

Smoking Rivers

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Personal Packing: Southwestern Expeditions

As with all of our trips, we will provide you all the proper river packs (dry bags), tents, and P.F.D.'S (life jackets/vests), although you may feel free to substitute your own gear, if suitable.

Your goal in packing for a trip should be to have all the gear you need to be comfortable, yet light packing will make your trip a more enjoyable one. Many people tend to over-pack; while on river, you shouldn't have to spend hours packing and unpacking items that you don't need and wish you hadn't brought along.

Even in the desert, Layering is an extremely important principle. It allows for the greatest diversity, and efficiency, as regards the ever changing conditions and temperatures one encounters on an extended outdoor excursion. Thought should be given to assembling clothing which allows for the greatest flexibility of combinations. Be strategic in your choices; a few key items can go a long way if chosen properly.

Certain materials and fabrics are far better than others for riverwear- essentially those that maintain their insulating qualities when damp- i.e. keep you warm when wet. Wool and synthetic pile are the best; cotton (which absorbs water easily, dries slowly, and makes you colder when wet) is worst.

River Footwear: All participants should plan to bring 2 pairs of footwear on the trip. The first will be the wet shoe, i.e. the shoe that is worn while loading the canoes, on the water, unloading, swimming, etc. For southwest trips, a pair of old sneakers works just fine. Ideally, a shoe that provides ankle support and has a thick sole are best. A pair of wet socks can be worn with the wet shoe to provide additional protection. Pairs of mesh wet shoes and sandals are unacceptable as they tend to wear out easily and expose your feet to dangerous rocks and debris on the bottom of the river.

The second pair of shoes will be the dry shoe. This is the shoe that will be worn around camp. Keeping in mind that the desert features many different types of cacti, biting insects, and various

poisonous snakes and spiders, a pair of sturdy hiking boots, with ankle support and a rugged sole, make the best option. As all southwestern expeditions feature opportunities for side-hikes (some up to 3 miles in length), a pair of worn in hiking boots makes the most sense. It is important to take care to keep your dry shoes dry throughout the trip; when in doubt, put on your wet shoes.

Clothing: Loose fitting, lightweight and quick-drying pants, with pockets and belt capability, work well in the southwest. Some people prefer shorts but keep in mind the strong UV rays that you will be experiencing while in the canoe. Around camp, pants are almost always the preferred option due to the sharp plants often encountered. Loose fitting shirts (at least one or two long-sleeved), provide protection from the elements and are comfortable to paddle in, as well as good insulation for cold nights in the desert.

Long underwear (no cotton- utilize the various active-friendly synthetics) is always recommended due to the extreme temperature fluctuations common in the high desert. A bathing suit, a fresh pair of socks for each day (wool socks can be nice at night and for hiking), are also necessary. A heavy-duty fleece/pile/wool jacket will provide warmth around the campfire at night and also during breakfast on a brisk morning. You may also consider a ‘paddling jacket’ as another option for layering as well as water and wind protection.

Even in the desert, your raingear should be of good quality, preferably Gore-Tex, with a hood. Rain pants are an added luxury but are generally not necessary in the desert. Rain ponchos are unwieldy and ineffective and just won’t do.

A cap or brimmed hat is a must; an extra is recommended. Make certain to bring several bandanas (extremely useful), leather work gloves (useful considering the cacti and sharp trees), paddling gloves (i.e. neoprene) are optional.

Sleeping Bag: A light-to-medium “three season” bag, synthetic filled (e.g. Polarguard, Hollofil, etc.); a mummy or semi-mummy style that compacts into a stuff sack. We recommend a temperature rating of no lower than 40 degrees for southwest trips. For a sleeping pad, a comfortable pad to sleep on, we definitely recommend Therm-A-Rest style inflating mattresses. However, inexpensive closed cell ensolite pads are an alternative.

Your complete set of dry clothes should be religiously secured in your dry bag for use in camp-after getting off river. Think of your dry bag as your checked luggage on an airplane; when it is packed and stowed for the day, you should not need to get into it until reaching camp in the afternoon. We will go over the packing system in more detail upon your arrival.

For items needed during the day (i.e. camera, sunscreen, rain jacket, etc.), a small backpack or bag will suffice. Keep in mind that it is very possible this bag may be exposed to water (rain, capsizes, etc.) so any electronics inside should be waterproofed in a plastic container. Pelican-box type products are generally very reliable. Zip-Loc Bags should never be trusted to keep water from an electronic device.

Other Specific Required Items

- At least one practical utilitarian knife and/or multi-tool should be on your person (e.g. Swiss Army Knife, Leatherman multi-tool and/or a sheath knife, or PFD river knife).
- Sunglasses are absolutely mandatory on all southwest trips; We recommend a strap to ensure they stay on in whitewater/wind.
- Spare glasses/contact lenses; All glasses should have a strap to ensure they stay on in whitewater/wind.
- Personal Medications (Daily Use) and Spare Medications; Please bring an entire extra set for the duration of the trip with you. A member of our staff will carry the extra set to help safeguard against loss.
- Flashlight (preferably a headlamp) with spare batteries; A back-up flashlight is also a good consideration in the dark canyons of the southwest.
- Toiletries Kit; Towel
- Towel
- Kneepads- inexpensive, strap-on rubber kneepads are sufficient for whitewater
- (2) Water Bottles are recommended; Nalgene-style are preferred.
- Sunscreen is absolutely mandatory; Minimum of SPF 30 and water-resistant.

Optional Items

- Small tarp or ground cloth- handy item around tent, etc.
- Personal drinking cup (we have an ample supply but some people prefer to bring their own).
- Photographic equipment with spare batteries and a waterproof camera bag/case.
- Binoculars
- Field guides, journals, writing/reading materials
- Personal Liquor/Beer, Soft Drinks, or Juices; We provide wine with dinner, powdered drink mixes at lunch and dinner and water. Refrigerated cooler space is not guaranteed on any southwest trip due to limited cold storage.

Your guides will be available to review your gear the evening prior to leaving for additions and omissions. Unwanted items and other travel gear can be left safely behind. There may be opportunity to make a quick stop at a store for last minute purchases the night prior or the morning of departure.

Misc. Travel Considerations

- Please remember to check with your airline/travel agent regarding updated luggage regulations and requirements. It is always a good idea to plan on arriving as early the day before the trip as possible to prevent against missed/cancelled flights. We may not be able to delay the trip waiting for tardy participants.
- We recommend that you 'carry-on' as much as possible within the requirements. In particular, take with you as much gear that's difficult to replace, bearing in mind that it may not be possible to have lost/delayed luggage delivered prior to the trip. Leave bulky items, and cabin-prohibited items) in your checked luggage.