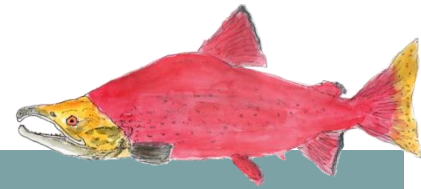




Idaho's River of No Return

# The Main Salmon



river trips

5 or 6 day rafting trip

5

## best things about the Main

Big, roller-coaster waves  
Warm water  
Giant, sandy beaches  
Fascinating human history  
Barth Hot Springs

### SPECIFICS

Length in days: 5 or 6

Length in miles: 81

Overall difficulty: III

Highest difficulty (#): IV- (2)

Rapids/day: ~10

Gradient: 12 feet/mile

Signature Rapids:

Big Mallard, Elkhorn, Vinegar

Types of boats:

Oar, paddle, inflatable kayak and SUP

Minimum recommended age:

10 in June, 8 in July, 6 in August

Rapids:	★★★★★
Scenery:	★★★★★
Wilderness:	★★★★★
Swimming:	★★★★★+
Hiking:	★★★★★
Campsites:	★★★★★+
Wildlife:	★★★★★
Fishing:	★★★★★

5

## best things about ARTA

Friendly, fun & gracious guides  
Active, engaging & informal style  
Steadfast commitment to safety  
Over 50 years of experience  
on the west's most iconic rivers  
We donate our profits back to  
protecting the environment

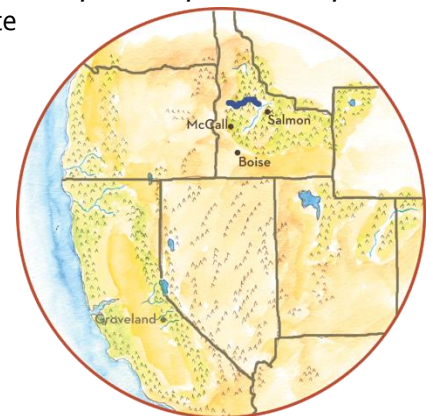


## Relax!

The Salmon River springs forth from the high lakes and snowfields of the spectacular Sawtooth Mountain Range in central Idaho. Descending steeply at first, the Salmon heads in a northerly direction through the dry "Upper Gorge" and the fertile Salmon Valley before turning abruptly west and heading into the beautiful and remote Frank Church Wilderness Area and the section known as the River of No Return.

Our trips begin where the dirt road ends at Corn Creek, and finish 84 miles downstream where the other dirt road ends at Carey Creek. Here the river alternates between stretches of lively whitewater and sections of peaceful current, providing a balance of excitement and relaxation. Each day is filled with fascinating things to see and interesting places to explore. Clear, cascading sidestreams, natural hot springs, Native American artwork, abandoned mines, decaying homesteads, and plenty of wildlife are just a few of the Main's attractions.

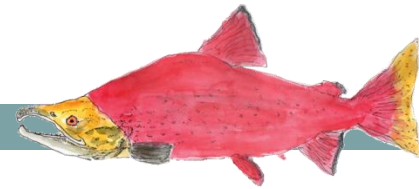
Our trips are designed to allow us ample time to explore the canyon's many interesting historical sites as well as to enjoy the on-river excitement that the river offers. Early season trips are scheduled for 5 days because the water is high and fast, enabling us to cover more miles each day without losing any off-river time for exploration. Later in the summer the river is a bit tamer, warmer, and slower, and 6 days are needed to enjoy the entire canyon. A late July or August Main Salmon trip is one of the greatest family vacation trips available.



*This was truly one of the best vacations I have ever taken and while the river was great, and the weather was great, and the food was great, it was really all of you that made it special. What a blast.  
I wanna go back to the river!!!!  
Michael Amster*

# Main Salmon~ logistics

## 5 or 6 day rafting trip



### Meeting Place

Stagecoach Inn  
Salmon, ID  
208/756-2919

### Meeting Time

8:00 pm the day before your launch date.

### Return Time

You will arrive in McCall, Idaho around 5:00 pm on the last day of your trip.

### Pre-trip checklist

- **Complete on-line registration** (follow the directions and link that came with your original reservation)
- **Reserve pre- & post-trip lodging** (most people stay at The Stagecoach Inn; options are listed to the right).
- **Plan for the unexpected** (purchase Travel Insurance through [USI Travel Insurance](#)).
- **Gather and pack your gear** (there is a thorough list on the Equipment page; call if you have any questions).

### What we provide

- Transportation from Salmon, ID to the river before the trip.
- Transportation from the river to McCall, ID at the end of the trip.
- Friendly, entertaining and professional guide service.
- All meals from lunch on the first day to lunch on the last day.
- All taxes and government access fees.
- Waterproof bags, lifejackets, and other specialized river touring equipment for the trip.
- Sleeping Pads for everyone
- Tents, if indicated on your registration

### What you are responsible for

- Transportation to Salmon and transportation from McCall.
- Meals and lodging before and after your trip.
- Personal clothing and toiletries (see Equipment page).
- Camping gear (see Equipment page).
- Soda, wine, alcoholic beverages (see Details page).

### Where and when to meet

We'll meet you at **8:00 pm the evening before the trip begins** at the Stagecoach Inn (208/756-2919) on Highway 93, in Salmon, Idaho. The Stagecoach is located at the north end of town, just across the bridge over the Salmon River. At the pre-trip meeting the trip leader will distribute waterproof dunnage bags, give trip information and answer any last-minute questions.

### How to get there

Your trip will begin in Salmon and end in McCall. Here are the most common transportation options:

**Drive** - Drive your vehicle to Salmon and have it shuttled to McCall during the trip.

**You must arrange the shuttle in advance .**

<https://salmonrivershuttlecompany.com/> or <http://www.rivershuttles.com> Plan to have your car left at the Stagecoach Inn in Salmon and shuttled to the airport in McCall.

**Fly** - Fly into Boise via commercial airline (United, Southwest, Alaska, etc.) and fly via Gem Air (small propeller planes) from Boise to Salmon before your trip and from McCall back to Boise after your trip.

You will need to arrange a flight from Boise to Salmon for the day before your trip (we recommend departing Boise for Salmon no later than 5:00 pm) and from McCall to Boise after your trip. Due to potential delays we recommend that you **DO NOT** plan on flying out of McCall the evening the trip ends, but rather that you spend the night in McCall and fly to Boise in time for your flight the following morning, (after 10:00 am departure from Boise is best). McCall is a small, scenic, vacation community on the shores of Payette Lake and the weather is usually more flyer-friendly earlier in the day. There is a round trip package through Gem Air - 208/756-7382 or [gemairflights.com](http://gemairflights.com)

**Please note:** Gem Air is currently operating out of 3815 Rickenbacker Street. Which is ¼ mile west of the main terminal. It is a 10 min walkable distance (though currently missing some crosswalks). Ubers available for those not wanting to walk. This is a short Term solution as the Boise Airport is expanding.

**Hybrid** - Fly into Boise via commercial airline (Southwest, United, Alaska, etc.) and rent a car for the 6 hour drive to Salmon, then have your car shuttled to McCall during the trip (see shuttle details under Drive above). **If you rent a vehicle**, you will need to get an "Additional Driver's Form" from the rental agency (Avis and Budget have been the easiest to work with in the past), fill it out send it over to Salmon River Transportation Company at: [salmonrivertransportco@gmail.com](mailto:salmonrivertransportco@gmail.com). Give them a call 208/993-9143 if you have any questions. SRTC will fill in their part and FAX/ send it to the rental agency before rental. This enables SRTC to drive the rental car.

**Other** – Some people find it more convenient to drive to McCall, leave their vehicle at the airport, and fly to Salmon before the trip. Conversely, some people find it more convenient to drive to Salmon, leave their vehicle at the Stagecoach, and fly back to Salmon from McCall at the end of the trip. One-way flights between McCall and Salmon can be arranged with Gem Air (208/756-7382 or [gemairflights.com](http://gemairflights.com)).

### Where to stay

Lodging before the trip is good at the [Stagecoach Inn](#) (208/756-2919) or at the [Sacajawea Inn](#) (208/756-2294). After the trip, lodging is available in McCall at the [Best Western Plus/McCall Lodge](#), (208/634-2230), or [Hotel McCall](#) (good downtown location, 208/634-8105). Pre- and post- trip accommodations are not included in the trip reservations should be made well in advance.

### DRIVING MILEAGES AND TIMES

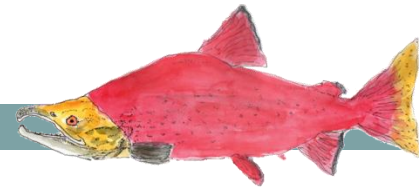
Boise to Salmon = 243 miles, 6 hours  
Salmon to McCall = 275 miles, 7 hours  
McCall to Boise = 120 miles, 2 ½ hours

### FLIGHT TIMES

Boise to Salmon = 1 hour 30 min  
McCall to Boise = 45 minutes

# Main Salmon~ details

## 5 or 6 day rafting trip

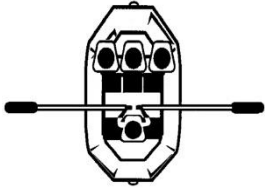


### Types of boats

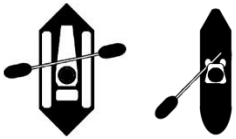
On the Main Salmon we usually have four types of boats in which to ride:



**Paddle rafts** are 14 feet long and carry 6 or 7 paddlers who actively paddle through the rapids and down the river. Everyone has a paddle, sits on the outer tube of the raft, and follows the instructions of the paddle captain who sits in the back.



**Oar rafts** are 18 feet long, carry all of the overnight gear and up to 5 guests. They are rowed by a guide using oars attached to a metal frame. Guests ride in the front, hang on through the rapids and relax in the calm stretches.



**Inflatable kayaks and stand-up paddleboard** are 10 - 12 feet long and are paddled by 1 or 2 people. The inflatable kayaks are fairly stable, require no previous experience and allow you to feel the thrill of independently paddling the river. The paddleboard is not so stable and offers a fun challenge through the rapids and a legitimate core workout on the flat stretches.

*Please note that we do not guarantee space in paddle rafts or inflatable kayaks. If there are more people who wish to ride in these boats than there are spaces, we will rotate so that everyone gets a chance to participate. Also, inflatable kayaks may not be available during the June high water period. On a typical 20 person, non-high water Main Salmon trip we have 3 oar rafts, 1 paddle raft and 3 or 4 inflatable kayaks.*

### Meals and drinks

ARTA meals are well-balanced and consist of high quality ingredients with fresh meats, fruits, vegetables, and breads. Guides double as camp chefs and the menu includes a wide variety of dishes. Lunches are served riverside and vary from deli spreads to salads to wraps. Dinners and breakfasts are hearty and healthy and often include a tasty Dutch Oven baked treat. If you have any specific dietary requirements or are celebrating a special event during the trip, please let us know in advance.

### Camping

Camping will be at beautiful riverside beaches with spectacular views of the canyon. Our guides will set up a central area with chairs, a snack and beverage area, and a complete kitchen. You will pick out a spot nearby to pitch your tent (our guides are happy to help). Camp activities vary from hiking and exploring the area, to relaxing along the river with a good book, to playing "koob" (you will learn). If you enjoy helping out in camp, you are welcome to pitch in as much as you want. A portable toilet will be set up away from camp. "The Groover", a sturdy metal box with a comfortable toilet seat and minimal odor, and a hand-wash station will be set up in an isolated (and usually beautiful) location; going to the bathroom in the wilderness is surprisingly pleasant.

### Weather

The weather in the mountains of Idaho is difficult to predict; we have encountered hailstorms in August and heatwaves in June, so please come prepared for a variety of conditions. The Main Salmon canyon usually enjoys mild and comfortable conditions, however afternoon thunderstorms are common at any time during the season. Generally, temperatures range from the 70's to the 90's during the day and the 40's to the 50's at night, with early season trips being 10 degrees cooler and summertime extremes being 10 degrees warmer. The water temperature is a chilly 50 degrees in June, warming into the 70's by late in the summer.

### Wildlife

We will be traveling through the heart of the Frank Church River of No Return Wilderness and visiting the home of a variety of wild animals. On the Main Salmon it is common to see otters, deer, and bighorn sheep as well as osprey, eagles, and other birds of prey.

### Fishing

The fishing on the Main Salmon is fairly good and is usually better after the water levels drop in mid July. Poles should be protected in sturdy cases, and only a small amount of tackle is needed. Dry flies and small spinners with single barbless hooks work well; you do not need waders or nets. If you want to fish you must have a valid Idaho State Fishing License. Licenses and gear can be purchased on-line at or at Ninety-three Mini Mart and Sports (208/756-3002) in Salmon.

### Suggested Reading

*River of No Return* by Cort Conley gives a detailed, mile-by-mile description of the history of the river and canyon. *The Last of the Mountain Men* by Harold Peterson, *Thousand Pieces of Gold* by Ruthanne McCunn and *Merciless Eden* by Doug Tims are great books about the canyon's colorful past. A good map and guide is available locally in Salmon or from [blackcanyonguides.com](http://blackcanyonguides.com).

### Local Attractions

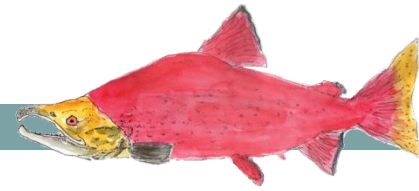
Within a day's drive of Salmon are Glacier, Yellowstone, and Grand Teton National Parks. If you want to extend your vacation with a stay at a western guest ranch, consider Rocky Mountain Guest Ranch or Twin Peaks Ranch, both of which are near Salmon. At the end of the trip, McCall is a wonderful vacation resort town on a lake with lots of vacation rentals and things to do.

### Tipping

If you truly enjoy your trip, tipping is a great way to show your appreciation. Tipping is optional and personal, but since a lot of people ask, a customary amount is between 10 and 15 percent of the trip cost. Tips can be given to the Lead Guide who will share them equally with the entire crew; (and the entire crew will appreciate them greatly – thank you.)



# Main Salmon~ equipment



5 or 6 day rafting trip

## Get ready!

One of the joys of life on the river is how simple it is. We will be carrying everything we need into the wilderness with us and leaving a lot of stuff behind; bringing the proper gear will make your trip much more enjoyable. The basic rule of packing is: **the right stuff, not more stuff**. One synthetic fleece pullover is much more compact and versatile than six cotton sweatshirts; a good raincoat is better than twenty ponchos. You should be able to find most of the gear you need in your closet, garage or neighbor's basement and what you can't find or borrow, you can rent from us. Your guides will help you make last-minute decisions at the pre-trip meeting, but please feel free to call us if you have any questions as you go through this list; we want you to have the best trip possible.

## PERSONAL EQUIPMENT LIST

This list has everything we can think of for a trip in May OR August.

You can adjust it to fit your departure date (more and thicker fleece early in the season), but you probably shouldn't skip anything.

### CAMP ITEMS: These will be packed in your dry bag and will generally not be accessible during the day.

- \*Compact sleeping bag, (down or synthetic, rated to 35°)
- 3" thick river sleeping pad (3"x24"x6") - ARTA Supplied
- Sleeping bag liner or flat bed-sheet (perfect for hot nights and will add warmth on cold nights)
- Small tarp or groundcloth
- Compact, lightweight tent, (free-standing work better; tents will be packed in a separate communal bag)  
\*If indicated, we will provide one for you free of cost.
- We will bring 1 tent for one and two person reservations; 2 tents for three and four person reservations; 3 tents for five and six person reservations, etc
- Your favorite pillow (an extra pillow-case is handy for organizing stuff in your bag)
- 2 complete changes of clothing (versatile pants and shirts, cotton is fine - something exciting for dinner is welcome!)
- Extra swimsuit or shorts and T-shirts for on the river and in camp
- Extra socks, (wool or fleece are best), and underwear
- Camp shoes, (flip-flops, trail running shoes, tennis shoes; something you can walk and hike in comfortably)
- Personal hygiene items, including medicine, insect repellent, dry-skin lotion, etc. **Please bring twice the amount needed of any essential medicine.**
- Warm jacket, (thick fleece is great - will work on-river as well or compact/down coat)
- Rain gear, (can double as on-river gear); top is essential, bottoms are advised before July 1
- Small flashlight with extra batteries, (headlamps are great)
- Book, sketch pad, journal, etc.

### RIVER ITEMS: These will be worn or packed in your personal semi-dry day bag and WILL be accessible during the day.

- Sandals with heel strap (Chaco, Teva) or old running shoes  
NO FLIP FLOPS OR SLIP-ONS
- Swimsuit or shorts and T-shirt, (nylon, quick-drying shorts and synthetic "tech-dry" type shirts are best - women often prefer to wear shorts over their swimsuits)
- Polypropylene pile or synthetic fleece top (essential)
- Polypropylene pile or synthetic fleece pants (encouraged)
- Waterproof rainshell (essential) and rainpants
- Brimmed hat, (baseball-style or visors work well; inflatable kayakers and others at certain water levels will wear helmets)
- Lightweight cotton clothing, (synthetic long-sleeved or old cotton dress shirts) for sun protection
- Waterproof sunscreen/block (SPF 30+), lip balm
- Sunglasses with strap, (maybe not your best pair)
- Small water bottle, 1 quart, (essential - even if it's just an empty plastic Gatorade bottle)
- OPTIONAL ITEMS: These are not absolutely necessary, but you are welcome to bring them.**
- Waterproof camera, (if you want to bring your cell phone to use as a camera, we strongly recommend getting a sturdy case such as an Otter Box or EscapeCapsule)
- Beer, wine, liquor, or soda in unbreakable containers
- Fishing gear, (compact, lightweight, rods protected in a case)
- Sarong (very versatile)
- Locking carabiner, handy for securing your day-bag
- 1 or 2 plastic garbage bags & gallon size zip-lock bags for organizing gear

\* Sleeping bags are available to rent from ARTA and can be reserved when you fill out your on-line registration.

Underlined items are the preferred choice of our professional river guides!

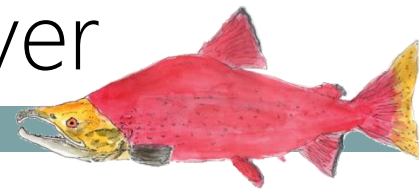
ARTA WILL PROVIDE: a sleeping pad, tent, a chair, cup, plate and eating utensils for each guest.

PLEASE DO NOT BRING: Valuable jewelry, radios, guns, or any irreplaceable items!

*If you are flying in for your Main Salmon trip we can transport a small amount of extra luggage from Salmon to McCall for you.  
Make arrangements at the pre-trip meeting.*

# Main Salmon~ life on the river

5 or 6 day rafting trip



## Professional Tips

Our **dry-bags** are great for keeping things dry but are somewhat awkward for packing and living out of, (they are tall and narrow with a small opening at the top). Compact sleeping bags are much more convenient, and small stuff sacks or zip-lock bags are helpful for dividing up your stuff inside the bag. Trying to put your entire duffel bag or rolling luggage into the dry-bag never seems to work.

Our guides say that one of the most versatile things to bring on a trip is a **sarong**. Comfortable and colorful, sarongs get used for quick clothing changes, beach throws, sun screens and dinner celebrations.

**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.

**"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. Any polypropylene long underwear will work; heavy-weight is the most versatile.

Parents will want to make sure that their kids have at least **two fleece tops and a waterproof rainshell**. Fleece pants and a fleece hat are also recommended. Children get cold more easily, (and wet more often), than adults. Remember, if you don't bring it for them, they will use yours!

## Itinerary

**First day:** We will meet at the Stagecoach and be transported to the launch site at Corn Creek, (2 - 3 hours). After a short safety and orientation briefing, we will launch on the river around noon and float several miles and through a few rapids to our first camp.

**Typical day:** Although there is no such thing, a typical day on the Salmon starts with fresh coffee and a hearty breakfast before we pack our bags and load into the rafts. Each day we will float 10 - 14 miles, (5 - 6 hours), and take numerous stops to scout rapids, explore abandoned homesteads, visit Native American sites, soak in a hot springs, wander up a creek, as well as enjoy a riverside lunch. We commonly rotate boats a few times each day, giving new people the opportunity to paddle or relax. We usually arrive at camp in the late afternoon and, while the guides prepare dinner, you are free to hike, relax, swim, or fish. After dinner, the campfire is often kept burning for singing and storytelling.

**Last day:** The last day on the river has some exciting rapids before we arrive at our take-out point at Carey Creek. We will de-rig the rafts, change clothes, and have our final lunch before being transported to your motel or the airport in McCall, (2 hours). Arrival time in McCall will be around 5:00 pm and we will stop on the way to call the air taxi company and confirm flights.

## How to dress

On **hot days** you will want clothing that dries quickly (nylon shorts and bathing suits) and something to shield you from the sun, (a high-tech SPF long-sleeved shirt or an old lightweight cotton dress shirt and maybe even lightweight long pants or capris). Also, a brimmed hat and a bandana will help you stay cool.

On **cool days** you will want a thick, synthetic fleece top, (pullover is best), and a sturdy, fully-waterproof rainshell. You may also want fleece pants or polypropylene long underwear bottoms and rainpants, particularly before mid-July. Don't bring a cotton sweatshirt for on the river; cotton does not work for on-river insulation when it is wet.

## How to pack

**Camp items** will go in a watertight dunnage bag provided by ARTA, (one per person). These are generally not accessible during the day. The bags are roughly 17 inches in diameter and 24 inches tall, (the size of a large duffel bag; plenty big, but you should try to limit all of your gear to about 25 pounds). We will show you how to close the dunnage bag so that it stays watertight even if temporarily submerged, but packing your sleeping bag in a garbage bag provides extra protection. Zip-locks, stuff sacks, and pillow cases are good for keeping track of small and/or wet things.

**River items** will go in a semi-watertight, personal dry-bag provided by ARTA, (one per person). These bags are 9 inches in diameter and 12 inches tall, perfect for rain gear, fleece, sunblock, and other things you want to keep handy during the day. The bags are marginally waterproof so for expensive cameras or other things that must stay dry we recommend a small Pelican Box which can be found online and at outdoor stores. If you want to bring your cell phone to use as a camera, please get a sturdy waterproof case.

## How to find it

**Bring it:** Local mountaineering or sporting goods stores should have everything you need and fleece garments are now available at most department stores (and our guides find a lot of fleece and other trip clothing at thrift stores). Great selections of river trip gear are also available on-line through REI, Columbia or Patagonia.

**Rent it:** We have good equipment available to rent. Reserve and pay for it in advance, pick it up at the pre-trip meeting, leave it behind when you're done.

**Sleeping bags** Compact sleeping bag, down or synthetic, rated to 35° - rental fee

**Tents** (two-person, free-standing, comfortable) free if indicated on registration.

**Sleeping Pads** 3" thick river sleeping pad (3"x24"x6") - ARTA Supplied for everyone