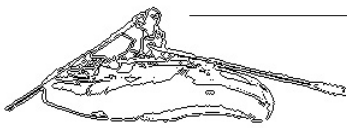


## John Day River



### 3 & 5 Day Trips, May—June

Born in the Blue Mountains of northeastern Oregon and flowing west then north to the Columbia River, the John Day River is distinguished as one of the longest undammed rivers in the United States. Over millions of years the river has carved a beautiful and twisting canyon through the hard basalts of central Oregon's high desert plateau, revealing geologic wonders and providing a quiet and out-of-the-way setting for those seeking to escape the crazy pace of everyday life. Home to Native Americans for thousands of years and later for pioneers arriving on the Oregon Trail, the John Day offers opportunities for exploring old homesteads and examining mysterious Indian rock art. Excellent bass fishing and ample opportunities for hiking also exist in a landscape that is still sparsely populated. With very few rapids, the John Day is the perfect river for those who believe that whitewater gets in the way of a perfectly good river trip.



## History

A wintertime residence for Tenino Indians, the John Day River Valley has produced artifacts from over 150 sites, and pictographs are common. Also resident in the nearby Deschutes River drainage to the West, the Tenino were master salmon fisherman, employing weirs, dams, funnel and hoop traps, baskets, nets, hooks, harpoons and even poison. The Tenino were fortunate to live near what is today The Dalles on the Columbia River. The Dalles was at the crossroads of trade in early times and the tribe controlled a fair amount of trade in the form of buffalo robes and horses from the east, elk skins and beads from the south, goatskin, slaves and berries from the northwest and marine products from the west.



Native American history lasts well into the 19<sup>th</sup> century with the marauding activities of the infamous Chief Paulina.

During early immigration a fort was established at The Dalles to protect wagon trains on the Oregon Trail. Lost wagon trains in the eastern Oregon desert were the source of many legends including the Blue Bucket Mine party who reportedly located and marked a promising mine location with a blue bucket. While the Blue Bucket Mine has never been found, miners began flocking to central and eastern Oregon where gold was eventually discovered on a tributary of the John Day River. With the great influx of whites, The Dalles Military Road along the John Day as well as other were built to facilitate traffic. All of this activity attracted the unwanted attention of the Northern Paiute who began conducting raids to the north of their homelands. Many settlers and miners were killed until Chief Paulina and his band were ambushed at Trout Creek in 1867. Development and activity continued in the area, but dropped off sharply at the turn of the century, leaving the John Day to dispersed ranchers.



“The Ouzel alone of all birds dares to enter a white torrent.”

*John Muir*

## Geology

The upper stretch (3-Day Trip) traverses the up-lifted Blue Mountain Anticline. Some of the exposed core rocks are more than 250 million years old. Early on, Columbia River lava flows give way to the 30 million year old John Day Formation, famous for its beautifully preserved fossil leaves and mammal bones. An hour of combing small streambeds that drain out of the rocks in certain places is often rewarded with finds of fossilized teeth and bones from past inhabitants. A little further on brings us to the startling reds, tans and even deep greens of the Clarno Formation. The Clarno Formation also produces a wide variety of plant and animal fossils.

The lower section of the river (5-Day Trip) is characterized by Columbia River lava flows. Another few miles of the John Day formation gives way to Columbia River basalts for the rest of the trip. This section affords excellent opportunities to see the detailed layering of individual volcanic flows. The Columbia flows were actually a succession of flows over a long period of time between 12 and 15 million years ago. This layering creates interesting stair-step sculpting of the canyon walls, and old soils that developed between the flows are visible today as red bands at the base of basalt columns. These bands have eroded faster than the surrounding basalt to form rock shelters and shallow caves, many of which were used as living spaces over several thousand years.

## Transportation

If flying, make connections to Redmond. Rental cars are available at the airport, or call our office for other transportation options.

**To Service Creek:** Bend – 106 miles; The Dalles – 108 miles; Portland – 219 miles.

**To Clarno:** Bend – 103 miles; The Dalles – 99 miles; Portland, 182 miles

*On 3-day trips your vehicle will be shuttled to Clarno. Please bring an extra set of keys.*



800-788-7238

[www.OregonRafting.com](http://www.OregonRafting.com)

## Fishing

Introduced to the river in recent times, small mouth bass have thrived in the John Day River. Many say that the next record small-mouth will come from the John Day. Without a dam to control flows, the best time to fish the John Day from a boat is hard to determine from year to year. Clear warm water produces far more fish than cold, sediment filled water.

Heavy snow melt in spring and early summer makes the river cool and cloudy, but as the weather begins to improve and the snowmelt lessens, the river becomes warmer and clearer – and the bass begin to bite. It is not uncommon to catch over 100 fish a day if the conditions are right. With few rapids there is plenty of time to drift and fish.

For families, the John Day offers easy fishing. No dangerous wading after hard to catch steelhead and no need to know exactly how to fish a particular hole is necessary. If the conditions are right, bass will bite on almost anything. A combination of plugs, spinners and live bait, using small and simple spinning reels or close-faced, push-button reels for kids work fine. Our guides are there to teach and assist, as eagerly helping the enthusiast chase the big ones as patiently helping a six year old with a slimy worm.



## 3-Day Trips

Three-day trips travel 45 miles from Service Creek to Clarno. In the event of low water we will launch at Twickenham, shortening the trip to 36 miles and avoiding extremely long days on the river. The trip meets at the Service Creek Bed & Breakfast. From here (or nearby Twickenham) your vehicle will be shuttled to our take-out at Clarno. Early in the trip we'll encounter the John Day and Clarno geological formations where searching dry streambeds is often rewarded with fossil finds. Old homesteads and Indian pictographs remind us of pioneer and Native American history and hiking at Rattlesnake Canyon or Big Bend lets us explore the geology and desert flora of the area.

## 5-Day Trips

Five-day trips explore 70 miles of the John Day River between Clarno and the Cottonwood Bridge. This trip meets at Clarno on the morning of launch. Your vehicle will remain at Clarno where we will return by van on the afternoon of the last day. Over the next 70 miles we'll explore the canyon in an unhurried manner as it twists and turns through 15-million year old Columbia Basalt flows. We'll search for petroglyphs at Potlatch Canyon and explore historic homesteads, arriving in camp each afternoon with plenty of time to hike, relax or fish while the guides set up camp, uncork the wine and prepare a delicious dinner.



### Lodging

#### Service Creek

*Service Creek Trading Post B&B:*  
541-468-3331. Store, restaurant, gasoline - 3-day trip meeting location.

#### Fossil (Services in Town)

*Bridge Creek Flora Inn:* 541-763-2365  
*Wilson Ranches Retreat B&B:*  
888-968-7698

#### Other Area Lodging

**Best Western (Madras)** 800-528-1234  
**Best Western (Prineville)** 541-447-8080  
**Best Western (Redmond)** 541-548-8080  
**The Shilo Inn (Bend)** 800-222-2244  
**Hotel Condon (Condon)** 541-384-4624

## What's Included

- Personal vehicle shuttled to take-out
- Experienced and knowledgeable guides
- Hearty and delicious meals
- Camp Chairs
- Professionally laundered sleeping bag
- Thick pad for sleeping
- Outfitter tent or family sized tent
- Complimentary t-shirt & Nalgene water bottle
- Waterproof bags & boxes for your belongings
- Splash tops & pants in case of cold weather



# John Day River, Oregon

## How Do I Make a Reservation?

You can sign for a trip by phone or email

Call us at

**800-788-7238**

Email us at

**info@OregonRafting.com**

You may also find more information and make your reservation securely on line at

**www.OregonRafting.com**

A \$250/person non-refundable deposit is due 7 days after you make your reservation. The balance is due 30 days prior to departure. Once you've made your reservation we'll send you additional trip information including a personal packing list.

*"My boys were 8 and 6 and they loved it. My wife was born in Manhattan and grew up in Westchester County. She had probably never used an outside john before this trip and had not been in a tent in 25-30 years. It was the nicest 5 days we ever spent."*

*John W. Kozyak*

