

Something Wicked This Way Comes...

The Third Annual GSP Raft Trip

On The Meaning of Life, the Universe, and Raft Trips

"Life is a bitch, and then you die." This is our once-a-year chance to get together and relive the craziness that characterizes GSPs wherever they may be. Let's enjoy it; someday we'll be old, you know.

A list of folks who are going in is Appendix I, along with phone numbers and point of origin. This could be a useful item to hang onto.

If it's Thursday, this must be Cincinnati.

We are going to try to have dinner at the Rookwood Pottery in Cincinnati this year; last year we were too late and wound up in a delightful Italian bistro, but this time...

Directions to the Rookwood Pottery are in Appendix II. Maps are attached at the end of this brochure. Note also the Blind Lemon which appears therein; we should have time to stop for a drink [note the use of the singular] before heading off into the Ohio River Valley. This is a good place to switch drivers...

Out of the Fog and into the Smog...

Around dawn on Friday we should arrive at the teeming metropolis of Charleston; we'll most likely invade the local Bob Evan's restaurant for breakfast before driving up into the mountains. Another good place to switch drivers...

In Heaven There is no...

Raft trip veterans are aware that since [1] West Virginia sells the infamous 3/2 near-beer and [2] the campsite does not have running water, that [3] a good deal of liquid golden grain is needed to survive this trip. It has been a raft trip tradition that everyone bring some (vast) quantity of refreshments from their part of the country. (This means you, Philbert -- More Henry's!)

Let's be Careful Out There.

It's probably a good idea for those who are driving to check out their vehicles to make sure that they're prepared for all sorts of conditions...check the spare and so forth...also it's a good idea to bring along a flashlight.

Additionally, there are lots of people driving along in both big groups (Lafayette and Northeast), so there shouldn't be any problem with switching drivers around should someone get tired. Chances are you will want to do this; let's not have any accidents!

It is "a wonderful idea" (Translation: mandatory!) to have a CB if you are driving; the benefits of driving in a group (navigation, assistance in case of breakdown, extra storage space, general hubbub) are partially negated if folks can't communicate with one another. Radios are also especially useful for short hops around the mountains to help keep everyone together. The official GSP channel is 16 (2⁴); we'll use 8 if 16 is busy.

In case of ultimate loss of sense of direction, the phone number for Mountain River Tours is 304-658-5817; our contact person there is Dee Dorsey. The number of Mountain Manor Campgrounds is 304-872-4220, and the contact is Ms. Pat Murphy.

The Raft Trip Itself

We must be at Mountain River Tours (MRT) headquarters 30 minutes or so before the trip to change, collect wits, and enjoy their free coffee. You will also be asked to sign a release form which relieves MRT from liability should your head be ripped off. I will have two copies of this form with me at the campsite, so stop by and see me Friday or Saturday to sign one of the copies depending on which time you're slotted for.

MRT provides the rafts, a guide, paddles, life jackets and helmets as part of the trip price; wetsuits are extra. Those of you with glasses are **HIGHLY** advised to bring something with which to secure them to your face. If you wear contacts, you'll probably want to bring glasses; several people last year had problems with lenses moving around in their eyes. If you decide to wear contacts anyway, you do so at your own risk. From MRT's building we have a half-hour bus ride (certainly the most dangerous thing we'll do all day) through the wilds of West Virginia to Thurmond, which is where we put in.

Five ! No, Three, Sir !

Mountain River Tour's "Backpaddle" newsletter mentions that they are experimenting with rafts with four thwarts instead of three; I don't know whether we'll wind up in those or not; they think it will provide a better ride and give those folks in the front of the raft a better foothold. We'll see.

The rapids we encounter in the morning aren't too rough, but the first one is called "Surprise", and it is. Think of it as an introduction to the river...there is a lot of gorgeous country to enjoy, and lot of large pools of water which give everyone a chance to swim and to bail out the rafts. This (for the uninitiated) is also when most of the waterfights occur. Jump Rock is on this stretch of river and it's for...uh...jumping off of. After a lunch on the riverbank (provided by MRT), we hit the nasty rapids, such as "Greyhound Bus Stopper", which is a class V stretch of whitewater.

It is therefore recommended that you not overeat at lunch.

There is at least one rapid which, given proper river conditions, is swimmable, and provides you with an idea of what it's like to be a raft. Even nonswimmers can take this one; those lifejackets are so buoyant that it's nearly (but not quite) impossible to go under while wearing one.

I Thought He Was Here a Minute Ago...

It might be a good idea to mention at this point what one does should one be silly enough to fall out of the raft in one of the real rapids. Should one not be immediately pulled back in by alert crewmates, one points one's feet downstream to ward off nasty rocks, and lets the current carry one to a calmer section of the river. Prayer is optional.

The entire trip takes about six hours; afterwards we take lots of pictures and help load up the rafts for the drive back to MRT. There are heated changing rooms at MRT, so leave a set of dry clothes in the car when you show up in the morning. You may also purchase T-shirts, posters, and other paraphenalia at MRT.

For the actual trip, plan on wearing a swimsuit **THAT WON'T COME OFF**, and an old pair of tennis shoes. A

T-shirt (and perhaps shorts) are essential to avoid a lobster-grade sunburn, or if the sun drops behind a cloud or the bluffs. Sunscreen and suntan lotion are also recommended. If it is really chilly (like last year) a flannel shirt and sweatpants might help; MRT does rent wetsuits as well (sort of like wearing a rubberband). Avoid cotton like the plague; it is not warm when wet.

If you plan on taking pictures, consider the following: there are great shots to be had out there on that river; but it is very hard to keep things dry. MRT provides waterproof bags which unfortunately are very hard to open and close, so if you are going to bring your camera you should also bring an inflatable water- proof sports bag to put it in. I don't know what an "inflatable waterproof sports bag" is; ask Malcolm. He claims that over several raft trips, the only thing that happened to his camera was a little water on the lens.

Wherever shall I go, Rhett?

We will be camping at Mountain Manor Campground (MMC) just south of Summersville. For those of you along last year: same campground, different campsite (sorry!). MMC is 20 miles north of the river and just off US 19. About a mile south of Summersville there is a road to Summersville Lake; follow the sign to the campground, or look at the maps tacked on the end of this.

There is a \$3.50 per night per person fee for camping; when you arrive at the campground stop at the lodge to pay this fee and to get directions to our campsite. We are registered as "Purdue GSPs". MMC has a shower house, latrines, junk food, and (HOPEFULLY) a volleyball net.

We have to bring everything else. If you have a tent(s), bring it(them), 'cause we'll need them. The Purdue Co-Rec has some, but they're not in good shape; we'll use them if we have to, though. Firewood may be purchased - don't cut down their trees! - but we should have several grills and charcoal brought along with us.

Please keep me informed as to tent and grill availability; these are probably our two most critical items. There are grocery stores in Summersville, but over this holiday weekend it's hard to say what will be open and when.

Whatever shall I do, Rhett?

There are a number of things to do to pass the time while waiting for the trip. My personal favorite is conversation / drinking / volleyball. It may turn out that we are minus a volleyball net this year; if so, we will perform an experiment to find out if 4 dozen or so engineers can materialize one out of nothing...

One of the things to do is to watch other rafters come down the river; this will let the newcomers among you judge what you will be up against. The last rapids on the New River are at Fayette Station; right under where US 19 crosses the river on the New River Gorge Bridge. There are two places to see the river; the easiest to get to is an observation point on the north side. The entrance for this point is on US 19 about a mile north of the river. The best view of the rapids is on an observation deck that is down the hill about a quarter mile. This is definitely camera material.

The best time to be at Fayette Station is between 3 and 5 in the afternoon; you'll see a lot of rafters and some crazed kayakers. These rapids are class V and are the only ones accessible by car. To get there: Follow US 19 across the river one mile. You'll be at a stoplight, and to the right is the road that used to be US 19. This road goes to the bridge at the bottom of the valley where US 19 used to cross. From the rim of the valley to the floor it's a three mile drive and the view is spectacular. The road is rather narrow and resembles small twisty passages (all alike); park at the bottom and follow the sound of whitewater to the rapids.

Another place to visit is Babcock State Park, which is about twenty miles southeast of the New River Gorge Bridge. From the campsite, take US 60 east from US 19, and after 10 miles or so you'll reach State Road 41. Babcock is 5 miles south of US 60. There are some great hiking trails in this park; see the attached maps. I believe that last year we started at play/picnic area with the view towards New River Canyon, walked down Skyline Trail (SE) until it met Rocky Trail, took that (SW) down to Fisherman's Trail, and that (SE) until we popped out at the park restaurant.

There will probably be a number of people going over to Babcock Saturday morning to hike down into one of the valleys and then to rockhop their way up the creek to the park lodge, which incidentally serves some of the best fried chicken I've ever had. If you plan on doing any hiking, remember that good shoes are a great idea. (Shoes for industry!)

The campgrounds are next to Summersville Lake, where there is a boat ramp and plenty of places for swimming.

The Hitchhiker's Guide to the Raft Trip

The drive from Purdue to Hico takes about 12 hours, although the Shuttlecraft/Starship Avocado/Renegade trio made it back last year in about 8 1/2; unavailability of warp drive precludes this possibility this year. (Which means you can't draft off me all the way across Ohio, Tom!) Hico is about 60 miles southeast of Charleston, and we have at least two people flying in there Friday night that will either be picked up by folks coming through or by some of us who'll descend from the hills. fall within zip code 47906; I'm going Paper Chasing.

To help you figure out what to bring, there is a (partial) list attached in Appendix III. With regard to raingear: check the weather forecast before you leave and then assume the worst.

Try to figure out whose tent you'll be in before the trip; or you may wind up sleeping on someone's back seat. Sometimes it is fun to take your chances, though. Ask dw.

Appendix III

What to bring on a raft trip.

The following items may be of use to you:

- _____ Tent
- _____ Grill/Hibachi
- _____ Sleeping bag
- _____ Raincoat/raingear
- _____ Extra blankets (if it's cold or rainy)
- _____ Towels (and remember, a hoopy frood knows where his towel is.)
- _____ Old shoes for rafting
- _____ Good shoes for hiking
- _____ Tennis shoes
- _____ Bug repellent
- _____ (I recommend a military-grade defoliant such as Agent Orange, laced heavily with DDT and Mogen David 20/20.)

- _____ CB radio
- _____ Clothes (Including some heavy jeans, extra socks, flannel shirt,
sweatpants, swimsuit, shorts.)
- _____ Medications
- _____ Suntan oil/sunscreen
- _____ Calumine lotion (useful for bug bites and other nastiness)
- _____ Plastic bag (for wet/dirty clothes)
- _____ Clothesline (or some means of hanging wet clothes up to dry)
- _____ Cooking gear/utensils
- _____ Water bottle
- _____ Cooler with food and drink
(Bring some beer warm to ice up later)
- _____ Lantern
- _____ Camera
- _____ Sub-Etha Sens-O-Matic - in case the Vogons show up