5 best things about the South Fork
Lots of fun and exciting rapids
Everyone gets to paddle
Suitable for a variety of thrill levels
Close to Tahoe
Great for groups of up to 80!

SPECIFICS
Length in days: 1
Length in miles: 10
Overall difficulty: III
Highest difficulty (#): III+ (2)
Rapids/day: ~20
Gradient: 23 feet/mile
Signature Rapids:
Troublemaker and Hospital Bar
Types of boats:
Paddle rafts
Minimum recommended age:
12 before May 31 - 9 in June - 6 after July 1

Rapids: ★★★★★
Scenery: ★★★
Wilderness: ★★
Swimming: ★★★★

This is fun!
Our one day trips on the South Fork of the American River are exciting journeys through the rolling foothills of California's Mother Lode country. We will cover 10 miles of river and tackle over 20 rapids, from small riffles to big drops. This is a really fun adventure for everyone.

We’ll meet you in the morning right on the river at beautiful Camp Lotus (look for us down by the river). Depending on that day’s flow and release schedule, your preference, and other conditions, we will either take a short bus ride in the morning, raft the Upper Stretch (Meatgrinder and Troublemaker), and finish up back at Camp Lotus or we will launch right at Camp Lotus, raft the Lower Stretch (Satan’s Cesspool and Hospital Bar), and take a short bus ride back to Camp Lotus at the end of the day. Both stretches are 10 miles long and have about the same number and difficulty of rapids; the rapids on the Upper Stretch are spread out pretty evenly throughout the day whereas the Lower Stretch starts out more gently and then the bigger rapids are concentrated in the afternoon. If we do the Upper, you will be back to Camp Lotus around 3:00; if we do the Lower you will be back to Camp Lotus around 5:00. If you have a preference, let us know.

At the end of the day, you’ll end up back at Camp Lotus where you can shower, change, and grab something to eat.

Our one-day South Fork American River trips are great for first-time rafters yet still lots of fun for seasoned veterans.

“I cannot think of one minute I didn’t have a smile on my face.”
Kimberley Ryan

ARTA RIVER TRIPS | 24000 Casa Loma Road Groveland CA 95321 | 800-323-2782 | arta@arta.org | www.arta.org
Where and when to meet
We will meet you at **10:00 am** the morning the trip starts at Camp Lotus, which is located on the South Fork of the American River near the town of Lotus. Obtain a parking permit from the campground attendant, park in the main lot, and look for an ARTA guide between the main parking lot and the river near the volleyball court.

How to get there
Camp Lotus is located 1 hour east of Sacramento between Highways 50 and 80. Driving time from San Francisco is about 3 hours, from Los Angeles it is about 8 hours.

Coming from the west (Sacramento): Take Highway 50 east 30 miles to the Ponderosa Road exit in Shingle Springs. Cross over the Highway and turn right onto North Shingle Road. Continue for 12 miles following the signs to Coloma and Lotus. Turn left at Bassi Road (stop sign just before entering the town of Lotus), and go one mile to Camp Lotus.

Coming from the east (South Lake Tahoe): Take Highway 50 west to Placerville and then take Highway 49 north through the Gold Discovery State Park in Coloma. Turn left on Lotus Road, (just before the bridge across the river) and go 1 mile to Bassi Road. Turn right on Bassi Road and go 1 mile to Camp Lotus.

Coming from the north (North Lake Tahoe): Take Highway 80 west to Auburn and then take Highway 49 south through the town of Cool to Coloma. After crossing the river in Coloma, turn right and go 1 mile to Bassi Road. Turn right on Bassi Road and go 1 mile to Camp Lotus.

Flying: The nearest airport with commercial service is Sacramento, (1½ hours west of Camp Lotus). If you fly, we recommend renting a car and driving to Camp Lotus. Due to potential delays, please do not schedule a flight out of Sacramento any earlier than 9 pm on the day of your trip.

Where to stay
Camping and cabins are available with advance reservations at Camp Lotus (530/622-8672), which has hot showers and a small store. The Cameron Park Best Western (530/677-2203) is on Highway 50, about 2 miles before the Shingle Springs exit. There are numerous motels in Placerville, 25 minutes away.

Boats
On the South Fork we use 14 foot self-bailing paddle rafts which are powered by 4 to 7 paddlers plus a guide. You will be sitting along the outside of the raft and actively paddling through the rapids.

Weather
The California Foothills enjoy warm to hot temperatures for most of the summer with very little rain. Summertime highs can reach the 100’s, however, it is usually cooler along the river. In the spring, (April, May and early June), it is generally cooler and there is a greater chance of rain. A fleece top and a good rainshell are advised during the early part of the season. The water on the South Fork is a chilly 60 to 65 degrees most of the year.

Water levels
NOTE: El Dorado County requires that we print the following notice: *Water flows in the South Fork of the American River result from releases from hydro-electric facilities located upstream. Such water releases are not subject to the control of El Dorado County or commercial companies operating under permits from the county of El Dorado.*

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**South Fork American ~ gear**

**1 day rafting trips**

**During the summer,** it is usually warm and sunny on the South Fork so you won’t need much. You will be getting wet and the water is cold (60 degrees) so things that dry quickly work best. Proper footwear is critical and a water bottle is handy. We will have a small, communal drybag available for odds and ends. Here is what you should wear:

**WHAT TO WEAR IN THE SUMMER**

- Sandals with heel strap (Chaco, Teva, Keen, etc.) or old running shoes. **NO FLIP FLOPS OR SLIP-ONS!**
- Swimsuit or shorts. Synthetic, quick-drying shorts are best. Women often prefer to wear shorts over their swimsuit.
- Lightweight fleece top (if you get cold easily) or T-shirt or dry-tech style synthetic shirt (if you want extra sun protection)
- Brimmed hat for under helmet (baseball-style or visor)
- Sunglasses with strap, (maybe not your best pair)
- Small water bottle, 1 quart, (essential - even if it’s just an empty Gatorade bottle)
- Waterproof sunscreen/block (SPF 30+)
- Waterproof camera, (if you want to bring your cell phone to use as a camera, we strongly recommend getting a sturdy case such as a waterproof Otter Box )

If you get cold easily or if you are going in the spring, (as late as June 15th), you should bring rain gear and some extra insulation. You may also want to rent a 3mm “farmer-john” style wetsuit (sleeveless) and a waterproof splash jacket (non-insulated) from The River Store (530/626-3435) which is 1 mile from Camp Lotus. **In addition** to the items listed above, you should bring:

**WHAT TO ALSO BRING IN THE SPRING AND FALL**
(or if you get cold easily)

**Required**
- Synthetic fleece or polypropylene pile pullover or jacket (“polartec”, “polarfleece”, etc. NOT COTTON)
- Waterproof rainshell or dry-top (coated nylon, gore-tex, etc. NOT WATER-REPELLENT)

**Optional**
- Neoprene wetsuit (rent from River Store, 530/626-3435 or Sierra Nevada Sales, 530/401-0088)
- Fleece cap, gloves, and socks, wetsuit booties

**Professional Tips**

**Proper footwear** will make your day much more enjoyable. You should wear shoes or sandals that won’t come off if you go swimming. Old running shoes are fine; outdoor sandals with a heel strap (Chacos, Tevas, Keens, etc) also work well; wearing wool, fleece or neoprene socks (not cotton) under them will help keep your feet warm. Wetsuit booties keep your feet the warmest, but can get a bit clammy after a full day on the river. Aqua shoes are great for the water park, not so good for walking on rocks.

You will be wearing a helmet that doesn’t have a visor, so a baseball cap (without the button on top) or a visor is nice (and will work better than a big floppy sunhat).

Our guides all wear sunglasses (and they keep them all summer by using a Chums strap).

“Fleece” is a generic term for a spun, polyester fabric developed for outdoor use. It is thick and fluffy and does not absorb water, making it ideal insulation on a river trip. It is commonly called Polartec or Polarfleece. “Polypropylene” is a thinner, stretchier, woven variation used predominately for long underwear. A fleece pullover is the most versatile insulating layer you can bring on a river trip.

**Layering your clothing** is an effective way to adjust to the daily weather changes that you will encounter. A light polypropylene layer under a heavy fleece top under a rainshell will get you going on the chilliest of mornings and allow you to shed layers as the day warms up.