



# The Grande Ronde River

**3 Day Trips**



**Oregon River Experiences** <sup>LLC</sup>

18074 S. Boone Ct. Beaver Creek, OR 97004

phone and fax: 503-563-1500

toll-free phone: 800-827-1358

email: [info@oregonriver.com](mailto:info@oregonriver.com)

web site: [www.oregonriver.com](http://www.oregonriver.com)

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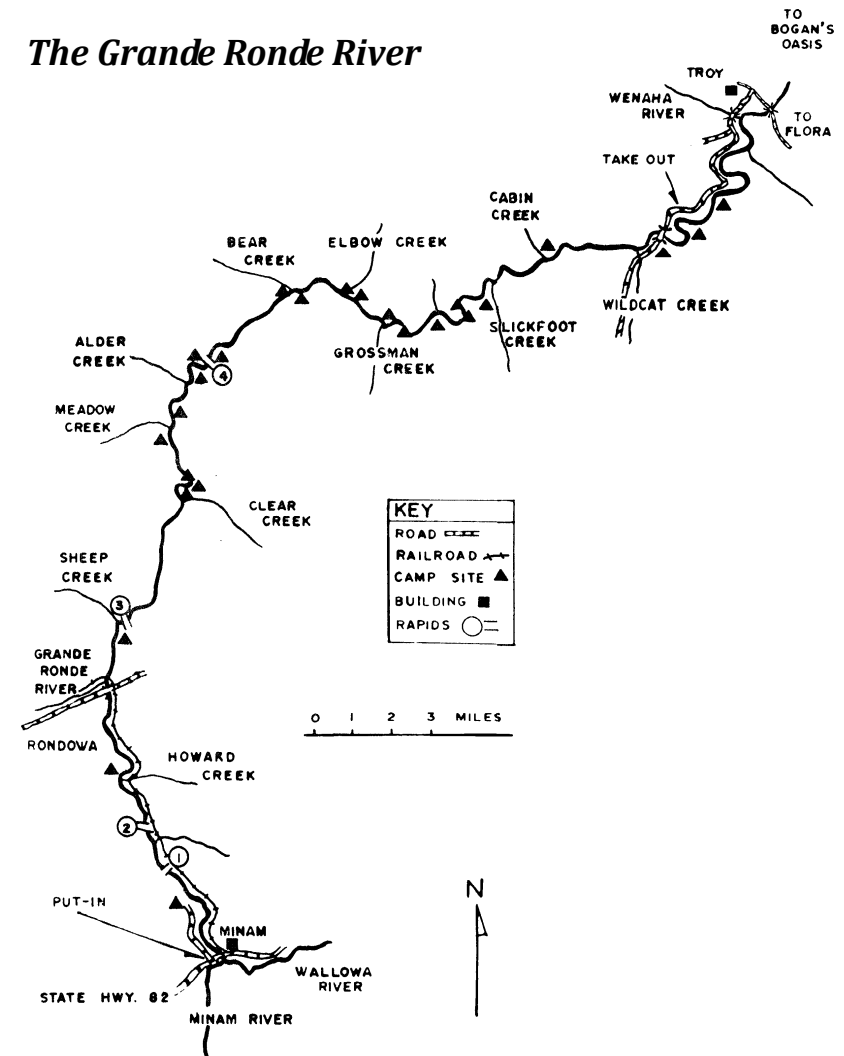
The Grande Ronde River begins life high in the Wallowa Mountains in the Northeast corner of Oregon. The river remains in Oregon for most of its 185 mile journey, but crosses into Washington State shortly before it joins the Snake River, where the Snake forms the border between Idaho and Washington.

Our trip begins amidst beautiful mountain forests then drops deep into the isolated canyon of the Grande Ronde. Along the way we pass through some of the most beautiful mountain scenery in Oregon. Bald eagles, black bear, and Rocky Mountain elk make their home here, and glacier lilies color the hillsides.

The Grande Ronde is an unheralded gem of a river. This is one of America's most beautiful yet least known river journeys.



## The Grande Ronde River



## Natural History

The Grande Ronde River canyon is composed of basalt (5 to 15 million year old lava formations) interspersed with layers of sandstone and clay. These alternating layers of rock create the canyon's lovely terraced appearance. Within the canyon are found an abundance of plant life and a

Trip length - 39 miles  
 Gradient - 21 ft/mi  
 Elevation at put-in - 2530'  
 Elevation at take-out - 1720'

wide variety of animal life, particularly bird life. It is not unusual for the careful observer to spot over 50 species of birds in a few days, and well over 100 species of plants, including many wildflowers. Because of the river's location and elevation, the Grande Ronde's scenery and its plant and animal life are more reminiscent of Idaho rivers to the east than Oregon rivers to the west.

## Human History

The Grande Ronde River region was once the home of the Nez Perce Indians, who lived in what is now Idaho, Montana, and Northeastern Oregon. Before the arrival of Europeans, the Wallowa Mountain region -- including the Wallowa and Grande Ronde river valleys -- were the home of the western band of the Nez Perce, led by Chief Joseph. In 1877, some 20 years after whites settled in the region, the Nez Perce were driven out and relocated to reservations. Today evidence of both Native Americans and later settlers remain along the river (although the canyon's thick vegetation make such evidence difficult to spot).

## Weather

The weather in the Grande Ronde River canyon is usually very pleasant. Warm days are likely, especially late in June. However, due to the river's relatively high elevation, cool weather is always a possibility. The river water itself is quite cool.

Here's some climate data for the nearby town of La Grande. Temperatures in the river canyon are usually fairly similar.

	May	June	July
Average daytime high temperature	68	77	86
Average nighttime low temperature	41	48	53
Average monthly rainfall	1.60"	1.40"	0.60"

## For More Information

For more information about the Grande Ronde River contact our office to request our natural and human history pamphlet. For a map and other river information contact the U.S. Forest Service at 1415 West Rose St., Walla Walla, WA 99362, (509) 522-6290.

# Itinerary

## First morning

We meet at 9:00 AM along the river adjacent to the Minam Store, in Minam, Oregon. (Please have your breakfast before our meeting time, and arrive in your river clothes.) Look for our boats, and for a vehicle sporting the O.R.E. logo. We'll show you how to pack your things into our river bags, and you'll park your vehicles nearby. Then, after a short safety and orientation briefing, which will include instruction on paddle and rowing techniques, we'll be on our way downstream.

## A typical day

Each day is a bit different. But a typical day on the river begins with freshly brewed coffee around 7 AM, and breakfast by 8 AM. After breakfast we'll pack our bags and load the boats. Then, after a brief orientation to the day's adventures, we'll head downstream.

We're on the river between three and five hours per day. Along the way we stop for a riverside picnic lunch. We may also stop to scout rapids, or to take a short hike up scenic side streams. We usually arrive in camp by mid to late afternoon, and while the guides prepare hors d'oeuvres and dinner, you'll have time to hike, fish, read, or nap.

## Last day

We typically arrive at Powatka Bridge, our take-out point, between 1:30 and 3 P.M.. Once we've unpacked, you'll board a van or bus for the ride back to Minam. (On small trips, we will completely de-rig the boats, and our guides will accompany you back to Minam. On larger trips, you will say good-bye to the guides when you leave the take-out, as they will stay behind to finish de-rigging.) The ride takes about two hours thirty minutes, and is an exceptionally scenic drive. We arrive back in Minam between 4:30 and 6:30 PM.



## Trip Highlights

For the first ten miles of our journey we'll be floating the Wallowa River, the Grande Ronde's biggest tributary. (The Wallowa is actually the larger of the two rivers in terms of flow, but the Grande Ronde, being the longer river, gets to keep its name past the confluence.)

The Wallowa is clear, swift and steep. Most of the rapids we encounter are class II, with several class II+ to III rapids: Minam Roller, Redrock, and Vincent Falls. (Rapids are rated I through VI. Class I indicates the smallest rapids, while VI indicates steep, turbulent, dangerous rapids and waterfalls.)

Below the confluence the pace slows, but several long class II+ rapids remain, including Sheep Creek and Martin's Misery.

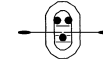
We camp in beautiful meadows dotted with ponderosa pines and fragrant mock orange. Our camps are good places to fish, birdwatch, or hunt for wildflowers -- all rewarding pastimes on the Grande Ronde. Take a walk, and you may see columbine, sego lily, lupine, shooting stars, or monkeyflower growing along the river, and golden eagles, pileated woodpeckers, western meadowlarks, and evening grosbeaks in the sky above.



## Raft Options

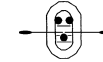
We offer four different boat types on the Grande Ronde: guided oar rafts, "row-your-own" oar rafts, paddle rafts, and inflatable kayaks.

### Guided oar rafts



Our 14 to 18 foot-long guided oar rafts are the most stable of river boats. They're ideal for young children and anyone who wants to hang on while the guide rows the rapids. And they're a great boat to choose if comfort, safety, relaxation, and sightseeing are your primary interests. (1 to 5 guests plus guide per oar raft; your guide does all the rowing.)

### Row-your-own oar rafts



"Row-your-own" oar rafts and catarafts are small, lively versions of the boats our guides row. They're the boat to choose if you're looking for excitement, freedom and a sense of accomplishment combined with a high degree of comfort. A rental fee applies to all row-your-own rafts: please visit our web site or contact our office for details. (1 to 3 guests per raft. O.R.E. guides provide instruction and supervision but are not present in the raft with you.)

Prior rafting experience is recommended, but you need not be an athlete nor do you need prior rowing experience to pilot your own raft. We outfit you and a boat partner with one of our custom designed rafts, rigged with frame and oars. We provide coaching and encouragement, and while your guides lead the way you float "follow the leader" style down the river. You trade off rowing with your boat partner and have ample time to relax, take pictures, or take in the passing scenery. Oregon River Experiences pioneered row-your-own river vacations. This is the ultimate "hands-on" river adventure.

### Paddle rafts



Paddle rafts are fast and exciting. These popular craft mix whitewater excitement with teamwork and group fun. (4-7 guests plus a guide; everyone gets to paddle.)

## Inflatable kayaks



Inflatable Kayaks are small, highly maneuverable one-person craft. They're fast and exciting but also surprisingly stable. We bring along one or more inflatable kayaks to be shared by the group. (1 guest per kayak. O.R.E. guides provide instruction and supervision.)

## A few important details about raft options

- ✓ Paddle rafts are available when a minimum of four adults request this option.
- ✓ Inflatable kayaks are available on a shared basis, but may be reserved for exclusive use for an additional fee.
- ✓ You are welcome to switch between boat types, but because of the need for training and practice prior to substantial rapids certain restrictions will apply.
- ✓ Paddle raft, inflatable kayak, and row-your-own raft availability is subject to water level limitations.

# Pre-Trip Details

## How to Sign Up

Call, write or e-mail us. We'll hold your reservation for 10 days while we await your deposit, which confirms your reservation (\$100 p.p.).

## Where and When to Meet

We will meet at 9:00 AM on the day your trip begins, on the riverbank adjacent to the Minam Store in Minam, Oregon. Minam is approximately 35 miles northeast of La Grande, and roughly 260 miles east of Portland.

## Getting To and From the River

### ✓ If you Drive

To get to Minam, take Interstate 84 to La Grande, and exit onto Oregon Highway 82. Follow Highway 82 to Minam. At the sign pointing to Minam State Park, you will see the Minam Store on the left, next to the Wallowa River.

### ✓ If you Fly

The closest commercial airport is Pendleton, Oregon (85 miles from Minam). It is serviced by Alaska Airlines. Plan your flight to arrive the day before your river trip begins.

No public transportation is available from Pendleton to Minam, but rental cars are available.

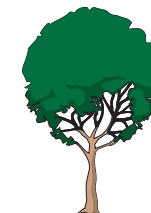
## River Shuttles

Your trip fare includes transportation from our take-out point back to Minam at trip's end. However, if you would rather have your car at takeout, shuttle service for your vehicle can be arranged through the Minam Store when you arrive for your river trip. We have used them for many years, and have found them to be very helpful and dependable. Their charge to drive a vehicle from Minam to takeout is approximately \$50.

## Accommodations (before and after your river trip)

The Minam Motel ([www.minammotel.com](http://www.minammotel.com)) is conveniently located across the bridge from our meeting place. Their phone number is (877) 888-8130. The Motel has received mixed reviews by our guests in the past, but is now under new management. Additional accommodations are available in La Grande. The Best Western Motor Inn (541-963-4498) and Super 8 Motel (541-963-2925) are La Grande options.

Camping is available at Minam State Park, just a few minutes drive from the Minam Store.



# What to Bring

Most of the time the weather in the Grande Ronde River canyon is warm and pleasant. But cool, wet weather can occur on any trip. It can be quite chilly when it's overcast, breezy or rainy, especially when you're in a raft. Please pay close attention to selecting your clothes and gear for your river adventure. Hopefully, you'll never need most of the cool-weather gear we recommend that you bring. But it is vital that you do bring it, just in case!

## What to wear

### ✓ On cool or rainy days

Appropriate clothing for these conditions is clothing that dries quickly, and keeps you warm even when the garment is wet. Modern high-tech synthetic fabrics such as polypropylene, capilene, and polyester fleece do both. (Wool provides warmth when wet, but does not dry quickly and is less comfortable. Wool is often less expensive, however, especially when purchased from Thrift or Military Surplus stores.)

Think in terms of layers of clothing for changeable and cool weather. As conditions change, you can add or subtract layers as needed. The first layer in cool weather should be long underwear made of synthetic materials such as polypropylene or capilene, which provide warmth and wick moisture away from your skin. The middle layer(s) should consist of polyester fleece (or wool), and will provide further warmth. The outer layer consists of a rain jacket and rain pants (ponchos are not recommended). Rain gear made of modern waterproof, breathable fabrics such as Goretex are best. But for a less expensive option, coated nylon will work, too.

A surprisingly large percentage of heat loss occurs from our heads. For this reason, a wool or synthetic hat will go a long way towards keeping you warm.

Wetsuits are generally not needed (although on cool days they may be used in place of a middle clothing layer). However, they do make inflatable kayaking more comfortable, given the river's cool water. For this reason O.R.E. provides wetsuits on a shared basis for kayakers. If you'd like to bring your own suit, look for an 1/8" thick "farmer john" style (which can be worn in conjunction with a sweater and raincoat). Thicker, full-body scuba style suits are warm, but they're less comfortable, and their bulk makes paddling more difficult.

### ✓ On hot days

Nylon shorts and bathing suits are worn, as well as a hat to keep the sun out of your eyes. Cotton shirts may be worn to keep cool and to ward off sunburn.

Cotton clothing is recommended for hot weather only! Wet cotton will lower your body temperature. This is great for keeping cool during a heat wave. But cotton provides no warmth when wet.

### ✓ On your feet

For footwear while on the river we recommend nylon or canvas tennis shoes, hard soled wetsuit boots, or sports sandals such as Tevas or Alps. For extra comfort you may want to wear nylon or polypropylene socks as a first layer. Wetsuit boots do a good job keeping your feet warm in the Grande Ronde's cool water. Sport sandals and shoes also work well, when combined with a pair of thick wool socks or neoprene wetsuit socks. Sport sandals are comfortable for rafting, and are preferred by many of our guides. But they're generally more expensive, and do not protect your feet as well as do shoes.

### ✓ In camp

You may want a change of shoes, and comfortable clothing for lounging or hiking. While cotton clothing may be worn on shore in dry weather, you may want to bring a second set of polypropylene and fleece for rainy weather.

## Where to find it

Check with local sporting goods stores. If they cater to outdoor sports (hiking, backpacking, etc.) rather than team sports, they should have most of the items you need. Gear is also available through mail order and on-line by contacting REI (800-426-4840, or [www.rei.com](http://www.rei.com)), L.L. Bean (800-341-4341, or [www.llbean.com](http://www.llbean.com)), or Northwest River Supply (800-635-5202, or [www.nrsweb.com](http://www.nrsweb.com)).

## Rental Equipment

O.R.E. offers camping equipment for rent to those who do not own or do not wish to transport this gear. High quality, two-person backpacking style tents are available for \$25 per trip. Sleep kits (Polarguard sleeping bag, cotton liner, self-inflating sleep pad, and ground cloth) are also available for \$25 per person per trip. Reservations and advance payment are required. To place a reservation for a tent or sleep kit please call our office at 1-800-827-1358.

## How to pack it

Pack your gear in a manner appropriate for your journey to the river. When we meet we will supply you with a watertight river bag, into which you will pack your clothing. This bag is roughly 14" in diameter and 24" tall. We'll also provide you with a second, larger river bag (roughly 16" in diameter and 33" tall), which you will share with one other person. Into this second bag will go your tent, sleeping bag, sleeping pad, and other bulky items. Items that you want to keep handy during the day but which must stay dry (camera, binoculars, a book, etc.) go best in a 50 caliber military surplus ammo box. O.R.E. provides these boxes on a shared basis. If you would like your own, they are available at most surplus and some outdoor stores, and work best when painted white or a light color and lined with foam. (Please note: ammo boxes cannot be carried in paddle rafts or inflatable kayaks.)

**A few words about the term *waterproof*.** The bags and boxes we provide are watertight under most conditions, even when temporarily submerged. However, leakage can occur, and we recommend you wrap your sleeping bag and clothing in heavy-duty plastic garbage bags for extra protection. We also recommend that you pack your camera, binoculars, reading material and similar items in large zip-lock food storage bags.

## Equipment Checklist

### ✓ River Gear

- \_\_\_\_\_ swimsuit, or shorts and T-shirt (avoid cotton shorts)
- \_\_\_\_\_ tennis shoes or sport sandals, or hard-soled wetsuit boots
- \_\_\_\_\_ wool or synthetic "ski" hat — for cold/rainy days
- \_\_\_\_\_ wide-brimmed hat (preferably with chin-strap), or baseball cap — for sunny days (wide-brimmed hats do a better job of keeping the sun off, but baseball caps can be worn beneath the helmets used by inflatable kayakers)
- \_\_\_\_\_ 1 pair socks (wool or synthetic)
- \_\_\_\_\_ waterproof rain jacket and rain pants
- \_\_\_\_\_ Polypropylene or Capilene long underwear tops and bottoms (midweight or expedition weight)
- \_\_\_\_\_ 1 warm sweater or jacket, polyester fleece or wool
- \_\_\_\_\_ water bottle or canteen

- \_\_\_\_\_ waterproof sunscreen (SPF 15 minimum), lip balm
- \_\_\_\_\_ sunglasses, with strap (i.e. "chums" or "croakies")

### ✓ Extra river clothing, camp clothing

- \_\_\_\_\_ camp shoes (or *lightweight* hiking boots)
- \_\_\_\_\_ 1 pair long pants
- \_\_\_\_\_ 1-2 pair shorts
- \_\_\_\_\_ 1-2 long-sleeved shirts
- \_\_\_\_\_ 1-2 short-sleeved shirts
- \_\_\_\_\_ socks and underwear

### ✓ Camp Gear

- \_\_\_\_\_ compact, lightweight tent (freestanding is preferred)
- \_\_\_\_\_ compact, medium-weight sleeping bag
- \_\_\_\_\_ compact foam sleeping pad (Thermarest is a popular pad), or air mattress
- \_\_\_\_\_ small tarp (to place beneath your tent, or as a groundcloth for sleeping under the stars)
- \_\_\_\_\_ personal toiletries, including small towel, biodegradable soap, dry-skin lotion, prescription medicines
- \_\_\_\_\_ small flashlight or headlamp with extra batteries

### ✓ Optional Items

- \_\_\_\_\_ a second warm sweater or jacket, polyester fleece or wool, and fleece or wool pants
- \_\_\_\_\_ gloves (especially if you'll be rowing) — bicycling, weight lifting, or gardening gloves work well
- \_\_\_\_\_ binoculars
- \_\_\_\_\_ camera and film
- \_\_\_\_\_ reading material
- \_\_\_\_\_ pen and journal or notebook
- \_\_\_\_\_ compact fishing gear
- \_\_\_\_\_ insect repellent
- \_\_\_\_\_ spare glasses, sunglasses
- \_\_\_\_\_ small daypack, ammo box, or small dry bag
- \_\_\_\_\_ beer or soft drinks (1 six-pack per person), wine or liquor — all in unbreakable containers. (We provide coffee, tea, and juice; also wine with some dinners). Please note: Consumption of alcohol is prohibited during the day — but is o.k. once we arrive in camp.

Please do not bring: pets, guns, valuable jewelry, cellular phones, or radios (personal "walkman" type music players are o.k.).

## Additional Information

### Your trip fare includes the following

- ✓ The services of our professional guide staff.
- ✓ Transportation from our take-out near Troy back to Minam at trip's end.
- ✓ All meals, from lunch on the first day through lunch on the last. Our menu is delicious, varied, and hearty. Meals are freshly prepared by our guides from the highest quality ingredients. Juice and water are available at each meal. Coffee, tea, and cocoa are available at dinner and breakfast, and complementary wine is served with some dinners. Special dietary needs may be accommodated with advance notice.
- ✓ Durable, professional quality rafts and river running equipment, including U.S. Coast Guard Approved lifejackets.
- ✓ Waterproof river bags for your personal gear.
- ✓ Cups, plates, and eating utensils.
- ✓ Camp chairs.

### Fishing

Fishing on the Grande Ronde is often good for steelhead in the spring, and trout in the summer. If you would like to fish you'll need an Oregon fishing license, which may be purchased at Oregon sporting goods stores.

### Camping

We select meadows and forest glens for our camp sites. Our guides establish a central kitchen and social area, and trip members select spots in the surrounding area to pitch a tent or roll out a sleeping bag.

The guides will set up a portable toilet at each camp, which will be located with privacy and convenience in mind.

O.R.E. practices minimum impact camping, and the crew will instruct you on the simple steps we follow to protect the river.

### Gratuities

Our guests sometimes ask whether it is appropriate to tip the guides. Tipping is optional, but if your guides did a great job then feel free to thank them with a gratuity. The amount is up to you, but tips between 8% and 20% of trip cost are typical. Gratuities are customarily presented to the Lead Guide, and will be shared equally among all guides on your trip.

### Nearby attractions

While in the area you may want to visit the beautiful Wallowa Mountains. Some of the Wallowa's many attractions are the Eagle Cap Wilderness, the towns of Enterprise and Joseph, and Wallowa Lake. For more information contact the Wallowa County Chamber of Commerce at P.O. Box 427, Enterprise, OR 97828, (541) 426-4622. Also nearby is Hells Canyon National Recreation Area. For more information contact HCNRA at P.O. Box 699, Clarkston, WA 99403, (509) 758-1957.

### Cancellations and Travel Insurance

The size of our trips is strictly regulated by law, and your reservation means we cannot sell the spaces to others. So we strictly adhere to the cancellation policies we explain in our reservation materials. For this reason we strongly recommend that you consider the purchase of travel insurance, which will reimburse you if you must cancel your trip due to illness.

### Emergencies

It may be difficult for family and friends to reach you while you are on the river. In case of emergency they should contact the local Forest Service office (Walla Walla, Washington) at 509-522-6277. They should also call the O.R.E. office at 800-827-1358.

