



## News

ADVERTISEMENT

[momsmiami - Profile](#) | [Pictures](#) | [Blog](#)



◀ August 2009 ▶

Su	Mo	Tu	We	Th	Fr	Sa
						1
2	3	4	5	6	7	8
9	10	11	12	13	14	15
16	17	18	19	20	21	22
23	24	25	26	27	28	29
30	31					

### Tags

- [kids \(34\)](#)
- [autism \(12\)](#)
- [schools \(12\)](#)
- [teen \(12\)](#)
- [pregnancy \(11\)](#)
- [green \(10\)](#)
- [summer \(10\)](#)
- [broward \(9\)](#)
- [fitness \(9\)](#)
- [child care \(7\)](#)
- [high school \(7\)](#)
- [marriage \(7\)](#)
- [obama \(7\)](#)
- [plastic \(7\)](#)
- [safety \(7\)](#)
- [teens \(7\)](#)
- [baby \(6\)](#)
- [balancing act \(6\)](#)
- [cindy goodman \(6\)](#)
- [family \(6\)](#)

## Family getaway: Rafting Snake River



Paddlers stow their oars and let the current do the work through the rapids on the Snake River. (STEVE HAGGERTY/COLORWORLD) Below, a girl on another trip holds up her catch. (ROW ADVENTURES)

LEWISTON, Idaho -- It looked like Survivor, the family version. But the sunburned stragglers stranded on the beach beside Idaho's Snake River were only waiting for lunch.

"Ooooh, yuck, that's disgusting!" said 11-year-old Michelle, peering into a tin of smoked oysters. She wrinkled her nose. "Can't we have peanut butter and jelly?"

To the rest of us, ready to devour an old shoe if necessary, the lunch table, laid out with olives and cream cheese, a tomato and lettuce salad, wheat bread and sandwich meats, looked positively delectable. But not to Michelle.

Two days and five meals into our six-day raft trip down the mighty Snake River, the grade-schooler from Atlanta was still turning up her nose at most of the menus. So far, Michelle hadn't liked much of anything. Now she rolled her eyes as 5-year-old Diane helped herself to an olive, dropped it in the sand, then stuck it in her mouth and chewed it, grit and all.



"Peanut butter coming right up," sang out Jo Deurbrouck, one of the six guides leading our family float trip, organized by ROW Adventures, an Idaho-based outfitter. "You'll need it, Michelle, if you're going to paddle the rapids."

Going into the food box, Deurbrouck, a 15-year veteran with ROW, dug out the peanut butter. The rest of us served our plates, buffet style, and munched gratefully, imagining the rapids that lay ahead.

The legendary Snake River, sweeping northward in broad loops toward the Columbia River, figures large in the history of the American West. For the pioneers, it was a dangerous obstacle on the journey westward. Today, the upper river's roaring rapids are a favorite with white-water enthusiasts.

But for families, the lower Snake's moderate Class II and III rapids, stretches of glassy pools, sandy beaches and sunny days add just the right mix of paddling, nature-gazing and camaraderie. Just right, in fact, for a customized "family-and-friends" adventure, with parents, daughters, sons, nephews and assorted friends.

When our son Steve announced that he was organizing a summer river rafting trip, the response was immediate. The trip's purpose, a reunion with far-flung family and friends in the heart of the still-wild west, offered lots to do and see. The preparations were minimal, he said, because

ADVERTISEMENT

## Events 4 Kids



- Adventures with Clifford the Big Red Dog
  - Robots exhibit
  - Kids Night Out
- [more events](#)

## Swap your Stuff

- Girls Dresser
- Jeep jogging stroller for sale
- Girls 7M- Stride Rite...
- Nursery Glider for Sale
- Single Mommy in need of...
- Britax Marathon Convertible...

[more swap](#)

City & State and/or Zip:

Category:

Within:

ADVERTISEMENT

ROW provides everything: guides, all meals, wine and beer, quality paddle and oar boats, spacious two-man tents, dry bags for cameras and sleeping bags.

Within two weeks, Steve had filled all 18 slots.

ROW, which leads a variety of guided rafting trips on Western rivers, often customizes outings for families and groups. These may include shorter or longer days on the water, extra time in camp, meals that kids will eat, and enough games and activities to keep all ages happy. So far, so good.

But when I saw Steve's sign-up list, a flicker of doubt crossed my mind. The 18 of us, ages 6 to 60, seemed as different as any group could be. And when we met for the first time in Lewiston, Idaho, at ROW's kickoff barbecue dinner, it was obvious that for many of us, Steve was the only common denominator.

What would his college roommate John, a California surfer, have to say to Caroline, a vice president at a Washington, D.C., investment bank? Would my sister Mary, a high school teacher and mother of four, have anything in common with Gordon, an international marketing manager, or with Steve's college friend, Dixie, a writer and single mother?

And what if the six kids were pests?

Who was most likely to survive after the city dwellers in the bunch had slept in tents, washed their hair in river water, been limited to three-minute showers and stood in line for the pit toilet? Six days in the wilderness would bond us together – or bring on a cat fight.

But Deurbrouck, our lead guide, had been in this situation before. Gathering everyone in a circle for an orientation, she succeeded in smoothing the waters.

"Since some of you have just met," she said, "we'll do things a little differently. If you're the macho type, you'll find plenty of challenges. Meanwhile, the rest of us can take it easy and enjoy life. On that note, I've brought a large supply of chocolate bars."

Smiles all around.

Then she continued, to more laughter, "A word about sanitation. The rule on the river is, 'dilution is the solution.' Solid waste goes in the chemical toilet – which we set up every night – but liquid waste goes in the river." (We grimaced.) "That's right, just wade in behind one of the boats whenever we stop. If all the rafters that camped in the pull-outs used the bushes, the river banks would be polluted in a single summer."

After a day on the river, spent eating, paddling and talking about everything from dating services and the corporate glass ceiling, to child-rearing issues and baseball scores, we were ready to run the first set of moderately challenging rapids.

After the first couple of paddle boats had navigated the waves, it was time for the kayaks to follow. Michelle and her cousin Sammy, also 11, each paddling a "Duckie" kayak, hung back in an eddy, hesitating until they saw Jo waving them on.

"All right, Duckies, now it's your turn," she yelled. "Paddle hard and steer toward the far side and wait. And don't get ahead of us."

Sammy pushed into the rapids, paddled hard, sailed into fast flow and flew down to the waiting boats. And then it Michelle's turn. All eyes watched as her paddle flashed in the sun, dipping down on one side, then down on the other. Suddenly her kayak rose up on the crest of a wave, then vanished in a trough.

"Oh-oh, she's flipped," somebody shouted. Then the kayak popped up into view, and shot over the top. "Go, girl!" called Jo, as Michelle sailed up, wearing a big grin. It was the first time we'd seen her smile. "Did you see me? Did you take a picture?" she squealed.

Our days on the river began at dawn and ended with starlight. We awoke leisurely, with pancakes, fruit and coffee. Then it was hurry, hurry, pack the duffels, buckle on life jackets, climb aboard and take turns riding, paddling, or when the water was calm, jumping in to float alongside.

We stopped often, stretching our legs to hike through wildflowers, ponder the bare places where pioneer wagons had crossed, climb the riverbanks to abandoned mine sites and investigate Native American pictographs scratched on boulders.

Meanwhile, "YEE-hahhh," was our high sign, shouted after running the rapids, breaking the hula-hoop twirl record or eating the most pancakes. Carmel and Caroline talked about relationships, Steve and Gordon compared restaurants in Madrid, and Mary and Dixie discovered a mutual love of poetry.

Sandra pulled a show-stopper when she climbed up on the seat of the oar boat and belted out Me and Bobby McGee in a throaty voice that made my hair stand on end. And Michelle, who eventually learned how to stuff her sleeping bag, confided that it was a pain to have parents who were divorced and made you live in two places.

Each afternoon when we pulled into camp, the kids dug holes in the sand, swam in the

ADVERTISEMENT

river and twirled hula-hoops on the beach. Fourteen-year-old Jacey helped Shanna, 7, string beads for a bracelet. Sammy and Jason tossed a ball until the twilight faded and it was too dark to see.

When the sky turned purple, we lay on the sand and looked for shooting stars.

The trip's six guides, Jo, Sandra and Lynn, and Harvey, Dave and Wiley, pulled it together, steering through the rapids, unloading the rafts, pitching tents, lugging water up to the solar shower, chopping vegetables and serving dinner. At least once a day, the kids dunked Harvey, voted the Snake River's finest human sponge.

On our last day we stopped for a final lunch on a quiet beach, conscious that a once-in-a-lifetime experience was ending, and – as time and distance intervened – we would return to other worlds and other lives. As the last of the fresh food disappeared, Jo opened a can of smoked oysters and a box of crackers.

"C'mon, Michelle," I coaxed, as a frown furrowed her brow. "Try one. Just to prove you can do it." Cautiously sticking her fork into an oyster, she nibbled the edge.

"Yech, it's horrible!" she screeched, spitting it out. Then she smiled. "At least I tried it."

---

By ANNE Z. COOKE, Special to The Miami Herald

---

Read more about traveling with kids on MiamiHerald.com's Family Travel [channel](#) and in the Travel section of Sunday's newspaper. Share your experiences traveling with the kids in our [forum](#).

Posted on: Apr 11 2008 - 06:00:00 AM

(0) Comments

Tags: [FAMILY KIDS RAFTING TRAVEL](#)

0 Comments - [leave comment](#)

