



Owyhee River 5-Day Rafting Trip (Rome to Birch Creek or Leslie Gulch – 53 to 63 Miles) Trip Planner

Thank you for choosing Ouzel Outfitters. This trip planner contains detailed information designed to prepare you for your trip. To finish your reservation we'll need to collect certain details about each person in your group. You may provide this information by phone or online. Use the link provided in your [confirmation email](#) to establish your trip account and fill out the [Guest Registration Form](#). If you already have an account, click [HERE](#) to access your information.

Meeting Location & Time

When: 8:00 am (Pacific Time) Our meeting location in Rome, OR is located just within the Mountain Time Zone but **all of our trips run on Pacific Time.**

Where: Bureau of Land Management (BLM) Launch Site in Rome, OR. Look for the gravel access road to the launch site just east of the HWY 95 Bridge over the Owyhee River. If you arrive early, you may find our staff having breakfast at the Rome Café. PLEASE DO NOT BE LATE. Service at the Rome Café can be slow; this is the most common reason guests are late. Being late affects the entire group and the first day's itinerary and may require us to skip popular stops or activities. If you are lost or will be late please use the following phone numbers to let us know. Please leave messages at each number.

Ouzel Office: 541-385-5947

Rome Ranger Station: 541-586-2612

Rome Café: 541-586-2295

Fine the Rome Boat Ramp on [Google Maps](#)

Local Accommodations

This corner of eastern Oregon is extremely rural with long distances between towns, few inhabitants and limited services. Services such as fuel and groceries in towns like Jordan Valley, Rome & Burns Junction will often close early so plan your trip accordingly.

ROME (Our meeting location)

[Rome Café & RV Park](#) (541) 586-2295. Very basic cabins, campground, RV hookups and airstrip.

[BLM Launch Site](#) Unimproved campsites with pit toilets. No dependable water source.

JORDON VALLEY (30 minutes east of Rome)

[Basque Station Motel](#) (541) 586-2244. Best accommodations – recommended.

[Crystal Crane Hot Springs](#) (1 hour, 30 minutes west of Rome)

(541) 493-2312. Rustic cabins and tent/RV sites available. Private and public hot pools.

BURNS (1 hour, 45 minutes west of Rome)

[America's Best Inn](#) (541) 573-1700

ONTARIO (2 hours east of Rome)

[Best Western](#) (541) 889-2600

BOISE (2 hours east of Rome)

[Best Western Vista Inn](#) (near airport) (208) 336-8100

Transportation Information

Airport Info

If flying, the closest airport is Boise. You can rent a car at the airport or call Owyhee River Shuttle Service at (541) 586-2352. The shuttle from Boise to Jordan Valley or Rome is about \$150 one way for up to 7 people. Call our office if you need a ride from Jordan Valley to Rome on the morning of departure.

Fuel

Available in Jordan Valley (30 miles east of Rome) and Burns Junction (20 miles west of Rome) before 5 pm. Fuel is usually available at the Rome Café & RV Park.

Dining

[Jordan Valley](#) offers the Basque Inn (best dining), the J.V. Café and a small grocery store. Rome offers a Café and very small store (they have beer and some sundries).

Vehicle Security

During the trip your vehicle will be left at the Rome launch site. There is a BLM ranger in residence at this location, but sometimes the ranger is out on patrol. We have never had a problem with any vehicle at this location but there is always a first time and we cannot guarantee the safety of your vehicles and valuables during the trip. We recommend leaving valuable items such as jewelry and laptop computers at home and packing wallets, keys and other valuables in your overnight dry bag.

Shuttles

We provide return transportation by van or 4WD vehicle from our take-out at Leslie Gulch or Birch Creek to Rome. For those wishing to depart immediately for Boise or points north, having your vehicle shuttled to the take-out will save you some driving time. You will need to arrange this through our office. If you choose this option, we recommend filling up in Burn's Junction if coming from the West or Jordan Valley if coming from the East. If our take-out is Birch Creek, you will need a high-clearance vehicle. Please bring an extra set of keys. Call our office for current rates.

Driving Times to Rome, OR

From Boise—2 HRS; Bend—4.5 HRS; Portland—7.5 HRS; Ontario—2.5 HRS; Jordan Valley—30 Min.

[Please refer to our Travel Info Page](#)

Trip Itinerary

Orientation & Packing

Our day begins at 8:00 am (Pacific Time) at the BLM Launch Site. You should have eaten breakfast before this time. The trip leader will give each guest an overnight dry bag and provide instructions on how to pack your belongings and seal your dry bag. The dry bag provides 3.8 cu. ft. of storage. When closed the bag is 16 inches in diameter and 33 inches tall. Your sleeping bag will already be packed in the dry bag.

Packing Your Dry Bag. Most guests find it useful to separate clothes and belongings into smaller bags for easier packing and better organization. Small, collapsible duffels, laundry bags and even pillowcases work well. Large or rigid duffel bags are difficult to work into and out of your dry bag. Pack toiletries and liquid items in a Ziploc or waterproof container in case they leak inside your bag. Once your trip leader has reviewed how and what to pack you will have a limited amount of time to pack your dry bag. Since rain is a possibility at the orientation, it is useful to have your belongings organized and pre-sorted in your vehicle. If you have a cabin at Rome, you will have only a limited amount of time to return to your room for packing.

Your overnight dry bag will not be accessible during the day, but additional shared dry bags and waterproof boxes will be available on the rafts for belongings such as sunscreen, cameras and extra clothing that you'll want accessible during the day. Your trip leader will help you decide what to keep out. If you have special photography equipment or unusual items please call our office for packing suggestions. Many guests find that owning their own small dry bag for day-use is convenient and eliminates the need to share.

Getting Ready to Launch. Once your bag is packed our guides will collect it along with any other items that need to be stowed on our equipment rafts - this includes personal soft drinks, beer or other items that do not go into your dry bag and that you will not need during the day. Make sure that you have made any last minute purchases at the Rome Cafe and that your car is parked in the proper place before packing your wallet and keys in your overnight bag. Once everyone is packed and ready to raft, the orientation will continue with a discussion about safety, the environment and what to expect on the trip. We try to be on the river by 10:00 am.

Day 1: After a few miles of easy floating through the Rome Valley we enter the first of many beautiful gorges to follow. Look for Golden Eagles' nests high on the canyon walls. Following a riverside lunch, easy whitewater and stunning vistas, we'll arrive at our first scenic camp where you'll have time to hike while the guides prepare a delicious evening meal.

Day 2: Varied canyons, spectacular hiking at Chalk Basin and several short but exciting rapids fill this day. With a little luck we'll camp at Rye Grass Camp where a soak in the hot springs (conditions at the springs change yearly) after dinner provides a welcome end to the day.

Days 3 & 4: A hot and hearty breakfast will send us on our way, giving us energy for the deepest (and liveliest) part of the canyon. Be on the lookout for Bighorn Sheep and keep your camera handy as we approach the dramatic formations of Green Dragon Canyon - floating beneath walls towering more than 1000 ft overhead is an experience not soon forgotten. Exciting rapids, soaring birds of prey and hike to mysterious petroglyphs and another possible hot springs camp make these days the most memorable.

Day 5: A leisurely half-day float through the towering spires of Sentinel Canyon brings us to the head of Lake Owyhee. After lunch we motor across the upper end of the lake, on the lookout for Western Grebes and Pelicans. The spectacular ash deposit formations of Leslie Gulch mark our take-out. We've arranged transportation back to Rome and try our best to have you there by 5 p.m. *Note: Low reservoir levels may make it necessary to take-out prior to the lake at Birch Creek Ranch, missing Leslie Gulch and the Lake.*

Weather Conditions

The Owyhee River Canyon is a varied and dynamic environment. This free-flowing desert river provides a narrow window for rafting, and during this time weather conditions can vary drastically from a sunny 85 to a chilly 38. While most trips have good weather overall, it is imperative that you be prepared for any conditions. While we provide tarps and additional rafting gear to make you comfortable on and off the river, being adequately equipped with the appropriate clothing will insure that your trip is both comfortable and enjoyable. [Check Owyhee River weather.](#)

Special Notes about Clothing for the Owyhee

It is not uncommon to experience wet & dry conditions and temperature fluctuations of up to 40 degrees within a given day on the Owyhee River. Being prepared on the Owyhee means being able to adapt to rapidly changing conditions. Common outdoor wisdom tells us that layering is the key. You should have several layers of NON-COTTON tops and bottoms made from synthetic materials such as polypropylene or fleece which maintain warmth even when wet. Clothing should vary in thickness from lightweight to heavy weight and we recommend having three layers.

We always have a supply of splash pants and tops, but these garments are not the best for very cold days. We recommend that you have a windproof/waterproof jacket and pants to complete the layering. Having a wind/rain shell made of Gortex or any of the fabrics that are both breathable and waterproof can make a huge difference in your comfort level both on and off the river.

Protecting your head, hands and feet are extremely important and often overlooked. You should have an insulated and water-shedding hat for wearing on the river. We also recommend a pair of neoprene gloves. Neoprene gloves are inexpensive and available at most large sporting goods stores such as GI Joes or the Sportsman's Warehouse (don't get the fingerless type preferred by fisherman!). The options for protecting your feet include neoprene booties, neoprene socks or layering with synthetic socks as described above. Neoprene booties have soles and do not require shoes or sandals, while neoprene socks require footwear (either sandals or shoes). If you decide to wear a few pairs of NON-COTTON socks we recommend a tennis shoe or light hiking boot over the top instead of sandals.

Finally, keep in mind that any of the items you choose to wear on the river (with the exception of your waterproof/windproof shell) are likely be wet when you reach camp. A complete change of clothes should be waiting in your large dry bag (including hats, gloves, socks and shoes).

Even when it's raining, our camps are comfortable with large tarp shelters and campfires to keep you warm and dry. As such, comfortable cotton and wool garments are perfectly acceptable in camp. It is our hope that most of your cold weather gear will remain packed in the bottom of your dry bag for the entire trip. Our goal is for you to enjoy the scenery, the hikes, the river and the campsites without being distracted by the weather. Don't hesitate to call us if you have any questions about weather or clothing. And don't forget the sunscreen! There is a very useful tutorial on layering for a river trip at [Cascade Outfitters' River Traveler website.](#)

What to Pack for Wearing on the River

Typical Warm Summer Days

- Hat (for sun protection)
- Sunglasses (w/strap)
- Water Bottle (**Important!**) See below for how to purchase an Ouzel water bottle.
- T-Shirt & shorts (or swimsuit/board shorts)
- Rafting Shoes: Sandals w/heel strap or sneakers (no flip flops)
- Lip Balm (with SPF) & Sunscreen (spray sunscreen runs out quickly)
- If you are sensitive to the sun, you might consider wearing pants and a long-sleeve shirt made from a lightweight, quick-drying material.
- Hydro Silk, Under Armour and other manufacturers make clothing designed for water sports. These stretchy fabrics are designed to keep you warm when wet, cool on hot days and help avoid chafing from life jackets. A small investment here can add substantially to your overall comfort over the course of a trip. Check any major or local sporting goods or outdoor apparel.

Cold Weather Clothing Suggestions

- [Check the weather before your trip!](#)
- Footwear. On colder trips we recommend having neoprene socks or booties. Booties have a built-in sole. Neoprene socks are designed to be worn with a sandal or sneaker.
- Neoprene gloves (optional)
- Warm/water-shedding hat
- Good quality rain top and pants. Fabrics that are waterproof and breathable work best.
- Extra polypropylene or fleece tops and bottoms (non-cotton). Wear these in layers under your rain gear or the splash gear we provide. Have a second set for camp.
- Avoid Cotton!**

What to Pack for Camp

- T-Shirts and Shorts
- Long sleeve shirts (cotton okay)
- Two pairs of long pants (cotton okay)
- Sweatshirt or fleece top
- Warm jacket (your wind/rain shell works when included with warm liners/garments)
- Plenty of warm socks
- Warm hat & gloves
- Long Underwear
- Sneakers or light hikers (light hiking boots are fine for hiking on the Owyhee)
- Small Towel & Toiletries (Don't forget a moisturizing lotion as the area is typically very dry)
- Flashlight or headlamp
- Insect Repellent
- One Article of Attire for "Dress-up" Night. It is a tradition on our trips to have some fun on our last evening. Ties, cummerbunds, costume jewelry, funny hats, etc. - think Halloween. You may be as creative and crazy as you want.

You should plan to have a completely separate (and dry) change of clothes and footwear for camp.

Optional Items to Pack for your Trip

Camera and Film (disposable waterproof cameras work great)

- Extra batteries for camera, flashlight, etc...
- Soda, beer, wine or your favorite spirits – we'll keep your drinks on ice if desired. (Please avoid glass containers if possible)
- Small Day-Pack for hikes
- Binoculars
- Small pillow (travel or backpack kind) or pillow case that you can fill with clothes.
- Small personal dry-bag (handy for incidentals and avoids having to share during the day)
- Trekking pole or walking stick (only if needed for stability)
- Personal amenities such as cards, books, cribbage board, journal, Frisbee, etc...
- Kayaking gloves. If you plan to spend a lot of time in the inflatable kayak, gloves will keep your hands from chaffing. Fingerless neoprene gloves are already on the list and work great.
- Small first aid kit with Band-Aids, ibuprofen, etc... All trips carry major and minor kits and each guide has their own supplies, but it can be handy to have your own "ouch pouch".
- Extra sunglasses
- Sarong

Recommendations for Kids

Exposure to varying temperatures and weather extremes during the course of a river trip can affect kids (and certain older or sensitive adults) more severely than others. Dehydration, hypothermia and general discomfort is far more likely in our very youngest and oldest guests. We recommend paying special attention to footwear, base-layer clothing and additional sun/rain protection.

- Good footwear means shoes that have a sturdy sole, protect the toes, are firmly attached with straps that can be tightened and do not hinder swimming.
- Head, hands and feet. On cold days, keeping hands, feet and the head warm goes a long way toward increasing comfort. Consider neoprene socks and gloves and an insulated hat.
- Hydration. The number one source of discomfort during a typically sunny day on the river is dehydration. Kids must be encouraged to drink plenty of water (not sodas or sweet juices) – this is also the case for older adults. Bring plenty of sunscreen and apply often. Prepare to cover up if you're sensitive to the sun and don't underestimate the effects of glare and reflection of sunlight on the water.
- Personalized snacks. Planning the itinerary for a given day on the river is an inexact science. Many factors can slow us down, lengthening the time between meals. Snacks are important to keep guests (especially kids) fueled and happy. The snacks we carry are limited in variety, so for "picky eaters" we recommend bringing snacks that will be welcomed.

What Ouzel Outfitters will Provide

- Tent (Sleeps two) *Family-sized tents are available on request and sleep four or more.*
- Sleeping Bag & Paco Pad
- Souvenir T-shirt and water bottle with the Ouzel logo – yours to keep. (water bottles are BPA free)
- Beverages include: Water, Lemonade, Iced Tea, Coffee, Hot Chocolate, Tea & an assortment of wines served with dinner (we plan for 2 glasses per adult per evening). You are welcome to bring your favorite sodas, beers, wine or spirits. We bring extra coolers and containers and can keep your drinks cold if required. Please avoid glass containers where possible (that special bottle of wine is okay).
- Splash Jackets & Pants (does not replace the need to bring good rain/wind shell)
- Wetsuits (for our enthusiastic inflatable kayakers)
- Library with books and information about the area
- All meals from lunch the first day to lunch on the last. Healthy snacks are always available.
- All group camp gear including tarps, fire pans, tables & chairs, toilets, hand-washing stations, etc.

Where to Purchase Items on the Packing List

Items listed in the packing list such as fleece and polypropylene tops and bottoms can be purchased at most local sporting goods stores. Neoprene socks and gloves are also available at sporting goods stores and dive shops. Don't hesitate to call us if you have questions. You can also find a useful tutorial on layering for a river trip as well as order clothes and equipment at [Cascade Outfitters](#). **Or call Cascade Outfitters at 800-223-7738 for a free catalog.**

Camping Equipment

Tents: Our tents are Alps brand outfitter model tents designed for durability. They are spacious for two (7ft x 8ft on average) and can accommodate more in a pinch. Special family-sized tents that accommodate up to four are available upon request. Please indicate your request for a family-sized tent on the Guest Registration Form.

Sleeping Bags: Our sleeping bags for Owyhee trips are rated at zero degrees. Sleeping bags are professionally cleaned by commercial launderers after each and every trip. You will find your sleeping bag packed inside your large overnight dry bag when this is issued during orientation. Letting you pack and unpack your sleeping bag each day insures that you won't get anyone else's during the trip. Our bags are of standard length (75" to 80") and will sleep a 6'0 person comfortably. If you feel that you need a larger bag it may be advisable to bring your own. Please call us for options. If you wish to bring your own sleeping bag, please indicate this on the Guest Registration Form.

Pads: The pads we use are called "Paco" pads. These pads are used by river rafters and guides all over the world for their comfort and durability. They are 1-1/2" poly foam in a heavy duty PVC shell. They are waterproof, do not roll up and are carried flat on our equipment rafts. If you feel you need additional padding you are welcome to bring an additional pad to use with the Paco pad that we provide. Please bring only a closed-cell foam "backpacker" pad or compact Thermarest. If the pad you bring cannot get wet, it will need to be packed into your large dry bag along with your sleeping bag and personal items. If you bring a small air mattress make sure you have a pump and patch kit.

Setting up Tents: The riverside campsites we select most often have a variety of options for tent sites. We find that most guests enjoy selecting their own personal site and setting up our easy-to-set-up tents on their own. Our guides will be happy to teach you how to set up your tent at the first campsite and are always available for "troubleshooting" during the trip. If you find that setting up your tent is difficult and don't mind the guides selecting your site, feel free to let your trip leader know that you would like your tent set up for you each night. We will be happy to accommodate your request.

Order T-Shirts & Water Bottles!

Take home the perfect souvenir from your rafting experience with Ouzel. Call to order t-shirts or water bottles at least 24 hours prior to your trip and we'll deliver them to you at the river. T-shirts are \$15 and water bottles are \$10 if ordered in advance. [Click here to see our t-shirts and water bottles.](#) Call 541-385-5947 or email us your order at info@oregonrafting.com.

Meals & Dietary Restrictions

Our menus are designed to be flexible in order to accommodate vegetarians and those with dietary restrictions. Since our meals are largely made from scratch, it is easy for us to prepare portions on the side without garlic, meat or other ingredients you may be allergic to. While we will know your preferences and allergies in advance, it is ESSENTIAL that you remind the guides of your preferences PRIOR to meal preparation. When appropriate, dishes and utensils are not used to prepare or serve more than one dish. Utensils used to prepare dishes with meat are not used to prepare vegetarian options. Here is a breakdown of what we are able to provide:

Vegetarians/Vegans – Plenty of fresh fruits and vegetables (including avocado and bell peppers) will be supplemented with Hummus, Tofu, Boca Burgers, Pates and other protein sources. Meals that have ingredients containing animal products and/or dairy products will have portions that can be prepared on the side without these ingredients.

Nut Allergies - Since we don't use a lot of pre-made and processed ingredients, it is not difficult for us to check for oils and extracts, avoiding them altogether or preparing portions on the side.

Wheat/Gluten Allergies – While we cannot guarantee your favorite brand we will have gluten free products such as breads, tortillas, snacks and pastas.

Non-Dairy – While we cannot guarantee your favorite brand, we can provide soy milk and will prepare dairy-free portions of meals where necessary.

Guest Registration Form - Please record any dietary allergies or restrictions on the Guest Registration Form. We purchase food for our trips the day before departure and do not have the ability to significantly adjust menus or add alternate dishes once the trip has begun. Please keep in mind that “preferences” are different than “restrictions”. We often find that “preferences” become less important as most guests find they are burning more calories than they’re used to during the course of a day. As an example, folks on low-carb diets often appreciate the “extra calories”. It is also common for kids to eat foods that they may not eat at home. Don’t hesitate to call or email if you have any questions. Download a [Sample Menu](#) here.

Bathing

While swimming regularly will reduce the need to bathe, we understand that there is nothing like a refreshing wash and shampoo at the end of an active day. The most current “leave no trace” ethics encourages us to discard suds and waste water into the river as opposed to on shore. As a result bathing takes place in or near the edge of the river and our main goal is to reduce the amount of suds. Please bring a biodegradable soap and use it sparingly. For showers we carry solar showers – a special bag with a small shower head that heats water during the day. It works pretty well even on cloudy days. The bag is suspended on a tripod. Since waste water must go into the river, privacy is often difficult; bathing in your swimsuit is common practice. Please let the guides know in the morning if you are interested in a shower that evening. Total hot water capacity is limited, but our guides will make every effort to make you comfortable.

Toilet Facilities

For many, the most feared and apprehensive aspect of a river trip is the “toilet situation”. When we arrive at a campsite on a wilderness river, we don’t expect to find the traces of previous visitors. Despite the fact that we arrive with tons of equipment and a score of people, we intend to depart leaving only marks in the sand. “Leave No Trace” means we take everything with us, from the ashes of our campfire to the food scraps from the cutting board. Like everything else, human waste must be transported out of the river canyon. We use the state-of-the-art “River Bank” toilet system on all of our trips. The River Bank system offers a large, double-hulled container with a molded seat that is slightly smaller than a normal household toilet. The toilet is set up away from camp in a private area. An “occupied indicator” insures privacy. One of the most difficult aspects of the portable toilet is the fact that capacity restrictions do not allow urination in the chamber – the toilet is for defecation only. This requires all users to urinate in the river or the separately provided “urinal” chamber nearby. Don’t forget to use the hand-washing system after every use. In some respects, this is the price we pay for seeing and experiencing the beautiful and dramatic settings our wilderness river canyons have to offer. Don’t despair! Our guides will take you through the procedures with sensitivity and humor. Be sure to ask them why we call it the “groover”.

Hygiene Information

Safety on a river trip doesn’t just mean wearing your life jacket and never diving into the river, it also includes washing your hands! We are very careful when it comes to contaminants on a trip. Our food coolers are “triaged” and drained daily and ice is carefully managed. Our dish washing and kitchen cleaning systems include a sanitizing bleach solution. Hand washing stations are set up near the kitchen and toilet. Please help us keep everyone healthy by washing your hands.

For Women: A helpful hint from past guests—having a comfy, casual skirt or wrap-around sarong handy makes urinating in the wet sand much more comfortable. You can wear it over your swimsuit during the day and/or wrap it around you in the evening. Frequent stops for urination are common and locations are selected to maximize privacy. Don’t hesitate to ask your guide for a “potty stop”. If you are expecting your period during the trip, we suggest that you pack a small amount of toilet tissue, a few Ziploc bags (small and large sizes), a few small paper bags, a small bottle of hand sanitizer and your napkins/tampons into one large Ziploc bag. Each day, pack a day’s supply of tissue, pads/tampons, small Ziplocs and a paper bag in a large zip lock and put this in your day-bag or in one of the watertight boxes that is available during the trip. During the day when you change a napkin/tampon, place the used one in a small Ziploc bag and put that in the paper bag with everything going back into the large zip lock. You can dispose of used products in the garbage set up by the toilet each afternoon. Do NOT put used products in the toilets. Feel free to ask any of your guides for assistance. We carry extra feminine supplies on each trip as well as zip locks and plenty of toilet paper to help restock your kit.

Environmental Concerns

While on the Owyhee you will be exposed to wide variation of temperatures and weather conditions. This is an unavoidable part of rafting the Owyhee. Sun exposure is always a concern but cold days are just as common. More than any of our other rivers, it is vitally important to be well-prepared for your Owyhee trip. Pay special attention to the clothing suggestions in your trip planner and [CHECK THE WEATHER](#) before you trip. The Owyhee is home to a few pesky plants and insects. Poison oak is present, so keep on the lookout. Our guides will help you identify it if you're not sure what to look for. If you've come in contact it is very important to wash with soap and water as quickly as possible. Keep in mind that the irritating oils from the plant are easily transferred from you, your clothing or equipment to other persons or equipment, so even if you're not sensitive it is important to consider others. While most guests never encounter them, scorpions and rattle snakes are present in the Owyhee River Canyon. It is important while hiking and in camp to watch where you put your hands and feet. Don't leave items lying around on the ground that critters will want to crawl under. Ticks are present during the rafting season and it is important to check yourself after hiking through grass or brush. Mosquitoes, when present, are not abundant, but we recommend bringing insect repellent.

How Strenuous is the Trip

Our Owyhee river trips include [oar-assisted paddle rafts, oar rafts and inflatable kayaks](#). In a paddle raft, all participants are expected to assist with paddling. Paddling is intermittent and only moderately strenuous. A few rapids require short bursts of strong paddling. Optional inflatable kayaks require a much more upper body strength and endurance. Oar rafts do not require paddling. Preference for riding the oar raft is usually given to folks who have difficulty paddling, require a back-rest or have other limitations. Camping involves sleeping on the ground (we provide pads) and negotiating rocky or uneven ground on hikes and around camp. The only lifting required is what you have packed in your bag. Days on the river can be long, and so preparing for extended exposure to the elements is vitally important.

Assumption of Risk & Guest Responsibility

Whitewater rafting is an outdoor activity that requires moderate physical exertion and exposure to the elements. There are risks associated with whitewater rafting and trip-related activities that are impossible to eliminate. While we take all reasonable steps to minimize the risks associated with the activity, it is vitally important for our guests to understand what is required of them and to appreciate and assume the risks of participation. Guests are expected to be prepared for their trip, to follow all instructions provided by Ouzel guides and staff and to act responsibly. Each participant is required to sign an [Assumption of Risk Form](#) prior to departure. **Only parents or legal guardians can sign for minor children.** Please let us know ahead of time if there will be minors on your trip who will **NOT** be accompanied by a parent or legal guardian. Feel free to review our [full participation requirements](#) and don't hesitate to call or [email](#) if you have any questions.

Fishing on the Owyhee

During the rafting season, the water on the Owyhee is cold and often full of sediment. As a result, fishing is typically not productive. A lightweight rod and spinning reel are good for the occasional catfish, sucker or small mouth bass. Please pack fishing rods in unbreakable cases. We'll keep your rod accessible and you will have time to fish in the mornings, at lunch and in the afternoon once camp is reached. You must have the appropriate Oregon angling license. Information on fishing licenses and regulations can be found at the [Oregon Department of Fish & Wildlife](#).

Raft Types

Oar Rafts, Inflatable Kayaks, Oar-Assisted Paddle Rafts.

Given the interpretive nature of our Owyhee trips, the long stretches of flat water and the general interests of our guests, all rafts are oar-powered. The Oar-Assisted Paddle Raft, however, will give you the opportunity to paddle. [Get a description of our raft types.](#)

Gratuities for Guides

If you have enjoyed your trip and feel that your guides have done an outstanding job, it is customary to thank them with a gratuity. The amount is up to you, but a gratuity of between 15% and 20% of your trip fare is typical for Ouzel guests. The guides share their gratuities and will appreciate any expression of thanks you care to offer.

Area Attractions

Steens Mountain

Isolated and unique this mountain oasis offers sub-alpine meadows, forests, deeply glaciated valleys, and stands of aspen. Activities in the area include hiking, resort lodges, horseback riding, fishing, hunting, scenic drives, wildlife viewing, photography and a variety of winter activities. 60 miles south of Burns, OR. [Learn more about Steens Mountain.](#)

Jordan Craters

Large “moonscape – like” area of basalt lava flows with well-preserved vents and striking flow features. 60 miles NE of Rome. [Learn more about Jordan Craters.](#)

Jordan Valley “Big Loop” Rodeo

Third weekend in May. This is one of the truly “original” rodeos left. Rough, wild and in the tradition of the old west, this rodeo draws cowboys from all over the west. Jordan Valley, OR.

Learn more about the [Big Loop Rodeo.](#)

Malheur National Wildlife Refuge

With more than 320 species of birds, and 58 species of mammals, the refuge offers prime wildlife viewing. In the spring waterfowl using the Pacific Flyway stop at the refuge and on the Silvies River flood plain around Burns to refuel for their journey northward. Large flocks of lesser and greater sandhill cranes and flocks of snow and Ross' geese provide spectacular viewing opportunities. Just south of Burns, OR. Learn more about [Malheur Wildlife Refuge.](#)

Silver City, Idaho Ghost Town

Authentic old-west town. One of the better-preserved ghost towns. May be difficult to get to in the spring. 60 “slow” miles east of Rome. Learn more about [Silver City.](#)

[View our River Info Links Page](#) to find more area attractions, lodging, maps and much more!

Special Considerations for Owyhee Trips

There are no dams to moderate the water flows through the beautiful and isolated canyon sections of the Owyhee River. During the summer months, the Owyhee is little more than a creek and is not navigable by anything larger than a small kayak. Our “rafting window” therefore is narrow, determined by available snow at the river’s headwaters and warm weather at just the right time to melt that snow. During normal years (we haven’t had one of those for a while) the river is navigable by raft from March through May. Recently, some years have seen that window narrow to just a few weeks in April and early May. Our trips over the last seven years have run over 75% of the time. At 30 days prior to our first scheduled trip we begin looking very closely at water levels, snow pack data and long range weather forecasts. Even with up-to-the-minute information from the National Weather Service, Snotel Snow Data and forecasts from the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, water levels are difficult to predict. In 2005, heavy rains and warm weather in March obliterated the snow pack earlier than normal and it looked like there would be insufficient water levels to run our scheduled trips. Heavy rainfall in late April, however, brought the water levels up just in time creating one of the best rafting seasons we’ve had on the Owyhee in 10 years. If there is any doubt as to whether or not your scheduled trip will run, you will receive updates via email every few days starting at 30 days prior to your trip. We realize that some folks can’t “hang on” until the last minute and accommodations will be made for changing your date, crediting you for another trip or under limited circumstances, allowing you to cancel with a full refund. In all cases, if your trip is canceled, you are eligible for a full refund. (Fees paid in advance to third parties for accommodations, transportation, travel insurance and other services are not refundable by Ouzel Outfitters). If you would like to check out water levels for yourself, [CLICK HERE](#). Our minimum threshold for running trips is about 500 CFS (Cubic Feet per Second).

Oregon's Most Remote River Journey

Tucked away in the empty southeastern corner of Oregon is a seldom-traveled desert canyon with exceptional scenery, isolated wilderness and dramatic colorful gorges teeming with many species of birds and other wildlife. There are just enough moderate rapids to deliver a good dose of fun and excitement without taking away from the scenery and endless opportunities for hiking. Hot springs take the chill out of the often-fickle weather in April and May. Inviting sandy beaches surrounded by quiet un-crowded desert solitude create a premier camping experience.

The geologic history revealed by the Owyhee consists of alternating layers of shallow lake basins, flood plains and volcanic debris ranging from ash to lava. The wildly contrasting red, brown, and black layers at Chalk Basin provide a spectacular backdrop for hiking and excellent opportunities for photography. Fossils preserved here include plants, fish and large and small mammals from 5 to 15 million years ago. Variety is central to the geology of the Owyhee, with the river traversing fractures and faults caused by massive earthquakes, and cutting dramatic gorges through pink and gray rhyolitic lava, columnar basalt, inter-canyon lava flows, fluvial deposits and volcanic ash flows. There's always something interesting around the next corner.

While otter, mule deer and big horn sheep are often spotted on the Owyhee many folks come strictly for the Birding. During the rafting season migratory birds including grebes, cormorants, cranes and curlews are common. A wide variety of raptors patrol the canyon and wrens, meadowlarks, sparrows and flycatchers entertain at camp. Don't forget to keep an eye out for our favorite, the Water Ouzel!

The evidence of ancient and more recent habitation is everywhere. Short hikes reveal sites with scatterings of chert and obsidian flakes and fragments. Sharp eyes and patient searching often reveal arrowheads and old camp and tool-making sites. Petroglyphs are prolific and range from several hundred to many thousands of years old. Recent archeological excavations at Birch Creek have led to a reinterpretation of early and later settlement patterns suggesting the possibility of more permanent residency as opposed to long-held assumptions of seasonal occupation. Regardless of current theories, 10,000 years of human occupation is easily observed and fascinating to contemplate.

Suggested Reading List

The Birder's Handbook. (A Field Guide to the Natural History of North American Birds) Paul Rich, David Dobkin, Darryl Wheye, Simon & Schuster, 1988.

Owyhee Trails. (Local History) Mike Hanley & Ellis Lucia, Caxton Printers, Caldwell, ID, 1973.

In Times Past. (Jordan Valley settlement and local History) Hazel R. Fretwell-Johnson The Print Shoppe, Filer, ID, 1990

Owyhee & Bruneau River Boating Guide. Dept of Interior, Bureau of Land Management, Vale, OR (541-473-3144) Call to order.

Sagebrush Country A Wildflower Sanctuary. Ronald J. Taylor, Mountain Press Publishing Company, 1992.

Roadside Geology of Oregon. David D. Alt, Donald Hyndman. Mountain Press Publishing Co., Inc. 1981

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