

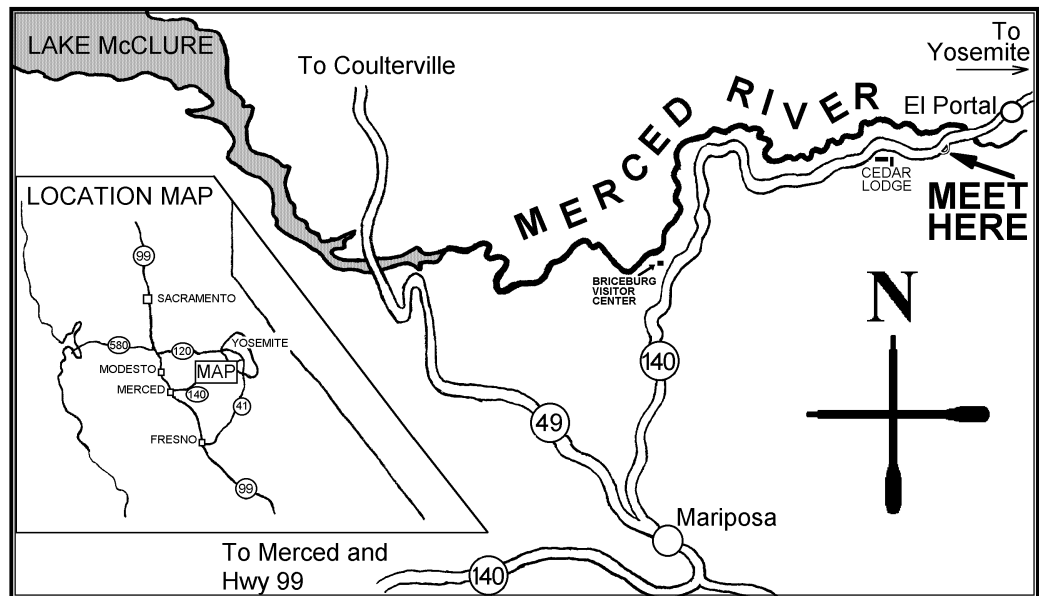
Welcome!

The Merced River originates on the slopes of some of the highest peaks in Yosemite National Park and flows free and undammed until it reaches Lake McClure on the edge of the San Joaquin Valley. Our encounter with the river begins about 10 miles outside of the Park and continues for 14 miles through the Sierra foothills. Since the river is only runnable during the Spring runoff period, the canyon hillsides are green and often covered with wildflowers, making a lovely back-drop for our trips.

The Merced is a powerful river. Dropping at nearly 30 feet per mile with wide fluctuations in its flow, it presents a difficult array of exciting and challenging rapids. At high water levels, usually late May to mid-June, it is very challenging and offers one of the best days of whitewater available anywhere. While the Tuolumne is known for its rocky, technical drops, the Merced is famous for large, roller-coaster waves and big crashing swells, perfect for veterans of the American and adventurous newcomers.

Meeting Time and Place:

All trip members will meet the ARTA lead guide in the parking area immediately adjacent to and on the south side of Highway 140 at 9:30 am on the morning of the trip. The parking area is a large dirt pullout off of Highway 140. Coming from Yosemite, the parking area is on the left, 3.4 miles beyond the El Portal Market and 1.1 miles beyond the Red Bud Picnic Area. Coming from Mariposa, the parking area is on the right, 25.1 miles beyond the Highway 49 junction in Mariposa and 1.5 miles beyond Cedar Lodge. You can't miss it, (at least not twice!)



Transportation:

Most trip members drive to El Portal. Driving time from San Francisco is about 3½ hours, via 120 through the Park or via 140 through Merced. From Los Angeles it is about 5½ hours via 99 and 140. Trip members who wish to fly, may fly into Fresno on United Express and then rent a car for the drive to El Portal (1½ hours).

Accommodations/Camping:

in the El Portal area include Cedar Lodge (209/379-2612) and the Yosemite View Motel (209/379-2681). If you are coming via the Northern Yosemite entrance (Groveland), consider Evergreen Lodge (800/935-6343). Camping is available along the river at "first-come, first-served" Forest Service and BLM campgrounds and at Indian Flat RV Campground (209/379-2339). Camping inside Yosemite National Park can be reserved in advance (209/372-0200).

Itinerary:

The Merced is an uncontrolled and unpredictable river, so our itinerary varies to take advantage of the best whitewater on any given day. We will meet in the El Portal area, then take a short van or bus ride to the actual launching point. When the water is very high, we will all practice swimming at the launch site. We will get an early start on the river, and will raft between 12 and 15 miles, running numerous rapids including the famous Ned's Gulch. During the day we will have time to enjoy a wonderful picnic lunch along the river and savor the historical sites, scenery, and spring wildflowers along the Merced. We will return to the meeting place around 5:00 PM.



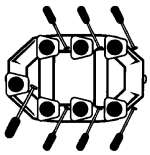
Personal Equipment

During the spring months, when we offer most of our one-day trips, the Merced is full with snowmelt and is quite cold. Therefore, we **require** that all trip members have wetsuits, waterproof rainshells and fleece jackets. 3mm or 1/8 inch Farmer-John wetsuits work best, they cover your legs and torso but leave your arms and shoulders free to move. For your upper body, a polypropylene pile or fleece sweater, **(NOT COTTON)**, under a waterproof rainshell will also help to keep you warm and comfortable.

*Rental Equipment

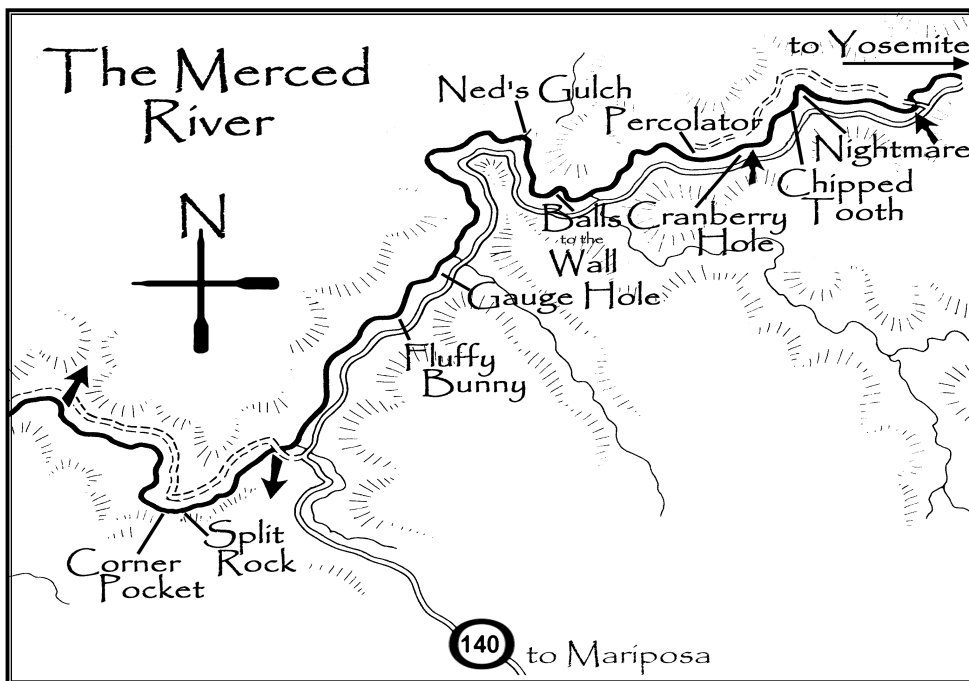
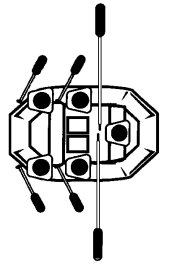
ARTA has wetsuits with waterproof paddling jackets available for rent, (bring your own fleece!) The cost is \$10.00 per day. Our supply is limited and we cannot always accommodate late requests. Please reserve well in advance using your Guest Information Sheet.

Raft Types:



Paddle rafts are our primary means of transport on the Merced. These small, dynamic rafts carry four to six paddlers plus a guide who actively propel the raft down the river and through the rapids using canoe-type paddles.

Oar/paddle combination rafts are also used, especially at very high water levels. These rafts are steered by a guide using oars while a paddle team assists with paddles. This creates a highly maneuverable and powerful craft.



Personal Equipment List

On all trips you will need:

- Sandals with heel strap (Chacos, Keen, etc.) or old tennis shoes
NO SLIP-ONS OR FLIP-FLOPS!
- Swimsuit or shorts (nylon quick-drying are best)
- Long-sleeved cotton or dry-tech style synthetic top for sun protection
- Hat for under helmet (baseball style is best)
- Sunglasses with strap, (maybe not your best pair)
- Sunblock, lip balm
- Water bottle (an empty Gatorade bottle is fine)
- Lightweight fleece or polypropylene top if you get cold easily
- Waterproof camera, (optional)

During the high water period (usually trips before June 15th) you will also need:

- Full or "Farmer-John" type wetsuit* **(required)**
- Waterproof (not repellant) rainshell or paddling jacket* **(required)**
- Polypropylene pile or fleece pullover or jacket (Polartec, Polarfleece, etc.) **(required)**
- Second pair of shorts for over wetsuit
- Fleece cap, gloves, and socks, wetsuit booties (optional)

*ARTA has 3mm Farmer-John wetsuits with Kokatat waterproof paddling jackets available for rent. The cost is \$10.00 per day. Our supply is limited and we cannot always accommodate late requests. Please reserve well in advance using your Guest Information Sheet.

Included:

The trip fee includes lunch, plus shuttle service from the meeting place to the river and from the take-out point back to the meeting place. Also included is the use of the equipment, including lifejackets, rafts and all other on-river gear, except wetsuits.

Insurance:

We strongly recommend that you purchase short-term travel insurance prior to your trip. This insurance can provide extra baggage, trip cancellation and medical coverage for you. Please request a Travel Insurance packet from ARTA if you have not received one.