



# The Grande Ronde River

5 Day Trips



**Oregon River Experiences** <sup>LLC</sup>

18074 S. Boone Ct. Beaver Creek, OR 97004

phone and fax: 503-632-6836

toll-free phone: 800-827-1358

e-mail: [info@oregonriver.com](mailto:info@oregonriver.com)

web site: [www.oregonriver.com](http://www.oregonriver.com)

# The Grande Ronde River

The Grande Ronde River begins life high in the Wallowa Mountains in the Northeast corner of Oregon. The river remains in Oregon for most of its 185 mile journey, but crosses into Washington State shortly before it joins the Snake River, where the Snake forms the border between Idaho and Washington.

Our trip begins amidst beautiful mountain forests then drops deep into the isolated canyon of the Grande Ronde. Along the way we pass through some of the most beautiful mountain scenery in Oregon. Bald eagles, black bear, and Rocky Mountain elk make their home here, and glacier lilies color the hillsides.

The Grande Ronde is an unheralded gem of a river. This is one of America's most beautiful yet least known river journeys.



## Natural History

The Grande Ronde River canyon is composed of basalt (5 to 15 million year old lava formations) interspersed with layers of sandstone and clay. These alternating layers of rock create the canyon's lovely terraced appearance. Within the canyon are found an abundance of plant life and a

wide variety of animal life, particularly bird life. It is not unusual for the careful observer to spot over 50 species of birds in a few days, and well over 100 species of plants, including many wildflowers. Because of the river's location and elevation, the Grande Ronde's scenery and its plant and animal life are more reminiscent of Idaho rivers to the east than Oregon rivers to the west.

## Human History

The Grande Ronde River region was once the home of the Nez Perce Indians, who lived in what is now Idaho, Montana, and Northeastern Oregon. Before the arrival of Europeans, the Wallowa Mountain region -- including the Wallowa and Grande Ronde river valleys -- were the home of the western band of the Nez Perce, led by Chief Joseph. In 1877, some 20 years after whites settled in the region, the Nez Perce were driven out and relocated to reservations. Today evidence of both Native Americans and later settlers remain along the river (although thick vegetation in the canyon's upper reaches can make such evidence difficult to spot).

## Weather

The weather in the Grande Ronde River canyon is usually very pleasant. Warm days are likely, especially late in June. However, due to the river's relatively high elevation, cool weather is always a possibility. The river water itself is quite cool.

Here's some climate data for the nearby town of La Grande. Temperatures in the river canyon are usually fairly similar.

	May	June	July
Average daytime high temperature	68	77	86
Average nighttime low temperature	41	48	53
Average monthly rainfall	1.60"	1.40"	0.60"

## For More Information

For more information about the Grande Ronde River contact our office to request our natural and human history pamphlet. For a map and other river information contact the U.S. Forest Service at 1415 West Rose St., Walla Walla, WA 99362, (509) 522-6290.

# Itinerary

## First morning

We will meet at 7:30 AM on the first day of the trip at the Red Lion Hotel in Lewiston, Idaho. (Please have your breakfast before our meeting time.) Lewiston is roughly 325 miles east of Portland, Oregon, and about 95 miles south of Spokane, Washington.

Our Lead Guide will meet you in the motel lobby, or just outside in the parking lot. (If in doubt about where to find us, ask at the desk and they will direct you.) You will pack your things into our river bags, and park your vehicles at the motel. We will then go by van to our put-in at Minam (approximately a 3 hour ride). We'll rig the boats, have lunch, then after a safety orientation is completed we'll be on our way down river.

## A typical day

Each day is a bit different. But a typical day on the river begins with freshly brewed coffee by 7 AM, and breakfast by 8 AM. After breakfast we'll pack our bags and load the boats. Then, after a brief orientation to the day's adventures, we'll head downstream.

We're on the river an average of three to four hours per day. Along the way we stop for a riverside picnic lunch. We may also stop to scout rapids, or to take a short hike up a scenic side stream. We usually arrive in camp by mid to late afternoon, and while the guides prepare dinner, you'll have time to hike, fish, read, or nap.

## Last Day

On our last day we run the river's biggest rapids (The Narrows) and arrive at Heller Bar, our take-out point, between 2:30 and 4:00 PM. Once we've unpacked, you'll board a van for the ride back to Lewiston, an hour's drive. You'll arrive back at the Red Lion between 4:00 and 6:00 PM.



## Trip Highlights

For the first ten miles of our journey we'll be floating the Wallowa River, the Grande Ronde's biggest tributary. (The Wallowa is actually the larger of the two rivers in terms of flow, but the Grande Ronde, being the longer river, gets to keep its name past the confluence.)

The Wallowa is clear, swift and steep. Most of the rapids we encounter are class II, with several class II+ to III rapids: Minam Roller, Redrock, and Vincent Falls. (Rapids are rated I through VI. Class I indicates the smallest rapids, while VI indicates steep, turbulent, dangerous rapids and waterfalls.)

Below the confluence the pace slows, but several long class II+ rapids remain, including Sheep Creek and Martin's Misery. The Narrows, the Grande Ronde's largest rapid, will be encountered the final day of our trip.

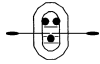
We camp in beautiful meadows dotted with ponderosa pines and fragrant mock orange. Our camps are good places to fish, birdwatch, or hunt for wildflowers -- all rewarding pastimes on the Grande Ronde. Take a walk, and you may see columbine, sego lily, lupine, shooting stars, or monkeyflower growing along the river, and golden eagles, pileated woodpeckers, western meadowlarks, and evening grosbeaks in the sky above.



## Raft Options

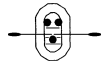
We offer four different boat types on the Grande Ronde: guided oar rafts, "row-your-own" oar rafts, paddle rafts, and inflatable kayaks.

### Guided oar rafts



Our 14 to 18 foot-long guided oar rafts are the most stable of river boats. They're ideal for young children and anyone who wants to hang on while the guide rows the rapids. And they're a great boat to choose if comfort, safety, relaxation, and sightseeing are your primary interests. (1 to 5 guests plus guide per oar raft; your guide does all the rowing.)

### Row-your-own oar rafts



"Row-your-own" oar rafts and catarafts are small, lively versions of the boats our guides row. They're the boat to choose if you're looking for excitement, freedom and a sense of accomplishment combined with a high degree of comfort. A rental fee applies to all row-your-own rafts: please visit our web site or contact our office for details. (1 to 3 guests per raft. O.R.E. guides provide instruction and supervision but are not present in the raft with you.)

Prior rafting experience is recommended, but you need not be an athlete nor do you need prior rowing experience to pilot your own raft. We outfit you and a boat partner with one of our custom designed rafts, rigged with frame and oars. We provide coaching and encouragement, and while your guides lead the way you float "follow the leader" style down the river. You trade off rowing with your boat partner and have ample time to relax, take pictures, or take in the passing scenery. Oregon River Experiences pioneered row-your-own river vacations. This is the ultimate "hands-on" river adventure.

### Paddle rafts



Paddle rafts are fast and exciting. These popular craft mix whitewater excitement with teamwork and group fun. (4-7 guests plus a guide; everyone gets to paddle.)

### Inflatable kayaks



Inflatable Kayaks are small, highly maneuverable one-person craft. They're fast and exciting but also surprisingly stable. We bring along one or more inflatable kayaks to be shared by the group. (1 guest per kayak. O.R.E. guides provide instruction and supervision.)

### A few important details about raft options

- ✓ Paddle rafts are available when a minimum of four adults request this option.
- ✓ Inflatable kayaks are available on a shared basis, but may be reserved for exclusive use for an additional fee.
- ✓ You are welcome to switch between boat types, but because of the need for training and practice prior to substantial rapids certain restrictions will apply.
- ✓ Paddle raft, inflatable kayak, and row-your-own raft availability is subject to water level limitations.

## Pre-Trip Details

### How to Sign Up

Call, write or e-mail us. We'll hold your reservation for 10 days while we await your deposit, which confirms your reservation (\$100 p.p.).

### Where and When to Meet

We will meet at 7:30 AM on the day your trip begins, in the lobby of the Red Lion Hotel, 621 21st St., Lewiston, Idaho. Lewiston is roughly 325 miles east of Portland, Oregon, and about 95 miles south of Spokane, Washington.

### Getting To and From Lewiston

- ✓ If you Drive

Lewiston is at the crossroads of highways 12, 95, and 195, in western Idaho, not far from the corner where Washington, Oregon, and Idaho

meet. From Portland take I-84 past Boardman to US-730. Take US-730 into Washington, and turn right onto US-12. Follow US-12 through Walla Walla to Lewiston. Once in Lewiston, US-12 becomes Main Street. Continue east then turn right on 21st Street. The Red Lion is 1/10th of a mile further along, on your left.

#### ✓ If you Fly

There's a regional airport in Lewiston. Service is provided by Alaska, Horizon, and Delta Airlines. Plan your flight to arrive the day before your river trip begins.

The Red Lion provides free airport shuttle service to guests staying at the hotel. Their shuttle bus meets all flights.

Car rentals are also available in Lewiston.

### River Shuttles

Your trip fees include transportation to and from the river. An O.R.E. van or chartered bus will transport us from Lewiston to our put-in at Minam, a 3 hour trip. At trip's end we will be transported from our take-out at Heller Bar back to Lewiston, a one hour ride.

### Accommodations (before and after the trip)

We recommend the Red Lion Hotel in Lewiston, which is our meeting place for the trip. For reservations phone 800-232-6730. They offer a discount to our customers, so be sure to tell them you're taking a river trip with Oregon River Experiences. For a lower price (but fewer amenities) we recommend Inn America (across the street from the Red Lion). Again, in order to receive the best rate tell them you are taking a river trip with O.R.E..



## What to Bring

Most of the time the weather in the Grande Ronde River canyon is warm and pleasant. But cool, wet weather can occur on any trip. It can be quite chilly when it's overcast, breezy or rainy, especially when you're in a raft. Please pay close attention to selecting your clothes and gear for your river adventure. Hopefully, you'll never need most of the cool-weather gear we recommend that you bring. But it is vital that you do bring it, just in case!

### What to wear

#### ✓ On cool or rainy days

Appropriate clothing for these conditions is clothing that dries quickly, and keeps you warm even when the garment is wet. Modern high-tech synthetic fabrics such as polypropylene, capilene, and polyester fleece do both. (Wool provides warmth when wet, but does not dry quickly and is less comfortable. Wool is often less expensive, however, especially when purchased from Thrift or Military Surplus stores.)

Think in terms of layers of clothing for changeable and cool weather. As conditions change, you can add or subtract layers as needed. The first layer in cool weather should be long underwear made of synthetic materials such as polypropylene or capilene, which provide warmth and wick moisture away from your skin. The middle layer(s) should consist of polyester fleece (or wool), and will provide further warmth. The outer layer consists of a rain jacket and rain pants (ponchos are not recommended). Rain gear made of modern waterproof, breathable fabrics such as Goretex are best. But for a less expensive option, coated nylon will work, too.

A surprisingly large percentage of heat loss occurs from our heads. For this reason, a wool or synthetic hat will go a long way towards keeping you warm.

Wetsuits are generally not needed (although on cool days they may be used in place of a middle clothing layer). However, they do make inflatable kayaking more comfortable, given the river's cool water. For this reason O.R.E. provides wetsuits on a shared basis for kayakers. If you'd like to bring your own suit, look for an 1/8" thick "farmer john" style (which can be worn in conjunction with a sweater and raincoat). Thicker, full-body scuba style suits are warm, but they're less comfortable, and their bulk makes paddling more difficult.

✓ On hot days

Nylon shorts and bathing suits are worn, as well as a hat to keep the sun out of your eyes. Cotton shirts may be worn to keep cool and to ward off sunburn.

Cotton clothing is recommended for hot weather only! Wet cotton will lower your body temperature. This is great for keeping cool during a heat wave. But cotton provides no warmth when wet.

✓ On your feet

For footwear while on the river we recommend nylon or canvas tennis shoes, hard soled wetsuit boots, or sports sandals such as Tevas or Alps. For extra comfort you may want to wear nylon or polypropylene socks as a first layer. Wetsuit boots do a good job keeping your feet warm in the Grande Ronde's cool water. Sport sandals and shoes also work well, when combined with a pair of thick wool socks or neoprene wetsuit socks. Sport sandals are comfortable for rafting, and are preferred by many of our guides. But they're generally more expensive, and do not protect your feet as well as do shoes.

✓ In camp

You may want a change of shoes, and comfortable clothing for lounging or hiking. While cotton clothing may be worn on shore in dry weather, you may want to bring a second set of polypropylene and fleece for rainy weather.

## Where to find it

Check with local sporting goods stores. If they cater to outdoor sports (hiking, backpacking, etc.) rather than team sports, they should have most of the items you need. Gear is also available through mail order and on-line by contacting REI (800-426-4840, or [www.rei.com](http://www.rei.com)), L.L. Bean (800-341-4341, or [www.llbean.com](http://www.llbean.com)), or Northwest River Supply (800-635-5202, or [www.nrsweb.com](http://www.nrsweb.com)).

## Rental Equipment

O.R.E. offers camping equipment for rent to those who do not own or do not wish to transport this gear. High quality, two-person backpacking style tents are available for \$35 per trip. Sleep kits (Polarguard sleeping bag, cotton liner, self-inflating sleep pad, and ground cloth) are also available for \$35 per person per trip. Reservations and advance payment are required. To place a reservation for a tent or sleep kit please call our office at 1-800-827-1358.

## How to pack it

Pack your gear in a manner appropriate for your journey to Lewiston. When we meet we will supply you with a watertight river bag, into which you will pack your clothing. This bag is roughly 14" in diameter and 24" tall. We'll also provide you with a second, larger river bag (roughly 16" in diameter and 33" tall), which you will share with one other person. Into this second bag will go your tent, sleeping bag, sleeping pad, and other bulky items. Items that you want to keep handy during the day but which must stay dry (camera, binoculars, a book, etc.) go best in a 50 caliber military surplus ammo box. O.R.E. provides these boxes on a shared basis. If you would like your own, they are available at most surplus and some outdoor stores, and work best when painted white or a light color and lined with foam. (Please note: ammo boxes cannot be carried in paddle rafts or inflatable kayaks.)

**A few words about the term *waterproof*.** The bags and boxes we provide are watertight under most conditions, even when temporarily submerged. However, leakage can occur, and we recommend you wrap your sleeping bag and clothing in heavy-duty plastic garbage bags for extra protection. We also recommend that you pack your camera, binoculars, reading material and similar items in large zip-lock food storage bags.

## Equipment Checklist

✓ River Gear

- \_\_\_\_\_ swimsuit, or shorts and T-shirt (avoid cotton shorts)
- \_\_\_\_\_ tennis shoes or sport sandals, or hard-soled wetsuit boots
- \_\_\_\_\_ wool or synthetic "ski" hat — for cold/rainy days
- \_\_\_\_\_ wide-brimmed hat (preferably with chin-strap), or baseball cap — for sunny days (wide-brimmed hats do a better job of keeping the sun off, but baseball caps can be worn beneath the helmets used by inflatable kayakers)
- \_\_\_\_\_ 1 pair socks (wool or synthetic)
- \_\_\_\_\_ waterproof rain jacket and rain pants
- \_\_\_\_\_ Polypropylene or Capilene long underwear tops and bottoms (midweight or expedition weight)
- \_\_\_\_\_ 1 warm sweater or jacket, polyester fleece or wool
- \_\_\_\_\_ water bottle or canteen

\_\_\_\_\_ waterproof sunscreen (SPF 15 minimum), lip balm  
\_\_\_\_\_ sunglasses, with strap (i.e. “chums” or “croakies”)

✓ Extra river clothing, camp clothing

\_\_\_\_\_ camp shoes (or *lightweight* hiking boots)  
\_\_\_\_\_ 1 pair long pants  
\_\_\_\_\_ 1-2 pair shorts  
\_\_\_\_\_ 1-2 long-sleeved shirts  
\_\_\_\_\_ 1-2 short-sleeved shirts  
\_\_\_\_\_ socks and underwear

✓ Camp Gear

\_\_\_\_\_ compact, lightweight tent (freestanding is preferred)  
\_\_\_\_\_ compact, medium-weight sleeping bag  
\_\_\_\_\_ compact foam sleeping pad (Thermarest is a popular pad),  
or air mattress  
\_\_\_\_\_ small tarp (to place beneath your tent, or as a groundcloth  
for sleeping under the stars)  
\_\_\_\_\_ personal toiletries, including small towel, biodegradable  
soap, dry-skin lotion, prescription medicines  
\_\_\_\_\_ small flashlight or headlamp with extra batteries

✓ Optional Items

\_\_\_\_\_ a second warm sweater or jacket, polyester fleece or wool,  
and fleece or wool pants  
\_\_\_\_\_ gloves (especially if you’ll be rowing) — bicycling, weight  
lifting, or gardening gloves work well  
\_\_\_\_\_ binoculars  
\_\_\_\_\_ camera and film  
\_\_\_\_\_ reading material  
\_\_\_\_\_ pen and journal or notebook  
\_\_\_\_\_ compact fishing gear  
\_\_\_\_\_ insect repellent  
\_\_\_\_\_ spare glasses, sunglasses  
\_\_\_\_\_ small daypack, ammo box, or small dry bag  
\_\_\_\_\_ beer or soft drinks (1 six-pack per person), wine or  
liquor — all in unbreakable containers. (We provide coffee, tea,  
and juice; also wine with some dinners). Please note: Con-  
sumption of alcohol is prohibited during the day — but is o.k.  
once we arrive in camp.

Please do not bring: pets, guns, valuable jewelry, cellular phones, or  
radios (personal mp3 and “walkman” type music players are okay).

## Additional Information

### Your trip fare includes the following

- ✓ The services of our professional guide staff.
- ✓ Transportation from Lewiston, Idaho to our put-in at Minam, Oregon  
and from Heller Bar back to Lewiston.
- ✓ All meals, from lunch on the first day through lunch on the last. Our  
menu is delicious, varied, and hearty. Meals are freshly prepared by our  
guides from the highest quality ingredients. Juice and water are available at  
each meal. Coffee, tea, and cocoa are available at dinner and breakfast, and  
complementary wine is served with some dinners. Special dietary needs  
may be accommodated with advance notice.
- ✓ Durable, professional quality rafts and river running equipment, includ-  
ing U.S. Coast Guard Approved lifejackets.
- ✓ Waterproof river bags for your personal gear.
- ✓ Cups, plates, and eating utensils.
- ✓ Camp chairs.

### Fishing

Fishing on the Grande Ronde is often good for steelhead in the  
spring, and trout in the summer. If you would like to fish you’ll need an  
Oregon fishing license, which may be purchased at Oregon sporting goods  
stores. If you wish to fish during the last day of the trip you’ll also need a  
Washington fishing license, available in the town of Clarkston, just across  
the river from Lewiston.

### Camping

We select meadows and forest glens for our camp sites. Our guides  
establish a central kitchen and social area, and trip members select spots in  
the surrounding area to pitch a tent or roll out a sleeping bag.

The guides will set up a portable toilet at each camp, which will be  
located with privacy and convenience in mind.

O.R.E. practices minimum impact camping, and the crew will  
instruct you on the simple steps we follow to protect the river.

## Gratuities

We are sometimes asked if it is okay for guests to tip the guides. As a way to express your satisfaction with the river trip, tipping is never required, but always appreciated.

## Nearby attractions

While in the area you may want to visit the beautiful Wallowa Mountains. Some of the Wallowa's many attractions are the Eagle Cap Wilderness, the towns of Enterprise and Joseph, and Wallowa Lake. For more information contact the Wallowa County Chamber of Commerce at P.O. Box 427, Enterprise, OR 97828, (541) 426-4622. Also nearby is Hells Canyon National Recreation Area. For more information contact HCNRA at P.O. Box 699, Clarkston, WA 99403, (509) 758-1957.

## Cancellations and Travel Insurance

The size of our trips is strictly regulated by law, and your reservation means we cannot sell the spaces to others. So we strictly adhere to the cancellation policies we explain in our reservation materials. For this reason we strongly recommend that you consider the purchase of travel insurance, which will reimburse you if you must cancel your trip due to illness.

## Emergencies

It may be difficult for family and friends to reach you while you are on the river. In case of emergency they should contact the local Forest Service office (Walla Walla, Washington) at 509-522-6277. They should also call the O.R.E. office at 800-827-1358.

