



Media Kit 2015

FACTS ABOUT THE ARKANSAS RIVER

White-water rafting experiences on the Arkansas River extend well beyond the riverbanks. The river and its environs are home to some of the most breathtaking scenery and natural beauty in the state. Towering mountains, abundant wildlife, impressive rock formations, and man-made wonders captivate visitors and make for some impressive photo opportunities.

BY THE NUMBERS:

- At 1,469 miles long, it is the sixth longest river in the United States and the second-longest tributary in the Mississippi-Missouri system.
- Two water sources for the Arkansas River include Mt. Elbert at 14,431 feet and Mt. Massive at 14,418 feet. They are the second and third highest peaks in the contiguous 48 United States and offer a spectacular backdrop.
- Four federally designated wilderness areas are adjacent to the river; Buffalo Peaks, Mount Massive, Collegiate Peaks and Sangre de Cristo. A fifth wilderness area is proposed in Browns Canyon.
- The Arkansas River drops 4,650 feet in elevation over the 152 rafting miles.
- The river includes Class II to Class V rapids, including more than 80 named rapids to enjoy.
- Fifteen of Colorado's 58 14,000-foot peaks are located in the Upper Arkansas River region.
- In 2012, 41percent of the commercial rafting user days in Colorado were on the Arkansas River, making it the most popular commercial rafting destination in the state.

GEOLOGICAL WONDERS:

- The Arkansas River begins its journey in the Sawatch Mountains near Leadville, Colo. The river begins at an elevation of 11,320 feet.
- The river is cutting deeper into the river gorge at the rate of about 1 foot every 2,500 years.
- The river gorge is so narrow on the Arkansas River that the Denver & Rio Grande Railroad had to suspend its track above the stream by an engineering marvel, the Hanging Bridge.
- The Arkansas River runs through some of the richest ore bodies in the state.

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- The Arkansas River has carved solid granite into one of the wonders of the world – the Royal Gorge.
- The Mount Massive Wilderness, encompassing 18,000 acres, was designated by Congress in 1980. The name comes from Mount Massive, the second highest peak in Colorado. The wilderness area has seven summits over 14,000 feet and is truly massive in size. With elevations between 9,700 and 14,421 feet, much of the area is above timberline with alpine communities and a permanent snowfield.

HISTORY:

- Evidence of the first humans on the Arkansas River dates back 10,000 years.
- Many Native American tribes including Apache, Ute, Arapahoe, Cheyenne and Kiowa used the river as a migration route.
- Lt. Zebulon Pike was the first white explorer to enter the area and probably built the first permanent structure. Halted in his trek to the headwaters of the Arkansas by the awesome Royal Gorge, in some places as narrow as 50 feet, Lt. Pike headed northwest into South Park.
- In 1859, Placer gold discovered in the Leadville area brought thousands seeking to strike it rich. To this day, boaters often float past placer miners operating within the Upper Arkansas River area.
- Leadville's Silver boom in the late 1870's saw the beginning of train service by the Denver and Rio Grande using the Arkansas River Valley railroad route.

ECONOMIC IMPACT:

- In 2014, commercial rafting in Colorado added \$160,131,798 to the state's economy
 - AROA contributed \$60,734,207 to that total.
 - \$23,724,300 of that contribution came from money spent in the Arkansas River valley for meals, services, lodging, souvenirs, etc.

TOURISM:

- The Arkansas River is one of the most popular locations for rafting and kayaking in the United States.
- One of the most commercially rafted rivers in the United States.
- Browns Canyon – National Monument

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- The River is unique in that it flows through a Colorado State Park: Arkansas Headwaters Recreation Area, which is operated in cooperation among the U.S. Forest Service, the U.S. Bureau of Land Management (BLM) and Colorado Parks and Wildlife.
- The Arkansas Headwaters Recreation Area is one of the most visited parks in the state.
- The Arkansas Riverwalk contains seven-miles of trail that wind along the Arkansas River through Cañon City and beyond.
- Chaffee County has more than 80 “eries”: galleries, roasteries, distilleries, wineries, breweries and eateries. Salida has more than 20 artist-owned galleries.
- Downtown Salida, just deemed one of two “Creative Districts” by Colorado Governor John Hickenlooper, is the biggest little art town in Colorado.
- A world-class fishing river, the Arkansas River has 5,000 wild Brown Trout per mile, and takes careful measures to protect the Brown Trout fishery.
- The Bighorn Sheep is Colorado’s state Mammal.
- Proposed - Over the River, a project by the world renowned Christo and the late Jeanne-Claude, features a temporary work of art on the Arkansas River between Salida and Cañon City. When complete, panels of silvery fabric will be draped in eight segments covering 5.9 miles.

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