

Frequently Asked Questions About Guiding for ROW

The following document should help answer some common questions about what it is like to work at ROW. If you have any further questions, please do not hesitate to ask.

As a new-to-ROW guide, where am I likely to work?

One of the great things about working at ROW is the unmatched variety of rivers we run, like the mighty Lochsa, the big whitewater thrills of the Snake in Hells Canyon or the history laden Missouri. Some new-to-ROW guides will see or guide lots of rivers their first season while others may see only a few. Experienced new-to-ROW guides usually work on the Salmon River Canyons, Snake River in Hells Canyon or the Rogue. Very rarely does a new-to-ROW guide work on the Middle Fork her/his first season and only the most qualified and experienced join our Lochsa crew. Brand new guides typically begin on the Spokane, Clark Fork or work at River Dance Lodge where we have float trips, hiking, cycling and fishing trips. Where you work is totally dependent on your demonstrated on-water abilities and ROW's needs. All ROW guides are expected to work on any river as needed (depending on qualifications and licenses) and to continue to develop their skills and licenses in order to be able to work on all the rivers ROW operates.

What does a typical season for a first year guide look like?

Most guides arrive in late April or early May to attend the staff training trip as well as training on the Lochsa and/or Spokane and Moyie rivers. After training, and depending on experience, guides may be assigned to our early season rivers which include the Spokane, Moyie, Lochsa, Rogue or Snake in Hells Canyon, based on their demonstrated ability, work ethic and ROW's needs. Work on our day tours in May and June is typically slow, usually no more than 2 - 3 days per week. Most guides choose to take advantage of additional training opportunities, such as licensing on other rivers that ROW runs, to best position themselves for more work later in the season and future years. Others take advantage of the off days to explore the area's rivers and mountains before the season ramps up in July. Multiday guide work early season can vary depending on bookings. During July and August, work is generally quite consistent regardless of seniority, with days off infrequent. Most experienced new-to-ROW guides who attend our multi-day training work multi-day trips and lesser experienced guides work day trips during these months. Our goal is to keep guides busy till late August. Managers and senior staff receive first crack at September work. After their last trip of the season, all guides are required to put in a minimum of 10-15 hours of warehouse work to help shut down operations.

How does guide licensing work in Idaho?

The state of Idaho requires that all guides be licensed in order to guide commercial trips. Effectively this means that guides with at least 500 miles of commercial experience must float a stretch of river in a raft before commercially guiding it. Guides may license on either a training trip or by accompanying a commercial trip. This trip is often four to six days in length and during these licensing trips, guides are expected to contribute as a team member. All licensing trips (commercial or training) are unpaid and licensing guides may not take guests in their boat. Depending on experience and demonstrated ability, it is expected that it will take one to three

trips before a guide is ready to move into a paid position. Complete information on this process will be provided upon job offer. Individuals with prior fish and game violations or criminal convictions should be prepared to make full disclosure to ROW and the Idaho Outfitters and Guide Licensing Board in order to get a license (such violations and convictions do not necessarily disqualify you from obtaining a license but failing to disclose them will).

Do I need a license to guide rivers in other states?

Neither Oregon nor Washington require any official license to guide, but outfitters are responsible for maintaining a current guide roster. In Montana, no license is required on the Missouri but guides must have a license for the Clark Fork river which is simply purchased from an authorized Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks vendor. If assigned to work on the Clark Fork, your area manager will help explain the process. Independent of state requirements, ROW requires that all guides see each river at least once and be approved by a senior guide or manager before guiding commercial guests.

If I am offered a job, am I guaranteed work?

ROW conducts an intensive hiring process to try and find the best candidates for the job. We offer jobs only to those candidates we believe have the tools to succeed at ROW and invite them to training. On very rare occasions training reveals that new hires do not in fact have these requisite skills, abilities or attitude or turn out to not be a good fit for ROW and thus we are forced to part ways prior to commencement of work. This has only happened a few times in ROW's history, however, all job offers should be considered provisional until after the successful completion of training.

How does ROW schedule guides?

Scheduling is a rather complex process and takes into consideration many factors including on-water skills, license status (such as Lead Boat), attitude, positive teamwork, and additional skills that complement the assigned crew for the trip, (such as a WFR, Sweep Boat Driver, guitar player etc.). Other factors considered include a balance of male/female guides, guides with proven ability in interpretation and other guest-driven factors (for example a trip that requires all male guides or all-female guides). Seniority and length of individual commitment to the current season are also considered in conjunction with the above factors but seniority alone is not a deciding factor.

I have previous paddle guiding experience but not rowing. How will this impact my opportunity for work?

ROW often hires guides with only previous paddle guiding experience. ROW seeks to hire individuals who want to grow and develop in their professional and personal lives. For many raft guides, moving from paddle guiding to rowing and single day trips to multi-days is an important part of their professional development. Proficient rowing ability, however, is an integral part of guiding multi-day and high water trips at ROW. Some basic rowing instruction may be provided during training and on some years, as needed, we conduct an additional rowing skills clinic. The development of proficiency in these techniques will certainly require additional time and motivation on your part. It is up to you to put in that time as well as create and take advantage of opportunities for further practice and instruction beyond what is provided in

training. The bottom line is that guides who cannot safely row guests down class IV water will guide multi-day trips infrequently and then primarily as a paddle guide.

Does ROW have a typical way it likes to run its trips?

ROW has worked hard in its more than 40 years of providing trips to establish systems and processes to make trips run smoothly. Our trips are not haphazard or thrown together randomly, but rather, carefully choreographed. For example, we run our trips on a schedule, we have set menus and, have set procedures at our put-in's and take-out's. Our systems are meant to simplify tasks and alleviate the concern over the proper way to do things. We believe that with these systems guides do not have to waste time and energy figuring out the same thing every trip. Instead they can focus on our guests and put their energy into ROW's Mission, Vision and Values while on trips. Experienced guides need to be prepared and willing to adopt our systems, so all team members are on the same page.

Tell me about ROW's emphasis on guest services.

One of ROW's Core values is "Striving for the High Watermark – We provide a high-quality experience for our guests while building trust and friendship with them. We seek to fulfill guest expectations and to meet both expressed and unexpressed needs." In order to set this high watermark in guest service, ROW guides are often expected to go above and beyond normal customer service. ROW guides regularly set up guest tents, cook all meals, clean all dishes including guest dishes and lead hikes, campfire activities and interpretive presentations. We expect ROW guides to try to anticipate guests' needs and do what is necessary to provide the best service possible. All this is quite demanding and before you apply, we ask that you consider your own work ethic and goals to make sure ROW is a good fit for you.

Why ROW places great emphasis on and natural and cultural history interpretation on its trips? What is expected from guides?

Bringing meaningful interpretation to guests is an important part of every ROW trip and a key part of the ROW difference. Meaningful interpretation helps reveal the places we visit and turn a river trip into a more expansive journey of personal discovery. Interpretation is also one of the primary ways we connect guests to the land and hopefully plant seeds of care about the special places where we work. While we don't expect all guides will make great interpreters, we do expect all guides to learn about the places where they are guiding and to know about the birds, trees, plants and basic geology. As well, we expect each guide will develop at least a basic proficiency in interpretive techniques as well as mastery of at least one presentation. To help achieve this expectation ROW requires all new-to- ROW guides to complete a 10 - 15 minute presentation on the topic of their choice that is relevant to rivers that ROW runs. On most years we also offer training on interpretive techniques. More guidelines on how to complete this presentation will be given upon job offer. To learn more about interpretation, please read this:

<https://www.nps.gov/grte/learn/management/upload/interp.pdf>

How much am I likely to earn my first season?

A lot of factors influence how much money a guide will earn their first season. Your availability and the company's bookings are key factors. Whether you are here from May to late August versus late June to mid-August is also a big factor. Guides who train hard, have a positive attitude and take advantage of early licensing opportunities typically earn more than those who

don't. Other factors include years of experience, the number and level of certifications (e.g. a WFR or WEMT) a guide has (ROW offers additional pay for these skills) and whether guides work on single or multi-day trips. On average most new-to-ROW guides earn between \$3000 and \$7000 in wages their first season. While it is ROW's philosophy that we do not work for tips, we recognize that gratuities are part of our industry. These can add another 30-70% in earnings over the course of the season. A complete pay scale will be provided upon job offer.

Does ROW provide complimentary housing for its guides?

Yes. All of our warehouses and outposts have either sleeping facilities or space for camping. In most locations there is also a guide lounge, wireless internet, bath and basic kitchen facilities. Guides typically choose to camp, sleep in their vehicle or use one of the beds depending on their personal preference. There is no charge to guides for use of these facilities.

IMPORTANT EXCEPTION: Unfortunately do to cost, ROW is unable to provide housing for ROW Adventure Center Activities Guides hired for ROW's Spokane and Coeur d'Alene operations at this time. Guides hired for these operations must secure their own housing.

Why do you charge experienced guides for training?

While we recognize that a new-to-ROW guide brings a lot of knowledge (that is why we hired him/her), we also know a new hire has a lot to learn about the ROW way. We take great effort and incur substantial cost to provide quality, comprehensive training to all our staff. The fee guides pay covers only a portion of what this extensive training actually costs. Importantly, the payment also demonstrates your commitment to the contract. All guides who complete the season in good standing, are invited to return for a second season and actually return, have this charge refunded in July of their second year.

What is ROW's policy on drugs and tobacco?

ROW is a Drug and Tobacco Free Workplace. Guides are in a fishbowl on our trips and we believe it is important for guides to model healthy lifestyle choices, especially around children. Our drug free policy is also an important part of our risk management practices. No employee may use federally illegal drugs or other controlled substances without a prescription at any time during the season. This includes marijuana. Random drug testing does occur and guides have been fired for non-compliance. Tobacco (including cigarettes and chewing tobacco) may not be used at any time on a ROW trip, ROW property or in a ROW vehicle. A complete outline of our policy will be provided upon job offer.

Can I bring my dog?

Out of consideration for your fellow employees, our guests and ROW property, please leave your pets at home. ROW does not allow employees to house pets on ROW property or accompany trips.