



Wilderness Trekking School

Introduction to Packrafting (WS1-IPR)

Course Information & Welcome Packet

Date: September 18-20, 2009

Locale: Bozeman, Montana

Instructors: (subject to change)

Purpose

The purpose of this course is to offer introductory training in the use of a packraft for multi-day travel on Class I/II (PR1-2) moving water.

Prerequisites

You must be a good swimmer. Everyone will be required to swim, sometimes with packs, paddles, packrafts, and/or PFD's, and on both flatwater and moving water.

Objectives

Upon completion of this course, you will be competent in the following skills:

1. Knowledge of, ability to select, and use appropriate gear, including packrafts, paddles, PFDs, packrafting clothing, packs and pack lashing systems, and safety gear.
2. Flatwater packrafting techniques, including boat entry/exit, paddling and tracking, and exit from and entry into both decked and undecked boats that have flipped.
3. Moving water packrafting techniques, including boat entry/exit, ferrying, pirouetting, and exit from and entry into both decked and undecked boats that have flipped.
4. River wading and swimming.
5. How to read river currents.
6. How to packraft through eddy lines, wave trains, and holes.
7. How to avoid obstacles.
8. Dealing with downed wood in river channels - submerged (strainers) and above the waterline (sweepers).
9. Scouting whitewater and knowing when to portage.
10. Packrafting at Class I-II (PR2) competency.

Schedule

Aug 18, 2009

- 8:30 a.m. Meet at the East Gallatin State Recreation Area. Directions: From the intersection of N 7th Ave and W Griffin Dr, travel East on W Griffin Dr, then go N on Manley Rd, then go E on Turtle Way to the parking lot at the end of the dirt road. Check-in at the covered shelter area. Muffins and coffee provided by Backpacking Light.

- 9:00 a.m. - 10:00 a.m. Instructor and student introductions, course objectives. An introduction to packrafting gear.
- 10:00 a.m. - 12:30 p.m. Still-water packrafting instruction on the pond: inflation, tempering, entry, exit, paddling, and wet entry/exit.
- 12:30 p.m. - 1:30 p.m. Lunch and travel to River Practice Area.
- 1:30 p.m. - 4:00 p.m. River packrafting instruction on the river: inflation, tempering, entry, exit, paddling, ferrying, obstacle avoidance, wet entry/exit, throw rope use, and buddy boat rescue.
- 4:00 p.m. - 5:30 p.m. Travel to Launch area and pack for river trip, eat snacks leftover from lunch, go over river signals.
- 5:30 p.m. - 9:00 p.m. Packraft down river and find a campsite, set up campsite, cook dinner.
- 9:00 p.m. - 11:00 p.m. Campfire and fellowship.

Aug 19, 2009

- 7:00 a.m. - 10:00 a.m. Breakfast, pack, break camp, load boats, and map review.
- 10:00 a.m. - 5:00 p.m. River float.
- 5:00 p.m. - 6:00 p.m. Look for campsite on beach, island, or primitive campground.
- 6:00 p.m. - 8:00 p.m. Set up camp, cook dinner.
- 8:00 p.m. - 9:30 p.m. Packraft camping techniques and gear.
- 9:30 p.m. - 11:00 p.m. Review, campfire/fellowship.

Aug 20, 2009

- 7:00 a.m. - 9:00 a.m. Breakfast, pack, break camp, load boats, and map review.
- 9:00 a.m. - 2:00 p.m. River float.
- 2:00 p.m. - 3:00 p.m. Travel back to vehicles in Bozeman.
- 3:00 p.m. - 5:00 p.m. Debrief, evaluations and review.
- 5:00 p.m. Course dismissed.

River Locales

Depending on water conditions and group ability, we will be floating one of the following rivers:

- Gallatin*
- Madison
- Jefferson
- Yellowstone*
- Missouri
- Stillwater*
- Big Hole

* The Gallatin, Stillwater, and Yellowstone rivers are subject to extremes in snowmelt that influence channel changes and wood accumulation, and are usually not floated during the earlier season, or with less experienced groups.

We have selected stretches on all of these rivers to maximize scenic beauty and provide an enjoyable and safe float for everyone!

Gear

Packrafting Gear

The following packrafting gear will be **lent to you during the course by Backpacking Light** as part of your tuition:

- Packrafts
- Packraft Paddles
- Packraft Inflation Bags
- Packraft Repair Kits
- Firestarting Kits

In addition, the following packrafting gear is required, but you must bring your own or rent it locally:

- Type III Personal Flotation Device (PFD)
- Helmet (bike helmet, climbing helmet, skiing helmet, or paddling helmet OK)
- River Knife (recommended)
- Throw Bag (optional)

Meals

You are required to bring 3 "lunches" (e.g., three "meals" that consist of easy-to-consume snacks totaling about 1,200 to 1,500 calories per meal). These should be no-cook items that can be eaten while in the boat, they should be packaged in water-resistant packaging, and they should be diverse and tasty. Examples: cookies, soft candy, chips, chocolate, energy bars, bagels, cheese, dried meats, crackers, nuts, etc.

A continental breakfast on Friday (muffins and coffee), backcountry breakfasts for Saturday and Sunday, and backcountry dinners for Friday and Saturday, will be **provided by Backpacking Light** as part of your tuition. They will consist of 600 to 800 calories of dry, prepackaged meals. Depending on the group and venue, these may be in individual plastic bags or in bulk packaging. Meals in individual bags require one to two cups of (preferably) hot water to rehydrate and may be eaten right from the bag with a long spoon. Bulk meals require that the students bring a lightweight bowl, mug, and an appropriate eating utensil. If you have special dietary needs you need to contact Backpacking Light in advance to make arrangements.

You should plan on bringing your own drink mixes (hot or cold, tea, coffee, cocoa, etc.).

Shelters and Cooking Gear

While packrafting techniques are certainly the focus of this course, so too are lightweight, low-impact techniques for river camping, and you are welcome to be engaged in learning those techniques as much or as little as you like.

You are encouraged to bring your own lightweight shelters and cook kits. We do ask that you do not bring bulky, heavy shelters, because we believe that lightweight experience and skills should be cross-pollinated among our participants. If you do not have your own lightweight shelters or cook kits, Backpacking Light has a number of options that we would be happy to rotate among the group for you to try, including solid fuel, alcohol, isobutane and wood cooking systems; and tarps and other lightweight shelter systems.

In addition, we recognize that some people may not own their own cooking and shelter gear, or that they simply want to focus on packrafting and not having to deal with their own shelter and cook kits. In that case, Backpacking Light will provide group shelter and cooking options.

Complimentary Supplies

- Two (2) 12.5" x 20" odor proof storage bags per person for food storage while river camping.
- Packrafting: An Introduction and How-To Guide (book by Roman Dial)

- Topographical River Maps

Camping Gear

The starred gear is to be **brought by the students** (rental and/or purchase information at the bottom of the page), and all the below will be stored in your packbag while packrafting.

- *Packbag. You don't need a backpack for this course, but it may make portaging easier if we have a long portage. At minimum, you should have 50L of immersible "dry" volume. This volume should be contained in a single rollover-style dry bag. Recommended: Pacific Outdoor Equipment Pneumo Lite.
- *Shelter. If you do not bring your own shelter, please bring a bivy sack or ground cloth, to be used alone or in combination with floorless shelters that Backpacking Light will provide.
- *Sleeping Bag. Rated to 40 degrees, synthetic fill recommended, pack in a plastic-lined stuff sack INSIDE the dry bag, or its own small dry bag inside your large pack drybag. Include, packed with your sleeping bag, a mylar emergency blanket or mylar emergency bivy sack (or similar) that will allow you to get inside your sleeping bag wearing damp/wet clothing or skin for rapid warmup.
- *Sleeping Pad or Camp Chair. Torso- to three quarter-length (32-48 inches in length), closed cell foam or inflatable, sleeping pad, or "Crazy Creek" style camp chair to double as a sleeping pad.
- *Meal Kit: 24-32 oz wide mouth mug or small pot for eating and drinking, and a spoon.
- *Camp Clothes: These must be separate from packrafting clothes (see below) and will remain in your dry bag while packrafting. Include one full set (top and bottoms) of lightweight synthetic or merino wool base layers (long sleeve shirt and pants), one pair of thick socks, a balaclava, and a down or synthetic (recommended) insulated vest or jacket. Also consider a pair of waterproof sock covers (plastic bread bags are fine) so you can wear dry socks in your wet shoes around camp.
- Food Storage: Two (2) 12" x 20" O.P. Saks (provided by Backpacking Light).
- Teaching Materials: Packrafting (book by Roman Dial - complimentary copies are available if you do not have your own), pen/pencil for marking notes in the book, small notepad.

Packrafting Gear

The starred gear is to be **brought by the students** (rental and/or purchase information at the bottom of the page), and all the below should remain easily accessible, or otherwise be worn/in use while packrafting.

- *Pack Lashing System: 10 ft of cord to lash pack/dry bag to packraft, or similar. Recommended: stretch bungee type with carabiner clips on each end, e.g., 18 inch " Shockles."
- *Shoes. Grippy rubber soles, ability to drain water a bonus. Example: Salomon Tech Amphibians.
- *Navigation. Waterproof map case and compass (maps provided by Backpacking Light).
- *Sunglasses. Polarized lenses are required for reducing glare on water to better read water features and see underwater obstructions. Lighter colors (more light transmission) are better than darker colors (low light transmission). Browns, coppers, and oranges offer more contrasts than greys. Sunglasses should have some type of retainer leash (e.g. Chums).
- *Whistle. Emergency whistle that works when wet, attached by a lanyard to your PFD D-ring.
- *Firestarting Kit. Firestarter and tinder (provided by BPL), to be stored on person, either in pocket of PFD or an interior pocket. In waterproof bag.
- Packraft. Alpacka, any style. BPL will provide if you don't have one.
- *Water Bottle: One (1) one-liter bottle, wide mouth collapsible type recommended. Should have a cap with loop that can be secured to a pack strap while packrafting.
- *Water Treatment: Your method of choice. Area rivers travel through riparian lands and are contaminated with Giardia. Some rivers receive flows from Yellowstone National Park hot

springs, and contain arsenic. For the latter rivers, bring a carbon filter capable of filtering metals, or plan on getting your drinking water from tributaries. Depending on the state of snowmelt, rivers may be silty. Example: Aquamira Frontier Pro

- Sunscreen. 3 oz. of SPF 30 minimum

Packrafting Clothing

Air and Water Temperatures

River water and air temperatures average as follows in the Bozeman area:

	May	June	July	August	September
Mean Water Temperatures	41-48 F	46-58 F	52-63 F	54-63 F	48-59 F
Mean Air Temperatures	38-65 F	44-74 F	49-82 F	48-82 F	40-71 F
Mean Water+Air Temperatures	79-113 F	90-132 F	101-145 F	102-145 F	88-130 F

A general rule of thumb is that if the air+water temperature is less than 100 F, the risk of hypothermia following immersion is significant. Consequently, plan your packrafting clothing system accordingly.

Acceptable Combinations of Packrafting Clothing

- Feet
 - thin neoprene booties/socks and/or thick wool socks + river shoes
- Lower body
 - *thin neoprene paddling shorts or pants + lightweight base layer pants worn under waterproof rain pants or "semi-dry" splash pants.
- Upper body
 - *thin neoprene paddling shirt + lightweight long sleeve base layer top worn under waterproof rain jacket or "semi-dry" splash jacket.
- Head
 - Lightweight fleece hat
- Hands
 - thin neoprene gloves with grippy palm material

* By "thin" neoprene, we typically mean something between 0.5 mm and 3mm in thickness (for mean air+water temperatures combinations of less than 100F we recommend 3mm neoprene, and 0.5mm for mean air+water temperature combinations of greater than 120F). These items will be required for intentional immersion practice on the ponds and rivers unless extremely hot weather and water temperatures permit otherwise. You may substitute a lightweight base layer and a dry pant/top combo or dry suit for the above clothing recommendations if you like, but this gives you less flexibility for dressing appropriately for warm temperatures. You may also substitute a single piece neoprene suit (e.g., Farmer John/Jane shorty or full suit). Farmer John/Jane wetsuits can generally be rented at Northern Lights Trading Company in Bozeman.