

FORKS OF THE KERN WHITEWATER RUN

Sequoia National Forest Kern River Ranger District



Welcome to whitewater paradise - the Forks of the Kern. Designated by Congress in 1987, as a National Wild and Scenic River, this section of the Kern River pirouettes through some of the finest rafting whitewater in North America. The Forks is a nearly continuous series of class IV and V rapids and waterfalls.

RIVER FACTS

Difficulty: Class V (Expert)
Put-in: Forks of the Kern
Take-out: Johnsondale Bridge,
Brush Creek, or Willow Point
Length: approximately 17 miles
Gradient: 60 feet per mile
Run Levels: 1,000-4,000 cubic feet per
second – assume this would be for rafts

LOCATION: The launch point begins 45 miles north of Kernville, at the confluence of the Little Kern River with the main Kern and is accessible only by trail. Travel north of Kernville via Mtn. 99 to Johnsondale. Half-a-mile past Johnsondale turn right and take the Lloyd Meadow Rd. (22S82) north for 15 miles. Turn right again at the dirt road (20S67) marked "Forks of the Kern" and proceed to the end of the road (approx. 3-miles) to the Forks Trailhead. The hike to the launch point is down a 3-mile long, narrow, rocky trail, which descends steeply to the Kern River.

GETTING EQUIPMENT TO RIVER: For most whitewater enthusiasts, getting equipment down the 3-mile trail to the Forks put-in will require the use of packhorses or mules. For details on renting animals, contact Golden Trout Wilderness Pack Trains, P.O. Box 756, Springville, CA 93265. Summer phone: (559) 542-2816. Winter phone: (559) 539-2744.

CAMPFIRE PERMIT: You will be required to obtain a campfire permit before venturing down from the Forks Trailhead. A shovel and a fire pan are required. Extinguish all fires completely with water using the drown, stir, and feel method.

COMMERCIAL OPERATORS: There are three companies providing whitewater boating outfitter and guide services on the Forks of the Kern. Please contact them directly for more information or to make reservations:

Whitewater Voyages, Inc.
5225 San Pablo Dam Rd.
El Sobrante, CA. 94803
(800)488-7238

Kern River Outfitters
P.O. Box 1149
Point Reyes Station, 94956
(800)323-4234

Kern River Tours
P.O. Box 3444
Lake Isabella, CA. 93240
(800)844-7238

Mt. & River Adventures
P.O. Box 858
Kernville, Ca 93238
(800)861-6553

Sierra South INC.
P.O. Box 1909
Kernville, CA 93238
(800) 457-2082

PERMIT REQUIREMENTS: Permits for private whitewater boating are required from May 15 to September 15. Each group of people must have a permit with a designated party leader and complete a FOREST SERVICE passenger manifest prior to launch. Manifests must be placed in one of the designated boxes. Group size is limited to 15 people. Reservations can be made in advance with a \$10.00 fee through a drawing selection process beginning March 15 and ending April 15. Confirmation letters will be mailed around May 1. Permits go first-come, first-serve after May 15. Permits MUST be picked up in person at one of the two locations listed below:

Kernville Ranger Station.
105 Whitney Rd.
Kernville, CA. 93238
(760)376-3781

Tule/Hot Springs R.D.
32588 Highway 190
Springville, CA.93240
(559)539-2607

SEASON AND WATERFLOW: Late spring and early summer are recommended for boating the Forks Run. Water flows are dependent on snowmelt and natural runoff. Changes in water flow may drastically change river conditions. Flow information is available by calling the Kern River flow phone. Call toll free at (844)537-6356 or locally at (760)376-8821.



United States
Department of
Agriculture

Forest
Service
Pacific Southwest Region

Sequoia National Forest



RECOMMENDED SAFETY EQUIPMENT

A Coast Guard approved personal flotation device must be readily accessible, properly fit, and in good condition, for each member of the party. Each raft should have an extra oar or paddle, a 50-foot throw line with bag and a 16-foot mooring line.

TRIP TIPS:

- Prior to your trip, check with the ranger station for local road conditions.
- Paddlers should have at least previous Class IV paddlers experience.
- The Forks should be attempted only by healthy, active, rugged people with strong swimming skills.
- Carson Falls and the Vortex may require portage; scouting is advised; be prepared.
- Water temperatures can be extremely cold; wearing a wet suit is advised. Watch for signs of hypothermia.
- If renting pack animals to transport equipment, remember to bring collapsible frames and oars.
- A human waste carryout system must be carried on each trip.
- Carry and secure bags so they will remain with the boat in the event of a flip.
- Lightweight hiking boots for the hike down to the Forks are recommended.
- Water from streams may contain a parasite known as Giardia, which can cause flu like systems. Heat water to a rolling boil for 5 minutes before using.
- Poison oak can be identified at a glance by its triple leaf pattern. The leaves change color with the season. Avoid contact with it and wear protective clothing.

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

For more information about the whitewater boating program, call the Kern River Ranger Station at (760) 376-3781.

“The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) prohibits discrimination in all its programs and activities on the basis of race, color, national origin age, disability, and where applicable, sex, marital status, familial status, parental status, religion, sexual orientation, genetic information, political beliefs, reprisal, or because all or part of an individual’s income is derived from any public assistance program. (Not all prohibited bases apply to all programs.) Persons with disabilities who require alternative means for communication of program information (Braille, large print, audiotape, etc.) should contact USDA’s TARGET Center at (202) 720-2600 (voice and TDD). To file a complaint of discrimination write to USDA, Director, Office of Civil Rights, 1400 Independence Avenue, S.W., Washington, D.C. 20250-9410, or call (800) 795-3272 (voice) or (202) 720-76382 (TDD). USDA is an equal opportunity provider and employer.” KR-04/08-Blue