

SAFETY, It's Your Life

It is your life and your responsibility to be thoroughly prepared and skilled to safely boat the Selway River. The river's course takes you through 47 miles of the Selway-Bitterroot Wilderness. Once you start this float you are committed to a trip with limited chance of assistance. Help is slow to arrive even when requested. Wilderness access is limited to foot, livestock, boat, and several remote airstrips. Planning to be anything other than totally self-sufficient is a big mistake.

The river drops an average of 28 feet per mile, creating a very technical whitewater course. Numerous Class IV rapids require a high level of whitewater skills, experience, and good equipment. Early to mid-June is when the river is highest and flow volumes fluctuate widely, changing the character and difficulty of the rapids dramatically. Water temperature as low as 38 degrees can be expected and life threatening hypothermia may occur with any dunking in the river. **The Selway is a very difficult and demanding river. Know what you are getting yourself into and be prepared.**

In the past, some boaters have not been adequately prepared or skilled. Boating accidents resulted in loss of life once prior to 1988, again in 1988, 1989, 1990, 1996 and another death in 2004. These deaths were a result of ill-prepared parties with poor equipment, limited boating experience or skill, or poor judgement.

As a prepared and skilled boater, will you:

1. Scout each major rapid and be willing to portage if you don't feel competent to run the rapid?
2. Have a first aid kit designed for wilderness survival, including care for snake bites?
3. Be able to do river rescues of people, gear, and boats?
4. If needed, know how to swim a rapid in the safest manner possible?
5. Have safety gear such as helmets, life jackets, throw ropes, extra oars or paddles, patching equipment, warm clothes such as wet suits and neoprene booties, etc.?
6. Have your gear in first rate condition and be able to repair equipment damage on the trip?
7. Know how to rig your boats to prevent overloading and gear loss if the boat flips?
8. Be physically fit to handle strenuous activity?
9. Waterproof your gear and food while floating?
10. Be willing to hold over if the river rises to a dangerous level from spring runoff? You may have an unplanned extended trip, due to high water conditions. In 1996, one group had to stay at Moose Creek for 14 days, with other groups spending several unplanned days. When the gauge at Paradise is running above six feet, the river is at a dangerous life-threatening level. Think twice before you go!

RIVER SAFETY IS A MUST. BE SAFE WITH YOUR LIFE.

ARE YOU SKILLED AND PREPARED?