



Forks of the Kern Whitewater Run

Sequoia National Forest

Kern Wild and Scenic River



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 the 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.

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:

Kern River Tours

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

Outdoor Adventures

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

Whitewater Voyages, Inc

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

How to obtain a River Use Permit for Forks Run:

Also referred to as "Forks of the Kern River Permits", the Forest offers these permits through the recreation.gov website. The permits will be made available in a block release annually on the 15th of March at 0700 PT. Limit three permits to a person for the season. The Forks Run is limited to 15 people per day. Permits are required from May 15 through September 15 each year.

Reservation To obtain a reservation, visit recreation.gov. There is a \$10.00 fee plus \$6 non-refundable reservation fee.

Permits will be available for booking on March 18th at 7:00 am PDT. All dates will be made available for reserving on this date. The last day to book will be September 15th (the last day of the season).

Outside of the permitted season of 5/15 to 9/15, no permit or registration is required. Be aware, water levels in the off season will impact rafting conditions and these roads are subject to seasonal closures in the winter and spring. Visit recreation.gov for full listing of permit and season information



Campfire Permits

You may want a campfire for cooking, enjoying its warmth, and roasting marshmallows.



For campfires, stoves, lanterns or barbecues used outside a campground or recreational vehicle and some developed campgrounds, you need a campfire permit.

The permit is free, valid for a full year from January 1 to December 31, and may be obtained in person from Forest Service, Bureau of Land Management, CAL FIRE offices, or online at <http://www.preventwildfireca.org/Campfire-Permit/>

Your responsibilities for building and putting out your fire safely are explained on the campfire permit. 36 CFR 261.52(k) PRC 4433.

Be aware that as fire danger becomes greater, campfires may be prohibited. Please check to find out if there are fire restrictions in the area where you intend to camp.

You are welcome to gather dead and down wood to use for your campfire, but not to take home unless you obtain a fuelwood permit.

Season and Water Flow:

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](tel:8445376356) or locally at [\(760\)376-8821](tel:7603768821).

Thank you for your help in making forest visits enjoyable and safe! Plan ahead by obtaining a National Forest map at one of the following offices:

Kern River Ranger District

P.O. Box 9

Kernville, CA 93238

[760-376-3781](tel:7603763781)

Forest Supervisor's Office

220 East Morton Ave

Porterville, CA 93257

[559-784-1500](tel:5597841500)



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](tel:7603763781).