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Whitewater Rafting Forges Bonds Stronger than the Rapids

By Jim Sampson

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by: **Jim Sampson**

Colorado River Rafting is a Trip

Visualize the boat's brow cutting through the swirling, surging water; the sun sparkling on the frothy waves, making tiny rainbows; the abrupt lurch of the craft, as the surging waves suddenly shift direction. The adrenalin is pumping, all senses alert, with nature working overtime to orchestrate a thrill you'll never forget. That's what most people think a raft trip entails, but there's much more going on. Your connection with the other rafters forms a matchless adventure that won't be forgotten.

Rafting down the Arkansas River on the rushing snowmelt from 14,000 feet peaks is exciting – no doubt about it. But the trip is still safe enough for a family vacation. River rafting in Colorado combines thrilling rapids with quiet stretches, where rafters can take in the spectacular mountain scenery close up. Their mental cameras capture images that will be studied over and over later, once they return home.

Look Past the Surging River and the Drama

There's one thing even more crucial than the water for making your adventure tour a treasured event. It's the other people. Some you bring along, like family, friends or group (such as a scout troop). You may think you know each other already, but the time spent on the river forever alters the way you'll relate back home. That's the real pay-off from a wilderness adventure. The guides and other rafters also play essential roles in the total experience.

Unlike taking a bus or a train, the goal isn't to arrive at the destination. Instead, getting there is ALL the fun. So there's no hurry. Everyone along plays their part in moving the boats, and reacts to what the river throws at them. Each person needs to develop their sense of teamwork and reliance on each other. The emotional exhilaration amps up even more because of the sharing involved. Facing physical challenges together builds trust and confidence in each other, in a matter of hours.

Make Memories that Don't Fade

Scientists have discovered that the intensity of an emotional experience permanently alters the way a person remembers it. Emotionally charged experiences are filed differently in the brain than everyday ones are. Later, they're recalled with vivid detail, without losing clarity over time. Recalling even a small part of the event brings the full force of experience back. That's why they're called "flashbulb memories."

When people go through such powerful experiences together, they relate to each other in new ways. It's certainly a step away from their day-in, day-out routines. That's a major reason why a wilderness adventure like whitewater rafting does more for those who take the trip than a casual vacation would. They develop new ways to relate to nature and each other. Rafters tell me they arranged the trip to get away from the TV and the cell phone. But they're pleased to find that the river is the tonic for much of

what's stressful for them.

Even when they get home, those newly-forged ways of relating influence the way people treat each other. As owner for Four Corners Rafting, one of the oldest whitewater rafting company on the Arkansas River, I've taken thousands of people on the outdoor adventure. Without exception, they find the experience delivered in ways that they hadn't expected. I'm often told that what they experienced during whitewater rafting was the highlight of their vacation. "We visited all the other attractions, we saw all the sights. Nothing comes close!"

Step Out of Your Shoes

The benefits that rafters receive don't stop when the trip is over. We've all heard the phrase about walking a mile in someone else's shoes. That does help to understand the experiences of others with fresh awareness. But I think that greater value comes in understanding yourself better. To step into someone else's shoes, you must temporarily step out of your own. That breaks a lot of habits and familiar assumptions. Then when you return to your own shoes, you can see aspects of your life that you usually overlook because they're so unbroken.

Taking a wilderness adventure is a walk in another pair of shoes. And those people who shared that intensely emotional adventure with you took the same mind-stretching trek. That stays with you for the long haul.

--Jim Sampson owns Four Corners Rafting, an early whitewater rafting company on the Arkansas River. With 1 to 3-day Colorado wilderness adventures. Near Buena Vista, CO (800) 332-RAFT PO Box 219 Nathrop, CO 8123

Where To Find The Best Destinations For White Water Kayaking

By Niall Barco

Whitewater Rafting Forges Bonds Stronger than the Rapids

Whitewater kayaking has many excellent destinations around the world for both new and experienced kayakers. The eastern United States has some of the best whitewater conditions you can find.

If you are an experienced kayaker, you probably already know that the eastern United States is one of the best places for whitewater kayaking. The world has many places that are renowned for great kayaking, but the eastern U.S. has several awesome places for professionals and newcomers. Here is a list of excellent destinations for whitewater kayaking. You might want to write them down because they are incredible. Do not miss out!

Hudson River

Acadia National Park

Champlain

Pine Barrens, NJ

Oswegatchie River

Allagash Wilderness Waterway

Adirondack Park

You might have heard of some of these places. Each is famous throughout the world for kayaking adventures. Classes are available if you are not at ease with the whitewater experience. By taking classes before going out, you will discover that kayak success has a lot to do with confidence.

Many people fear whitewater rafting. The same people compare rafting and kayaking, but each sport is totally different. If you are such a person, it is essential to know the major differences between the sports. Many people believe that whitewater kayaking is much more fun than rafting. Take a risk! Find out on your own! It is not dangerous. If you are not confident in yourself, you can simply have an instructor or a professional go into the rapids with you.

Whitewater kayaking can be done in either hot or cold weather. If you have a wetsuit, you can enjoy the kayaking season all year long! Consider these great kayaking destinations and go to one yourself! They will impress you greatly when you arrive.

You will soon be enjoying the incredible thrills and highs of kayaking on the rapids.

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