

The Bota Baggers Truckee River raft trip of July 17 was a huge success, with 31 rafters and 50 dinner guests. It was a hot day, which allowed the rafters to dry off between the vicious and intense water fights between our six rafts. On occasion a raft full of strangers would make the grievous mistake of firing at us, and our superior firepower always prevailed. The put-in was from just below Fannie Bridge in Tahoe City and the take-out was at River Ranch. At the take-out point many of the rafters had refreshing adult drinks on the River Ranch patio. The raft reservations with Mountain Air Sports were made by Nancy Ellis. That night, dinner was served at a Tahoe Donner residence of long-time Bota Baggers Jeff and Barbara McCabe (Jeff is Race Chairman of Singles League Racing). Dinner included hor dourves, including sushi, barbequed tri-tip as the entree, salad, beans, potato salad, dinner rolls, chocolate cookies, and all you could drink beer and wine. The package price for the raft trip and dinner was \$45, and dinner by itself was \$15. The Bota Bagger Truckee River raft trip is an annual affair normally scheduled for two weekends after the 4th of July weekend, so next years event will be held July 16. See you then.



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The Truckee River is flowing high and strong enough now for a smooth, quick ride from Fanny Bridge down to River Ranch. Quick, unless you do it right. Take your time. You will experience a rare sense of freedom, and be completely renewed by the experience.

Rafting the Truckee is idyllic and adventurous. Most people agree, it is one of Tahoe's best experiences. But it does require some common sense, like knowing what a river is.

A few complain about the fact that, yes, rivers have rocks in them, and that, no, the river doesn't stop flowing just because you ignored all the warnings and fell out of the raft.

Yes, it helps to be aware of the real, natural world around you, and what lies ahead.

The commercial raft companies provide adequate boating and river safety information to every guest they launch in a raft. You do not need a guide. You are on your own, but there is a procedure if you hire a raft and need assistance. Just walk to the nearby highway with your paddle, hold it up and the frequent river patrol will assist you.

Don't bother taking heavy coolers. They tend to create drag, and will act like an anchor. You don't need weight. The less alcohol, the better. All you need for a good time rafting the Truckee is a light heart and a song, a little food and water, good friends, sunscreen and a love of Tahoe Time. To set your watch on Tahoe Time, throw it away.

You can hear how much spontaneous fun people are having as the rafts float by.

“Hi! Hey, you guys can be with us.”

“We’re all in the same boat now!”

“Who wants to be the captain?”

“Is this river moving?”

“There are parts where you flip out.”

“We won’t splash you without asking permission first.”

“Dad, can I put my hand in the water?”

“Do you know how to back paddle?”

“Can I sit in front?”

“I thought I was in front. Now it’s the back.”

“How do you steer this thing?”

“That last part was the best!”

Laughter and squeals of glee echo through the pines, brighter than the sparkling sun on the white water. No matter how crowded the river is, no matter how close you are to the highway, it is just you and the river. Time slips away.

The trustworthy current that eddies clockwise in the big pool at the end of the float makes it impossible for even the most inexperienced rafters to get sucked in over the little falls at River Ranch. The rare few who go too far are in for a wild ride as a half dozen Truckee River rafting employees, running as fast as deer down the bike trail, scramble to the rescue and work together on the rocks to make the save before anything serious happens.

The raft crews for both Mountain Air Sports and Truckee River Raft Company are the unsung heroes of the summer raft business. Those young men, some of them as skinny as a whip, lift 100- to 200-pound rafts all day and still manage to keep everyone flowing in relative peace as they emerge from the river and slowly drift back onto dry land.

Then all is silent.

The river runs down alone, searching for something to carry, different life forms to touch along the way. Be free. Answer the call of the river. It is irresistible.

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