

Green River from Flaming Gorge Dam to the Swallow Canyon Takeout - September 4-6, 2021

as reported by Karen A. and Erin D.

Although 35 people signed up for this trip and seemed to want to go, only 12 people actually were able to make it. The 3 people who assisted Karen (Trip Leader) in getting camps and reserving shuttles all had to back out. But we had a great time, including the dory! Thanks go to Scott and Wendy for going almost 2 days early to get an extra river campsite for Saturday night.

We met at Arch Dam group camp #3 Friday before the trip. Several people had dinner in town and the sunset above the dam was beautiful. We mostly gathered at 8pm to discuss plans, including staggering arrivals at the put-in, as well as to pay for the trip. There were vault toilets and covered tables along with drinking water at this beautiful camp.

The beginning and end of the river were busy with other people and boaters fishing. The National Parks fees required leaving passes in the car windows to avoid tickets. You needed to already have a senior parks pass or buy a multi-day one. Our early arrival (~8:15) at the boat ramp to dump gear was helpful as the commercial rafts and dories do not get there until after 9:00. While our first 5 vehicles were able to unload on or by the ramp, the commercial fishing operations were given the spot taken by our 6th vehicle who then had to haul gear a fair distance to the beach below the ramp. There was also confusion at the put in with getting to the correct location to do the shuttle and we started more than an hour late due to this. Good thing we did not have any afternoon wind or storms the whole trip.

It was great having experienced paddlers in each of six total tandem boats. We had Scott/Wendy, Jerry/Teresa, Rick/Erin, and Louise/Karen in 4 tandem canoes, Martin Orner and his 15 year old daughter in a ducky, and Chet/Kathryn in their dory. They had been told that dories need about 1500cfs on this stretch of river and we lucked out with about 2000 instead of the usual 900 minimum for fish. The Flaming Gorge, Blue Mesa, and Powell reservoirs were being drained to keep enough water in Mead and Powell.

There were small drops paddling Saturday, and these were more exciting due to the higher flow. The dory grounded just once, and nobody had trouble going through Mother-In-Law rapid. We all enjoyed happy hour at Sand camp, with plates and serving utensils to avoid germs; and then half of the boats and people left to get to Cat's Paw camp. There was just one camp in the short distance between our 2 camps, but a tall rock formation prevented walking from one to the other. Both camps had a table, fire ring, and screening for the toilets that we brought, along with tent pads that weren't exactly level due to erosion. More ospreys and blue herons were seen, in addition to vocal owls plus a beaver at Sand camp.

Sunday was a lazy morning. We scouted Red Creek rapid, with some apprehension adding an hour delay. Karen and Rick were positioned with throw ropes, and Jerry and Teresa ran it first and eddied out at the bottom to provide safety. Everyone had great runs on the left. Martin was clever soloing his ducky well saying he faked it until he made it while safely leaving his teenage daughter Lara on the shore wanting more. Most notable, the dory was beautiful, seemingly going through without a scratch while Kathryn perched at the front taking photos.

Our last camp was Indian Crossing and it was the most crowded and difficult to reach. Unwilling to leave our

boats by the ramp, we lifted them 3 feet and along a narrow path through the bushes to keep them in camp. It was an easy walk to the historic Jarvie Ranch. Although closed (probably due to COVID), the self-guided tour passed the corral, shed, and many antique farm tools, leading to the blacksmith shop, both log storage and ice houses, and an irrigation ditch by a garden that had not been planted this year. There was a rock garden, old store and stone cabins before the dugout on the way to the water wheel. The sign by the bridge crossing the creek displaying Jarvie's words was prophetic, about death giving meaning to life, along with the two cemetery plots seen across the road. This camp also had tables and more fire rings which we did not use, because we had had so much smoke in the air this year. The vault toilets were between many surrounding camp sites. This night we gathered to talk more than eat and shared many great boating stories including those from members from long ago. An eagle was seen across the river the next morning.

The lunch spot the last day was in gorgeous red canyons. Erin switched boats with Teresa to see if she and Jerry would be good to tandem on her Deso trip later in September (they were). The ramp was busy at the takeout, but everyone working together loaded the vehicles quickly. On the drive out, Vermillion Falls was striking to see along 318 headed east, and some met for dinner at the Back Door Grill in Steamboat Springs. Karen survived being the trip lead (reserving 4 camps, a shuttle service and an often changing member list wore her down), and she was rewarded with their impressive Mahi Mahi sandwich.

LOGISTICS:

Some tips here are designed to help anyone else brave enough to manage this trip.

While the Arch Dam Group Camp - which has 3 nice sites - costs over \$100, it is still worth getting if you have at least a dozen people as the nearby individual camps get reserved quickly and are not as close to the put-in nor any good for a group meeting to organize things and collect fees. #3 was a bit nicer than the other 2 though it had some noise from the highway.

We used Dutch John Resort, (435) 848-8000 for the shuttle. It is \$150 plus tax for up to 10 drivers in their newer van. We all followed them to the takeout and returned in 1 van. They are used to putting all boats and gear onto a trailer and taking you to the put-in. We did not want to move gear twice so persisted in telling them how we would do it.

Note that the confusion in where to meet for the shuttle exists because there is a parking lot both above and below the Fee Station on the way to the ramp and there are also 2 gas stations a half mile apart in Dutch John and both of them do shuttles. So it is important for the Trip Leader to be very clear on where people should meet after dumping their gear. The ramp area is crowded and you must leave that area as soon as you have unloaded everything.

About half of the Saturday night river camps can be reserved 6 months ahead through recreation.gov, but the key here is to stay up past midnight (not sure which time zone) or get up before the roosters or all of these camps will be gone. I snagged the last 1 on the afternoon of the day 6 months ahead! Only Big Pine 1 and 2 will get you space for 20 people together. The Grasshopper 1 and 2 sites are currently reservable only at Little Hole 1-2 weeks ahead.

The sites reservable in person at Little Hole are cheaper at just \$7/night. They open up a new week every Monday. But people from Salt Lake City come over on Mondays and reserve an entire week at a time. Some will hang out at their camps for the fishing, but others only use 1 or 2 nights and the camps sit empty, unavailable to other people.

The only cure for much of this madness would be to run the trip before Memorial Day weekend or after September or

during the week.

The Indian Crossing Campground works well as all of the camps below there are not reservable and hard to find and you may be out of luck getting 1. The group camp was okay as it had enough space for 22 people, but you would not want to leave your boats at the very busy ramp, and hauling them up out of the water was a chore. I would suggest that you reserve the next 2 campsites just downstream of the group camp as they have a nice landing for boats and just as much space. For now, you reserve by calling the BLM at 435-781-4135. The price of \$35 for the group site and about half that for individual sites is better than the camps up near Dutch John and the dam.

Indian Crossing is nice as it is a short walk to Jarvie Ranch and has vault toilets. This allows you to bring 20-use toilets for the first river night rather than having to use the bigger club toilets. The only down side is it leaves the most miles for the 3rd day. Still we were able to get off the river at about 1:00. There is only 1 class I rapid on the 3rd day, and no hikes or sites to stop at.

PHOTOS: Arch Dam Group Camp:



Flaming Gorge Reservoir - late afternoon and sunset:



Madness at the Put-in:



Chet's preying mantis and a River view:



Pool drop in Section A and Sand Camp in Section B:



Cat's Paw Camp and Scott/Wendy paddle:



Next 4 photos are all of Red Creek Rapid:





Our Day 2 lunch spot and Indian Crossing Camp:



Jarvie Ranch:



Blue Heron and Swallow Canyon:



Day 3 lunch stop and Chet in Swallow Canyon:

