kern

KERN RIVER OUTFITTERS

Sequoia National Forest

P.O. Box 1207
6643 Wofford Heights Blvd.
Wofford Heights, CA 93285
Toll Free (800) 323-4234
Local (760) 376-3370
Fax (760) 376-8830

eMail: office@KernRafting.com
www.KernRafting.com

The headwaters of the North Fork of the Kern River originate at Mt. Whitney and plunge forty miles to the confluence of the Little Kern River. There, in the Golden Trout Wilderness, we begin our Forks of the Kern rafting trip. Mile for mile, no other river we run surges with as many waves, holes, and hair-raising hydraulics as the Forks of the Kern. The scenery is magnificent, with eight-thousand-foot granite spires looming to the west, and waterfalls plunging straight into the river.

We look forward to meeting you on your Forks of the Kern River trip. To ensure that you fully enjoy your trip, please use these notes when making plans. Pay close attention to the trip details section, which explains the two-mile hike to put-in, the need for wetsuits and some of our on-river procedures.

Trip Dates: May 6, 11, 16, 21, 26,
31, June 5, 10, 15, 20,
25, 30,
July 5, 10, 15, 20, 25, 30

Meeting Time: 8:00 AM
Meeting Place: Kern River Outfitters'
Rafting Center,
Wofford Heights, CA

DIRECTIONS

From Southern California, leave the Los Angeles Basin by Interstate 5 North. Descend the Grapevine Grade and take Highway 99 North to Bakersfield. Take the Lake Isabella/Highway 178 East exit and follow 178 up to the town of Lake Isabella. At Lake Isabella, take Highway 155 North towards Kernville. Wofford Heights is mid-way between Lake Isabella and Kernville. Our Rafting Center is located on the right at 6602 Wofford Heights Blvd (at the intersection of Evans Road).

Park your car at the back of the building and register inside. Although our parking lot is on private property, it is near a busy road. Do not leave valuables in your vehicle and make sure it is securely locked. No overnight camping is allowed at our parking area.

LODGING THE NIGHT BEFORE YOUR TRIP

Most of our guests spend the evening before their trip in the Kern Valley at one of the many motels in the area. Our office staff will be happy to assist you with pre and/or post trip lodging plans. Please let us know where you will be staying.

ACCOMMODATIONS IN THE AREA

If you plan to stay in the area before or after your trip, we suggest:

The Kern Lodge
67 Valley View
Kernville, CA 93238
1-800-924-8817

The Barewood Motel
7013 Wofford Blvd
Wofford Heights, CA 93285
1-888-734-3344

Falling Waters River Resort
15729 Sierra Way
Kernville, CA 93238
1-888-376-2242

The Whispering Pines
13745 Sierra Way
Kernville, CA 93238
1-877-241-4100

PRE-TRIP MEETING

The evening before your trip, one of your guides will hold an informational meeting to discuss trip details and hand out waterproof bags for your gear. The pre-trip meeting will be held at 8:30 pm at your motel. If you are unable to attend, a waterproof bag with an instruction sheet will be left for you at your motel.

AGE LIMITS

The minimum age on our Forks of the Kern trips is sixteen years old. Guests under eighteen must be accompanied by a parent. This age limit is in place for the safety of your child, the safety of our other guests, and our guides.

TRIP DETAILS

The headwaters of the Kern are on the slopes of Mt. Whitney. By the time the river reaches our put-in at the confluence of the North Fork and the Little Kern, the water temperature is usually in the mid-forties. **Use of a wetsuit and paddling jacket is included in your trip fee. We do not provide footwear and recommend neoprene or wool socks, which you should wear with sturdy sneakers.** This is the best footwear for stability, moving around on rocky trails, and foot protection. Standard booties don't provide enough support and protection when climbing over boulders. A **full-length wetsuit** is absolutely essential for your comfort and to avoid hypothermia, the dangerous lowering of the body's temperature.

Well in advance of your trip, please return your Participant Agreement and provide the personal information requested. Please remember to include your height, weight, and age.

On the morning of the trip, we meet at our Rafting Center in Wofford Heights at 8:00 am. After registering, we board our bus and drive to the nearby town of Kernville. We stop there to review safety issues relevant to running a river as challenging as the Forks, and to evaluate the ability of guests to deal with situations we might encounter. Paddlers will be asked to take our "Class V Paddler's Evaluation". This test will include basic swimming and safety exercises with a focus on stamina. After the test, we'll re-board our bus for the 2-hour drive to Lloyd Meadows and the trailhead to the Forks. From there, we hike to the river.

The hike is virtually all downhill, switch-backing steadily, with a striking view of the canyon. You must carry your own gear, which usually weighs about thirty pounds. The trail is easy going, and the duffels Kern River Outfitters provides have convenient shoulder straps. Please bring only essential items, so that we can keep the weight of the boats to a minimum.

At the river put-in, you'll meet the rest of the guides who have helped pack the boats down to the river by horseback the previous day. While the boats are readied and the equipment stowed, we'll serve lunch. You'll have a chance to pack items you'll want during the day in waterproof containers. You'll probably want to bring sunscreen, sunglasses, and perhaps a camera. If you bring a camera, we recommend you obtain insurance for damage. We will also use this time to go over further safety and logistics concerns.

We start floating the river in the afternoon on the first day. During the second and third days, we start midmorning. All three days take us through some astounding rapids, all piled one on top of another. Freeman Creek, Vortex, Confusion, the Gauntlet, and Carson Falls are some of the highlights of this 20 mile stretch of rapids. We reach take-out mid-afternoon of the third day and usually have you back to the Rafting Center and your car by 5 pm.

ON-RIVER PROCEDURES

The Forks of the Kern is a snow-melt river subject to quick changes of high mountain weather conditions, and the water level can rise or fall significantly in a few hours. At some water levels, rapids such as Carson Falls and Vortex may be unsafe to run. At these times, the Trip Leader may elect to line or portage the boats and equipment around these spots or to have the guides row the boats through with no passengers in them. On most trips, there will be time for hikes up side canyons and streams. Fishing here is world-class. You can try your luck at our overnight camps and lunch stops. If you plan to fish, you must obtain a fishing license.

WEATHER

The Forks of the Kern can experience cold, changeable, high mountain weather. Our experience has shown that fleece or wool clothing with polypropylene underwear provides the best all-weather comfort. Tents will be needed throughout April, May, and June.

WHAT TO BRING

- Sleeping bag and ground cloth (must be polar guard type and compactly storable. Do not bring bulky cotton bags)
- Air mattress or pad
- Polypropylene underwear, tops and bottoms
- Rain jacket and rain pants
- Hiking or sturdy shoes for trail/camp
- On-river footwear (neoprene socks and sneakers)
- Lightweight tent
- Change of clothing
- Toiletries
- Sunscreen and lip protection
- Swimsuit or shorts
- Insect repellent
- Sunglasses with strap
- Fleece pullover or wool sweater
- Wool cap or hat
- Wool socks
- Gloves
- Flashlight
- Water bottle

Optional items might include reading material, sketch pad, field glasses, fishing equipment (rods in protective aluminum cases), camera, and personal beverages (in unbreakable containers). Do not bring radios or firearms.

If you do not have a tent or a compact, synthetic sleeping bag, you may rent them through our office. Please make rental arrangements well in advance of your trip. Please remember that we carry everything with us... **pack light!** An excellent source of information on outdoor clothing appropriate for river trips is the *Patagonia Guideline*, 1-800-523-9597.

ALCOHOL

If you bring alcohol on your trip, we ask that you drink in moderation and only while in camp in the evening. Consumption of alcohol is prohibited while rafting or prior to rafting for your safety and for the safety of your fellow guests and guides.

MEALS

All on-river meals are provided beginning with lunch the first day and ending with lunch the last day. The food is fresh and hearty and the guides will prepare it for you. Usually the guides cook over an open fire, though in periods of fire danger, propane stoves will be used. We welcome your participation in helping to set up camp, prepare meals, etc. Please feel free to participate in trip work as much, or as little, as you would like. We also encourage you to share any knowledge you have of geology, botany, or any other subject of interest.

EQUIPMENT

We furnish rugged inflatable rafts, 12 to 16 feet in length. We provide life vests, first aid, and safety supplies. Do not bring your own lifevest. Our lifevests are approved for rafting and we require that they be worn by guests. On most trips, the majority of passengers ride in paddleboats. A paddleboat is piloted by a guide, assisted by four to six passengers.

HELMETS

Safety helmets are available at no additional charge to guests joining us on any stretch of river that we run. Helmets are **REQUIRED** for all trips we run except the Lickety Split stretch on the Upper Kern. Clients expressly assume all risks associated with their refusal to use or properly use helmets.

GUIDES

Our guides are experienced, skilled whitewater boaters. They are knowledgeable about canyon ecology and natural history. Should the need arise they are trained to administer First Aid. Guides can also provide information on organizations that work to preserve and protect rivers and river canyons.

PHOTOS OF YOUR TRIP

Kern River Outfitters will be on the river to capture your day of fun and excitement. A skilled photographer will take snapshots of you and your group as you travel down the Kern River. CD's will be available for purchase at the conclusion of your trip containing all of the photos of your raft or, if you prefer, all of the photos taken of the entire trip.

CARE OF THE ENVIRONMENT

To protect the river, we carry out all trash and use no soap in the river. The guides will instruct you in simple procedures that minimize the impact of our group on the canyon.

RESPONSIBILITY

Trip participants should understand that river trips involve known and unknown risks. Kern River Outfitters assumes no responsibility for injuries, death, or loss/damage to client's property while on the river. All clients must sign a Release and Waiver Agreement expressly acknowledging these points. Kern River Outfitters assumes no responsibility for vehicles and/or the contents of vehicles parked during the trip. Because of the risks associated with river trips, including personal injury, death, property loss or damage, or financial loss in the event of trip cancellation, we urge all trip participants to supplement their own insurance with vacation insurance.

YOUR HEALTH

Our Kern River trips are fun, fast, and challenging. To participate, you should be in good health. You may also need to perform certain physical activities. These include: basic swimming, hiking in rugged or uneven terrain, climbing in and out of rafts, and assisting in your rescue, if that becomes necessary. Please let us know when you return your Release Agreement if you have any health or dietary restrictions. We will gladly accommodate reasonable dietary restrictions with advanced notice.

PERFORMANCE

It is sometimes necessary to cancel or modify a trip because of unusual circumstances beyond our control. In such cases, we cannot be responsible for paying expenses other than refunding all or part of the fees paid to Kern River Outfitters. Determination of refunds (if any) will be made after reviewing trip details. Guides and other personnel employed by Kern River Outfitters are not authorized to make or promise trip refunds or trip credits. Such determinations can be only be made by company officers.

CANCELLATIONS

If you must cancel your reservation, you may be eligible for a partial refund. Our cancellation policy is firm. We operate under stringent federal regulations which restrict the number of guests per trip and the number of trips per season. We incur substantial expenses before each trip departs. In the event of late cancellations, Kern River Outfitters cannot recover costs, nor can we make refunds. Written cancellation notice received more than 30 days prior to departure will result in a refund of trip fees less \$250 per person. **Cancellations within 30 days of a trip are nonrefundable.** If you must cancel at the last minute, and do not have vacation insurance, try to find a friend to take your place.

TIPPING

Guests sometimes ask whether gratuities are appropriate. If you enjoyed your trip, please feel free to leave a tip with the Trip Leader. Guests typically leave 10% - 15% of the trip cost. Gratuities will be shared among all the guides on the trip.

PERMITS

Our trips are conducted under a permit issued by the U.S. Forest Service, Sequoia National Forest. Our permit is your assurance that Kern River Outfitters is legally operating on the river. Our operations and facilities are operated on a nondiscriminatory basis.

RAFTING VACATIONS IN IDAHO & OREGON

Our sister company, Idaho & Oregon River Journeys, offers 6 day trips down the Middle Fork and Main Salmon rivers in Idaho and 4 day trips on the Rogue River in Southern Oregon. For more information on our Idaho and Oregon trips visit www.IdahoRiverJourneys.com or www.RogueRiverTrips.com.

STAYING IN TOUCH WITH KERN RIVER OUTFITTERS

Keep in touch with Kern River Outfitter on the internet via our website: KernRafting.com. Updates and important news is available on our Kern Blog, Twitter, and Facebook pages as well as our e-Newsletters. ■

Kern River Outfitters logos, photos and original text are © 20101 by Kern River Outfitters and O.A. Outfitting, Inc. All rights reserved. Revised 2/25/11.