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Walking Tour of the Middle Fork of the Salmon

While many people have floated the Middle Fork, few take advantage of the beautiful trail that runs along most of its course. These trips offer you a chance to hike some 48 miles over six days in the middle of the *biggest wilderness area* in the contiguous United States. Our supply raft carries all the camping gear and your personal belongings, so all you carry is a small daypack.

This is not a forced march by any means and each person can set their own pace. The only time we all need to be together is at lunch. There will be a ROW guide leading the way and on trips with more than eight people, another bringing up the rear as ‘sweep.’ In addition to our large cargo raft, we’ll have a smaller support raft to carry lunch and other gear. This raft will float along at the group’s pace and be available for any emergency needs or as a sag wagon if someone gets too tired to keep hiking.

We meet you at **7:00PM (Mountain Time) the evening before the trip at the Mountain Village Resort in Stanley, Idaho** for an hour orientation meeting. The next morning we take a scenic flight to the Thomas Creek backcountry airstrip, elevation 4409’ (included in trip price). (Weather has occasionally delayed this flight). Your personal gear is transferred to our gear raft, which is ready and waiting, and our walk begins.

Natural and Cultural History: The Middle Fork canyon is a place of superlative beauty. Not much has changed since the days of Tukudeka, or Sheepeater Indians, lived here. The river has shaped its course through a land so rugged that any attempts at settlement have failed. There are no roads leading to its banks, and little remains of man’s brief presence other than prehistoric cave paintings and dilapidated log cabins.

Around you are granitic pine-studded mountains rising to a sky of magnificent dimension. Our trail roughly parallels the river and often we’ll enjoy transparent views to a golden pebbled bottom. There are several hot springs along our route and we’ll stop to enjoy them, perhaps even making camp at one.

In this unspoiled land, we’re very likely to see big horn sheep, probably more than once as they use licks along the river. We’ll also see eagles, hawks, songbirds and waterfowl and if we’re lucky, we’ll have sightings of deer, elk, mountain goats, mink and river otter.

As we walk there’s time to breathe deeply and understand the oneness with the earth that the Indians who lived here once knew. Along our way we’ll stop to view their rock paintings and learn about their culture and history.

Luxury Camping: Around 4:00pm we arrive at camp. The cargo boat has gone ahead of the walkers and has the kitchen set up as well as the spacious 2-person tents that ROW provides. All you have to do is carry your personal gear to the tent of your choice and roll out your thick sleeping pad and sleeping bag. We feel there are things you’d enjoy doing more than setting up a tent!

In the day’s remaining light, there’s plenty of time to relax, climb a mountain, read a book, take a dip, watch for birds or soak in the rays of the sun. You are free to share with others or find a time of solitude.

Camp is also a fine place to throw out a fishing line. Fishing is excellent for native cutthroat and rainbow trout and in order to preserve this fishery, only catch-and-release fishing is allowed using single barbless hooks.

Meals: As the sunsets over the canyon rim, hors d' oeuvres are served, and soon thereafter, dinner. The quality of our food reflects the quality of the wilderness environment in the Middle Fork canyon. We hand-select the freshest fruits and vegetables we can find and pack them carefully in huge ice-coolers. Likewise, these coolers carry fresh dairy products and meats. From these ingredients we prepare bountiful, healthy meals. Sustainably harvested wild Alaskan Salmon served with a fresh garden salad; Prime Rib combined with a fresh Chilean salad and Idaho mashed potatoes or made-on-the-river lasagna is a few possible entrees. Big salads of vegetables and fruit add color and variety to every meal. Desserts are made each evening in our Dutch ovens and range from authentic cobbler and pineapple upside-down cake. We serve juice each morning and moderate amounts of bottled wine with dinner. We also provide two beers and two sodas or juices per person per day. There's always plenty of cold water, lemonade mix, tea, coffee and cocoa. You're welcome to bring your own beverages or alcohol as well. We always have plenty of ice to keep your drinks cold.

Our days begin with a breakfast feast on which you can freely indulge, knowing you'll need the calories as the day passes. We leave camp and look forward to a day with constantly changing scenery and glorious views.

Walk Logistics: On the fifth day of our adventure, we enter Impassable Canyon, a narrow, granite-walled canyon of spectacular dimension. When the trail was being built by the CCC in the 1930's they got through just eight miles before they gave up to the vertical walls of granite and turned the trail west to head up Big Creek.

On our last day you enjoy a long day of whitewater fun on the river. For about 20 miles we are in a narrow granite-walled gorge of spectacular dimension, the constriction of the river, coupled with the large volume of water makes for an exciting day. Then a 2-hour bus ride will put everyone in the town of Salmon at about 5 pm. That evening enjoy a farewell dinner hosted by ROW. We make hotel reservations at the Stagecoach Inn that evening. Therefore, you can make your return travel plans the next day.

If You Drive: Leave your car at the motel in Stanley at the beginning of the trip. We will help you arrange a shuttle to take your car to Salmon. The cost is about \$115, not including gas, payable by check or cash directly to the shuttle company the evening before the trip. The Mountain Village Lodge charges an additional \$15 per vehicle left for shuttling.

If You Fly: The nearest major airport is Boise and you need to arrive in Boise the day before the launch dates listed, arriving no later than 4-5pm. From Boise you have two options: 1) Take an air taxi from Boise to Stanley and then from Salmon to Boise at the end of the trip. The cost is roughly \$400 including tax. Please call Sawtooth Flying Service at 800-798-6105 to make these reservations. 2) Rent a car and drive about 3 hours to Stanley. Then have it shuttled to Salmon for about \$115, where it will be at trip's end. The Mountain Village Lodge charges an additional \$15 per vehicle left for shuttling. It's about a 6-hour drive back to Boise from Salmon.

You should not book your return flight out of Boise until after 8:30am the day after your trip gets off the water. (Example- On the July 6th trip, you'd fly to Boise on July 5, be on the river July 6-11, spend the night of the 11th in Salmon, then the morning of the 12th take the air taxi flight to Boise, and fly out of Boise sometime after 8:30am.) The air taxi service will take you from Salmon to Boise whenever you need to leave, based on your commercial flight from Boise and the schedules of any other passengers who might have flights within an hour or two of yours. Exact flight time from Salmon to Boise will not be confirmed until the evening before the flight.

Fly/Drive Option: If you want to visit other places in the region, groups of four or more may find good economy in chartering an air taxi plane at the end of the trip to take them from Salmon to some other location, such as Missoula, Montana (on the way to Glacier National Park) or Jackson Hole (near Yellowstone) where you can pick up a rental car. In this case, buy an "Open Jaw" air ticket that takes you from your home to Boise, and allows you to return home from Missoula or Jackson Hole. Spokane, Washington is just 4 hours west of Missoula and is another common airline gateway, so a nice loop is to get a car in Missoula, drive to Glacier and end in Spokane.

Accommodations: The night before your trip, we'll make reservations for you at the Mountain Village in Stanley (for messages, etc. their number is 800-843-5475). At the end of the trip we'll reserve you a room at either the Holiday Inn in Boise (208) 344-8365 or The Stagecoach Inn in Salmon (208) 756-2919.

Suggested Reading: An excellent book about the river and its history is [The Middle Fork](#), which you can order from ROW for \$22 including postage and handling. We'll have a copy in our River Library as well.

Gratuities: Here are some helpful guidelines on tipping. Your guide is a paid professional. Tips are appropriate and accepted only if we exceeded your expectations. Whether you tip and how much you tip should depend on your satisfaction with the trip, your feelings about tipping, and your financial means. If you believe your guide deserves a tip, a suggested range is from 7-12% of your trip cost. If you had the time of your life, then the sky is the limit! We also appreciate your comments. We use your feedback to recognize extraordinary guest service and to discover areas where we can make improvements. Our goal is to exceed your expectations! (P.S. Let us know if you found these guidelines appropriate or helpful.) Tips can be given to the ROW "Team Leader," who will distribute it equally among the crew.