

University of Minnesota Duluth - Rec Sports Outdoor Program

Discover the Ozarks: Canoe the Buffalo National River, Arkansas

Warmth, beauty, and fun are all a part of this late winter getaway to the Buffalo National River (part of the National Park System). Start the trip on the upper reaches of the Buffalo with 500 foot bluffs and mostly flat moving water and move along in the clear flowing water as we pass by small rapids, old homesteads, and wildlife. Trails to hidden waterfalls, cemeteries, caves, and relic farms beckon as we explore. The total river distance the group will travel is about 94 miles.

HERE'S WHAT TO EXPECT:

We will begin our journey here in Duluth and travel together as a group to the put-in on the Buffalo River in Ponca, AR. While on the Buffalo, the group will paddle and explore the rich human history and natural history. The difficulty of the river ranges from flat water to class 1-2 rapids, depending upon the river level. Anticipate paddling on the average about 15 miles per day. This will allow for various stops along the way to hike or relax. Evenings will be spent camping on sand and gravel bars at the river's edge, telling stories around the campfire, and sleeping in tents.

WHEN:

Pre-Trip Meeting: Tuesday, March 2, 2010, 5pm SpHC 153
Trip Departure: 4pm Friday, March 12, 2010
Trip Returns: 2pm Sunday, March 21, 2010

PREPARATION:

- *Equipment* – attached is an equipment list that includes what we provide and what you need to obtain. **Follow this closely**, it is based upon extensive experience. Plan on weather that could range from the mid-60's to the 40's and rainy (though it could be higher or lower depending upon weather systems at that time).
- *Fitness & skills* – this trip is an introductory level trip in which most anyone can participate. It is recommended that you have paddled in a canoe before, at least on lakes, and that you are fit enough that you could be physically active for numerous full days. There will be time for breaks and relaxation, but we will need to keep moving down the river daily.
- *Health & Liability Form* – complete these forms and return them no later than the scheduled pre-trip meeting.

THE OUTDOOR PROGRAM PROVIDES:

All group gear, quality paddling equipment, food while on the trail, transportation, and expert instruction.

COST:

UMD Students: \$465/ Others: \$725
Registration Deadline: Noon on Friday, February 26
Sign up early to ensure you get a spot on the trip!

TRANSPORTATION:

We will be travelling the 800 miles to the river in a University van. If you would like to meet us at our starting point, we can make arrangements.



GOALS:

- Have fun with other people who like the outdoors
- Discover or practice canoeing skills on a spectacular river
- Explore a beautiful and rich environment

RESOURCES:

There is a lot to learn about the Buffalo – the more you know, the more you can enjoy the area. Check out the Buffalo National River at <http://www.nps.gov/buff/>

GENERAL INFO:

Phone: (218)726-7128
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The Real Classroom is Outside...Get Into It!

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Itinerary

This itinerary is designed to be flexible based on many factors that include: weather, water levels, skill levels, and interests. Listed are highlights of what will be seen and done.

Tuesday, March 2, 5:00pm

Mandatory Pre-Trip Meeting in Sports and Health Center 153 Conference Room. Introductions, group expectations, itinerary, safety, physical preparation, limitations, equipment, meals, and final payment due at this meeting.

Friday, March 12, 4pm

Depart from the front of the Sports and Health Center on the U.M.D. campus. Drive down toward Arkansas with gas stops, dinner, and breakfast along the way. Each person pays for their own meals. Sleep in the van (so bring a pillow).

Saturday, March 13 9am

Arrive at Lost Valley Park. This will be a day of hiking and cave exploring in the park as well as organizing gear and working on canoeing skills on a part of the river. This will be the time to transition from van travelling to canoeing and hiking. Camp at Lost Valley.

Sunday, March 14

Break camp and put-in at Ponca or Steele Creek (depending upon water level). Today is the day of spectacular cliffs of over 500 feet. We can hike at Big Bluff and Hemmed in Hollow with hidden falls and stories of lost homesteads. (10 miles of paddling) Camp at Indian Creek – a nice open spot along the river.

Monday, March 15

Paddle and explore along the way. At Erbie ford, a hiking loop will take us to the Cherry Grove cemetery with 18th century graves and the Parker-Hickman farm, with buildings still standing (a sight right out of a history book) – you will see what life was like at a rural homestead in much of the early 19th century. Camp below Pruitt on a gravel bar. (13 miles of paddling).

Tuesday, March 16

Continue paddling – past Chimney Rock and Stillhouse Hollow to a beautiful spot across from Falls Bluff where we will camp. We will arrive in camp early and relax and work on our pizzas for dinner. (16 miles of paddling).

Wednesday, March 17

Paddle through Patton Shoal and Longest Pool, past Copper Bluff to the “Nars” (narrows) between Buffalo and Richland Creek and hike up for expansive vistas. Explore for the old Narrows Cemetery hidden in the brush. This area, where Richland Creek joins the Buffalo is fertile in land and history. Set up camp across from Whisenant Bluff (19 miles of paddling).

Thursday, March 18

Paddle past Skull Bluff (through one of the “eyes” of the skull) to Tyler Bend. Explore Tyler Bend Park, spend time hiking the trails (Collier Bluff Trail), learn about early settlers in the area. Paddle on to Gilbert and explore this little town with an old-time General Store – bring your money for an ice cream cone or other treat. Camp near Red Bluff. (17 miles of paddling).

Friday, March 19

Paddle, relax, and explore our way down to the next campsite. A bit slower paced day. (12 miles of paddling).

Saturday, March 20

Paddle down to Buffalo Point. Pass Skull Rock along the way. Pack up for the return drive. (9 miles of paddling). By 8pm depart for Duluth.

Sunday, March 21

Arrive back in Duluth by 2pm - put gear away as a group.

INTERESTING INFO:

- The Buffalo River is in the Ozark Mountains
- The river was preserved as the last free-flowing (no dams) river in Arkansas in 1972.
- To help preserve the river, we will practice minimum impact camping.
- The cliffs and caves found around the river are a result of the erosion of ancient sea-bed rocks.
- Many of the hiking trails are relic trails of days gone by – everything from horse trails to wagon trails.
- The spring migration of birds will be in full force when we are on the Buffalo – birds heading north are passing through.
- Even though we will be in snake country, it is unlikely that we will have the opportunity to see them – still a bit too cold.
- The cave that we will explore in Lost Valley is spectacular – narrow passages lead to a large room with a waterfall coming from overhead.
- There are no portages on this river – all rapids are fairly simple with, at most, basic maneuvering needed.

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Equipment List

On this trip the weather may vary from warm and sunny with a high of 65 degrees to cold, rainy, and windy and in the 40 degree range. Plan your clothing items so they can be worn over each other in layers. During the coldest possible weather, you may be wearing nearly all of your layers. Pack equipment in small duffel bags or stuff sacs. Bring a smaller day pack for easy access articles. The majority of your personal gear will be kept in Duluth Packs (lined with heavy duty garbage bags).

WE FURNISH:

- Canoes
- Spare paddles
- Life jackets
- Folding saw
- Utility ropes
- Water filters
- Matches
- Paddles & Life Vests – we can supply these, but you may prefer to bring your own
- Maps
- Tents
- First-aid kit
- Camp stoves/fuel
- Cook kit
- Repair kit
- Tarps
- Duluth Packs
- Toilet bucket, seat, etc
- Bailers or sponges
- Rescue ropes equip.
- Cooking utensil kit
- Food & menus
- Toilet paper

YOU NEED TO BRING:

- Sleeping pad (closed cell or self-inflating)
- Sleeping bag (to 20^o) in stuff sac w/plastic liners
- Broad brimmed hat for sun protection
- Unbreakable eating utensils (plate, cup, bowl, fork, spoon)
- Life vest (optional)
- Wool or fleece winter hat
- 1 pair light shoes
- 1 pair hiking shoes or boots
- 2 pair loose fitting pants
- Lightweight wool or fleece shirt
- Wool or fleece shirt/sweater
- Spring/fall weight jacket
- 3 cotton t-shirts
- 4 pair wool socks
- Long underwear (not cotton)
- Spare prescription glasses
- 1 quart water bottle
- Soap/shampoo/hygiene kit
- Sunscreen and hand lotion
- Flashlight or Headlamp w/ fresh batteries
- Sandals or rubber overshoes/boots
- Pillow and food money for van
- Canoe paddle (optional)
- Gloves or mittens
- Wind breaker/paddling jacket
- 2 piece rain suit
- Belt
- Pocket knife
- Small towel
- Day pack for hiking
- 2 pair shorts
- Underwear
- Sunglasses
- Safety strap for glasses
- Toothbrush/paste
- Bandana
- Band-aids and moleskin

RENTAL:

If you don't have some of the major items, you can rent from the Rec Sports Outdoor Program Rental Center at a 10% discount from normal rates.

EQUIPMENT TIPS:

- Fleece and wool are great insulators – they even work when wet.
- Quality rain gear really helps you enjoy inclement weather. Get something good.
- Long underwear should be a synthetic material, not cotton. If you don't have any, most outdoor stores have appropriate supplies.
- Wool socks work best because they are durable and warm.

EXTRAS YOU CAN BRING:

Personal tent or tarp for sleeping on sand/gravel beaches, camera, journal, pencil/pen, book to read, field guides, personal river guide book, map, compass, and gloves to protect your hands from blisters while paddling. Camera will need to be in a durable, waterproof container.

DO NOT BRING:

- MP3 Players (except for van ride)
- Valuables
- Recreational drugs or alcohol

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