



Media Kit 2015

COLORADO'S ARKANSAS RIVER RAFTING IN DEPTH

There are six major sections that are rafted on Colorado's Arkansas River covering 101.8 miles and including more than 80 named rapids. Arkansas River rafting outfitters are licensed to conduct trips on a 152-mile stretch of the river between Granite and Cañon City, although some sections are not cost-effective on which to run commercial trips. Rapids are numbered using an International Classification system to indicate difficulty, equipment and experience needed. AROA outfitters are able to take first-time rafters down any of these stretches because the guides are trained to manage the risk appropriately.

A rapid's grade is not fixed, since it may vary greatly depending on the water depth and speed of flow. Although some rapids may be easier at high flows because features are covered or "washed-out," high water usually makes rapids more difficult and dangerous. At flood stage, even rapids, which are usually easy, can present unpredictable hazards (briefly adapted from the American version^[5] of the International Scale of River Difficulty/Wikipedia).

- **Class I:** Very small rough areas, requires no maneuvering. (Skill Level: None)
- **Class II:** Some rough water, maybe some rocks, small drops, might require maneuvering. (Skill Level: Basic Paddling Skill)
- **Class III:** Whitewater, medium waves, maybe a 3–5 foot drop, but not much considerable danger. May require significant maneuvering. (Skill Level: Experienced paddling skills)
- **Class IV:** Whitewater, large waves, long rapids, rocks, maybe a considerable drop, sharp maneuvers may be needed. (Skill Level: Some advanced white water experience)
- **Class V:** Whitewater, large waves, continuous rapids, large rocks and hazards, maybe a large drop, precise maneuvering. Often characterized by "must make" moves, i.e. failure to execute a specific maneuver may result in serious injury or death. Class V is sometimes expanded to Class V+ that describes the most extreme, runnable rapids (Skill Level: Expert white water experience)
- **Class VI:** While there is some debate over the term "Class VI", in practice it refers to rapids that are not passable and any attempt to do so would result in serious injury, near drowning or death. If a rapid is run that was once classified impassible, it is typically reclassified as Class V.



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The six most commonly rafted sections on Colorado's Arkansas River each offer a variety of Class II-V rapids. Some sections are essentially float trips, designed for families with children, elderly or physically impaired passengers, while others appeal to those with a sense of adventure. All include wonderful scenery, great camaraderie and an enjoyable day outdoors. The descriptions below are of the six most commonly rafted sections of the Arkansas:

- Granite Gorge – (Advanced) Rapids IV & V: This five and a half mile section is the highest whitewater rafting run on the Arkansas River. It starts in the town of Granite and runs quickly through several exciting rapids. Granite Gorge culminates at Pine Creek Rapid, a class V rapid that is long and powerful. Pine Creek is usually portaged at medium to high flows. Generally Granite Gorge is combined with The Numbers for a full day trip.
- The Numbers – (Advanced) Rapids IV-V: A six-mile stretch in the northern-most Upper Arkansas River that is typically run by commercial outfitters. The Numbers includes eight numbered rapids, all class IV-V. It is a trip for experienced or thrill-seeking passengers. Water levels affect the difficulty rating for rapids, so more rafters can enjoy this stretch during lower water levels.
- The Narrows “Wildhorse Canyon”- (Moderate/Advanced) Rapids II-IV This seven-mile stretch is usually done on a multi-day trip or in addition to The Numbers, to make that a full-day adventure. Very scenic and a wide variety of action throughout the rapids.
- Browns Canyon (1/2 day or full day) – Beginner/Intermediate Rapids II-IV. This 10-mile trip is the most popular half-day trip on the river. Winding through the proposed Brown's Canyon Wilderness area, this scenic stretch offers a variety of beauty, wildlife and plenty of action! After a few miles of relative calm and disarming beauty, the river rumbles over 16 named rapids.
- Bighorn Sheep Canyon (1/2 day) – Beginner/Intermediate Rapids II-IV. A 7-mile stretch just upstream of the world-famous Royal Gorge), this is the beginning of the “Lower Arkansas River” for many boaters. Rafters in this section experience some of the river's best known rapids and plenty of action. It is named after the adorable inhabitants often seen along the canyon walls, bighorn sheep.



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- Royal Gorge (Advanced Rapids II-V) – Considered part of the Lower Arkansas River, the Royal Gorge section begins upriver from Cañon City (Parkdale) and extends through the narrow and scenic Royal Gorge, ending near Cañon City. Unique for the number of rapids (17 named rapids) and 10 miles of action. Riders on this section also usually feel a twinge of anticipation as they depart from shore, knowing that there are no easy ways out of this canyon, except downriver.