

Trip Planning Strategies to "Avoid the Crowds" on the South Fork During Summer Weekends.

The South Fork can be extremely busy on weekends in July and August. If you are like most people, you work Monday through Friday and cannot visit the river to boat on weekdays. Below are some ideas for finding more space on the river for you and your boat.

Saturday

- Most outfitters will run the lower river, or gorge run, on Saturday.
- Most commercial rafts will launch between 10:30 a.m. and 12:00 p.m.
- The concentration of rafts is the highest from the County Park to Turtle Pond between 10:30 a.m. and 1:00 p.m.

Recommendations

- Run the upper river, launching prior to 10:00 am or after 11:00 am. Be aware that releases from the dam may begin decreasing after 12:00 pm, depending on water supply and demand.
- Launch after noon for the lower run. The boatable flow (about 1000 cfs) launch window in Coloma usually extends from 10:30 am to 4:00 pm.
- If you launch before noon
 - avoid entering the gorge (Fowler's Rock at river mile 15.8) between 2:30 pm and 3:30 pm.
 - the BLM lunch site at river mile 15.3 is used far less than the beach area at river mile 12.3.
- After 6:00 p.m., the commercial take-out on river left below the Salmon Falls bridge has plenty of space

Sunday

- Most outfitters will run the upper river on Sunday, launching between 9:30 and 11:00 a.m.

Recommendations

- Run the lower river on Sundays, launching after noon.
- If you run the upper river,
 - arrive at Chili Bar early and launch by 10:00.
 - arrive at Chili Bar after 11:00 am and launch closer to noon. Be aware that the utilities may decrease the flows after 12:00 p.m. You can get flow information from the employees at the Chili Bar put-in.