

## Calm Water Float Trips Green & Colorado Rivers



Moab Area Travel Council  
Internet Brochure Series  
Available from:  
**discovermoab.com**

### INTRODUCTION

This brochure provides basic information about floating the calm water portions of the Green and Colorado Rivers in southeastern Utah. These river areas are suitable for use with canoes, kayaks and rafts. Please help preserve these beautiful rivers so that everyone will be able to enjoy their primitive character for years to come.

The Bureau of Land Management administers the shoreline of Labyrinth Canyon from Ruby Ranch to the northern boundary of Canyonlands National Park and most of the shoreline of the Colorado River below Moab down to the boundary of the park. Canyonlands National Park administers the Colorado River from south of Shafer Canyon to the head of Lake Powell, and the Green River from five miles below Mineral Bottom to the Confluence, where the two rivers meet. River mileage points are measured from the Confluence (Mile 0) upstream on both rivers.

Travel on these rivers requires advance planning. The land is primitive and there are no facilities. Temperatures of 100 degrees Fahrenheit are common in June, July, and August. Afternoon thunderstorms are common during July and August.

### COLORADO RIVER

For the first 62 miles downstream from Moab, the Colorado is a broad, placid river. The Slide, a moderate rapid, is located one and a half miles upriver from the Confluence. Inexperienced canoeists may want to portage the Slide. The

section between the Confluence and Spanish Bottom can have dangerous whirlpools and eddies during high water while the rapids of Cataract Canyon which begin four miles below the Confluence can be among the most hazardous in the country. Take-outs at the Confluence are recommended. If you float below the Confluence, use extreme caution; you could end up in Cataract Canyon without your life jacket.

### GREEN RIVER

From the town of Green River to the Confluence, the Green River flows calmly through Labyrinth and Stillwater Canyons. Sandbars are numerous by late summer. Boaters should be aware of two areas which are especially rocky at low water: Midard yon (Mile 33.5) and Horse Canyon (mile 14.5).

### HIKING

Desert soils are extremely fragile. Minimize your impact by thinking about where you walk. If you hear your feet are

making crunching noises while you are walking in the desert, more than likely you are walking on cryptobiotic soil crusts (cryptogams). Cryptobiotic soils are nature's way of retarding erosion. These brown or black plants are crushed when stepped on and often take years to recover. Please try to walk on rocks, in washes, or on established trails marked by rock cairns.

Cairned trails can be found in the more frequently visited areas, such as Lathrop ruins and the Loop Trail on the Colorado; Bowknot Bend, Fort Bottom and Water Canyon on the Green; and Lower Red Lake and the Doll's House trails below the Confluence.

### PREHISTORIC AND HISTORIC VALUES

There are numerous prehistoric Indian sites along both rivers. Do not enter structures or touch rock art. Most are extremely fragile and all are irreplaceable. Climbing into a ruin can dislodge the mud mortar and loosen rocks leading to

### LIFE JACKETS

Life jackets, one per person, must be carried in your boat. It is recommended that life jackets be worn at all times. Life jackets must be worn below the Confluence.

### CAMPFIRES

Bring charcoal or a stove for cooking. Although driftwood can be collected for fires, it is not always readily available, especially during high water. Dry vegetation can burn very quickly, so please be careful with your fires.

In the past fire rings of blackened rock and ash piles made some camps unsightly. Fire pans are required. A fire pan can be any metal container capable of containing your fire. An oil drain pan or garbage can lid works fine. Clean up is easiest if you let your fire burn down to coals, then shovel the coal and ash into a bucket of water. The coals will cool quickly and those that float can be placed in a plastic bag and carried out. The water and residue that settles to the bottom of the bucket should be deposited in the main channel of the river.

The disposal of ash in the river's back water may have a detrimental effect on young squawfish, an endangered species. On long trips you can reduce the amount of charcoal you carry out by burning the coals in the next night's fire.

### GARBAGE

All garbage and trash must be carried out on all portions of these rivers. Check your camp before leaving and make sure it's clean. Even small scraps of food left behind will attract ants, flies, and mice. Burn paper waste in your fire pan to reduce bulk on longer trips.

eventual destruction of the site. You may also find structures and inscriptions left by historic river runners and explorers. These should be treated as carefully as the prehistoric Indian site. Refrain from adding your name to these historic panels or canyon walls. Visitor register boxes are located at the River Register and Bowknot Bend in Labyrinth Canyon to record your visit. Your help and cooperation are needed in order to preserve these prehistoric and historic sites for future visitors.

Individuals planning overnight river travel above the confluence within Canyonlands National Park must obtain a backcountry permit from the park office in Moab or send a letter requesting the permit at least two weeks prior to the trip. The application letter must include your name, address, group size, trip route, an itinerary with starting and ending dates, the number and type of boats, and the place you plan to leave your vehicle. This information will help rangers locate you in case of an emergency. If you plan to take a non-

commercial river trip through Cataract Canyon, you must obtain a backcountry permit. Contact the Canyonlands National Park River-District office well ahead of your planned trip for information.

Non-Commercial permits are not required for Labyrinth Canyon or the Colorado River between Moab and the park boundary. For those floating Labyrinth Canyon, the Bureau of Land Management asks that you register at the visitor registration boxes at Green River State Park or Mineral Bottom. Porta-potties and fire pan are required. Group size is limited to 25 people.

**TRIP LOGISTICS**

On the Colorado River, trips usually launch from either the Moab Dock (mile 64) or the Potash Dock (mile 47). The take-out sites are at Potash, the Confluence (mile 0) and Spanish Bottom below the Confluence. There is no vehicle access to the Confluence or Spanish Bottom. If you plan to take out at the

Confluence or Spanish Bottom, arrangements must be made prior to your trip to have you and your raft or canoe taken back upriver by jet boat. This service is provided by two commercial tour companies: Tag-A-Long Expeditions 435-259-8946, 452 N. Main, Moab, UT 84532, and Tex's Riverways 435-259-5101, 691 N. 500 West, P.O. Box 67, Moab, UT 84532.

On the Green River, trips through Labyrinth Canyon launch from Green River State Park (mile 120) or Ruby Ranch (mile 97), located 14 miles south of Interstate 70 from Exit 173. Both charge a fee. If you choose to start from Ruby Ranch you should obtain permission from the ranch operator in advance by calling (435) 650-3193. The take-out for Labyrinth Canyon and launch site for Stillwater Canyon is Mineral Bottom (mile 52). The drive to Mineral Bottom includes about 20 miles of dirt road and a short stretch of switchbacks, which drop approximately 900 vertical feet in a mile and a half. This road may become impassable or just plain terrifying when wet. The only take-outs below Mineral Bottom are the Confluence and Spanish Bottom, which require a jet boat pickup.

If you need assistance with vehicle shuttles or rentals, contact the Moab Area Travel Council in Moab or Green River for names of businesses that provide these services.

**CAMPSITES**

There are no designated campsites along these river sections. It is strongly recommended that you camp on sandbars to minimize environmental impacts. Set your kitchen, fix pan, and toilet system as close to the river as possible so high water will erase any trace of your use. Extra care in collecting all food scraps and trash in high-water camps is necessary to keep ant and mice populations at a tolerable level.

**SANITATION**

There is only one toilet on the Green River (at Mineral Bottom) and there are no toilets on the Colorado River. All solid human waste must be carried out of the canyon. You may use a commercially manufactured "porta-potty" or put together your own toilet system. Boaters

**FLOAT TIMES**

The waters of the Green and Colorado Rivers above the Confluence are slow moving. The river level fluctuates throughout the summer with peak runoff occurring sometime between mid-May and mid June. The speed of the current varies from 7-10 mph during peak runoff to 2-4 mph the rest of the year.

In planning your trip, consider that averages of 20 miles per day in a canoe or 15 miles per day in a raft are common. The following table shows the approximate number of days you should allow for your trip depending on water flow. These times do not allow for much exploration of side canyons, so allow more time if you plan to hike or want a more leisurely trip.

<b>Green River:</b>	<b>Miles</b>	<b>Days</b>
Green River, UT, to Ruby Ranch	23	1-2
Ruby Ranch to Mineral Bottom	45	2-3
Mineral Bottom to Spanish Bottom	56	34
<b>Colorado River:</b>		
Moab Dock to Potash Dock	15	1-2
Potash Dock to Spanish Bottom	49	2-3

Once you have traveled past Moab on the Colorado or the town of Green River on the Green, there are few sources of drinking water. The best way to ensure that drinking water is safe is to bring your own A gallon of water per person for each day of p your trip is the recommended minimum.

If your original supply of water runs out, river water may be used. Water should be obtained from the center of the main channel of the river and allowed to settle overnight. It must then be treated to kill or remove disease-causing organisms. Approved methods for treating are boiling for several minutes or mechanical filtration plus chemical disinfection.

must use washable, reusable toilets that allow for disposal of solid human body waste through authorized sewage systems.

You'll also need a plastic toilet seat, toilet paper, hand soap and commercially available chemical additives and holding tank deodorants. The use of non-toxic, non-formaldehyde based additives is strongly encouraged to reduce the impacts to sewage treatment facilities. Urinating into the toilet reduces the carrying capacity of your system. Urinating onto wet sand or into the river prevents odor and other problems from developing in popular campsites. After your trip, deposit the waste at an approved dump station or sewer system. Do not dump waste into the toilet at Mineral Bottom.

**EMERGENCY EVACUATIONS**

If someone in your group becomes seriously injured or too sick to continue the trip, an evacuation may be necessary. Stop all passing trips and tell them of your situation, as there may be someone on the trip with medical training, or the group may encounter park rangers on patrol and relay your request for assistance.

Another way to get help is to signal an airplane from the river. Pilots may call the Moab airport by radio to relay a message to the Sheriff for managing agency. Effective methods of signaling aircraft are with a signal mirror or by placing life jackets or two international orange panels 3 x 10 feet in a large "X" pattern on the beach or sandbar.

<p><b>EQUIPMENT</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Life jackets (required)</li> <li>• Fire pan (required)</li> <li>• Toilet (required)</li> <li>• Spare paddle (required)</li> <li>• Fix extinguisher (required for motorized boats)</li> <li>• First aid kit (strongly recommended)</li> <li>• Boat repair kit</li> <li>• Signal mirror or device</li> <li>• Water or purification system</li> <li>• Guidebooks and maps</li> <li>• Sunscreen, sunglasses, and sun hat</li> </ul>
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Although your best chance of getting help is to stay on the river, you should be aware of roads leading to the river. These roads are remote and infrequently traveled. Labyrinth Canyon has four seldom-used access roads to the east. These are located at Crystal Geyser (mile 115.5), Ruby Ranch (mile 96.5), Tensile Canyon (mile 81), and Spring Canyon (mile 67.5). A primitive road also runs next to the river from Hell Roaring Canyon (mile 55.5) past Mineral Bottom take-out (mile 52) to Hardscrabble Bottom (mile 43).

In Stillwater Canyon in addition to the road to Hardscrabble Bottom, a seldom-used road reaches the river from the west at Millard Canyon (mile 34). This road can also be reached by way of a hike from Anderson Bottom (mile 32). At Queen Anne Bottom (mile 32.5) a short, one-half mile road leads to the White Rim four-wheel-drive road. At any of these roads you may have to wait hours, or even days, for a vehicle to pass. Your chances are best along the White Rim Road east of the river.

Along the Colorado, a seldom-used road leaves the river at Lockhart Canyon (mile 26.5). At Lathrop Canyon (mile 23.5) a four-wheel drive road receives frequent use. The main campground is one-fourth mile from the river.

Below the Confluence two trails lead to four-wheel drive roads from just above the first rapid. Located at river mile 213 (below the confluence, river miles are measured upstream from Lees Ferry) on the east side of the river is the Lower Red Lake Canyon Trail. Four miles from the river plus an elevation gain of 900 feet, the trail meets a four-wheel drive road. Another nine miles of hiking brings you to the Needles District campground. At best this is a six hour hike from the river to the campground with a light pack. The hike could easily take eight hours with a heavy pack.

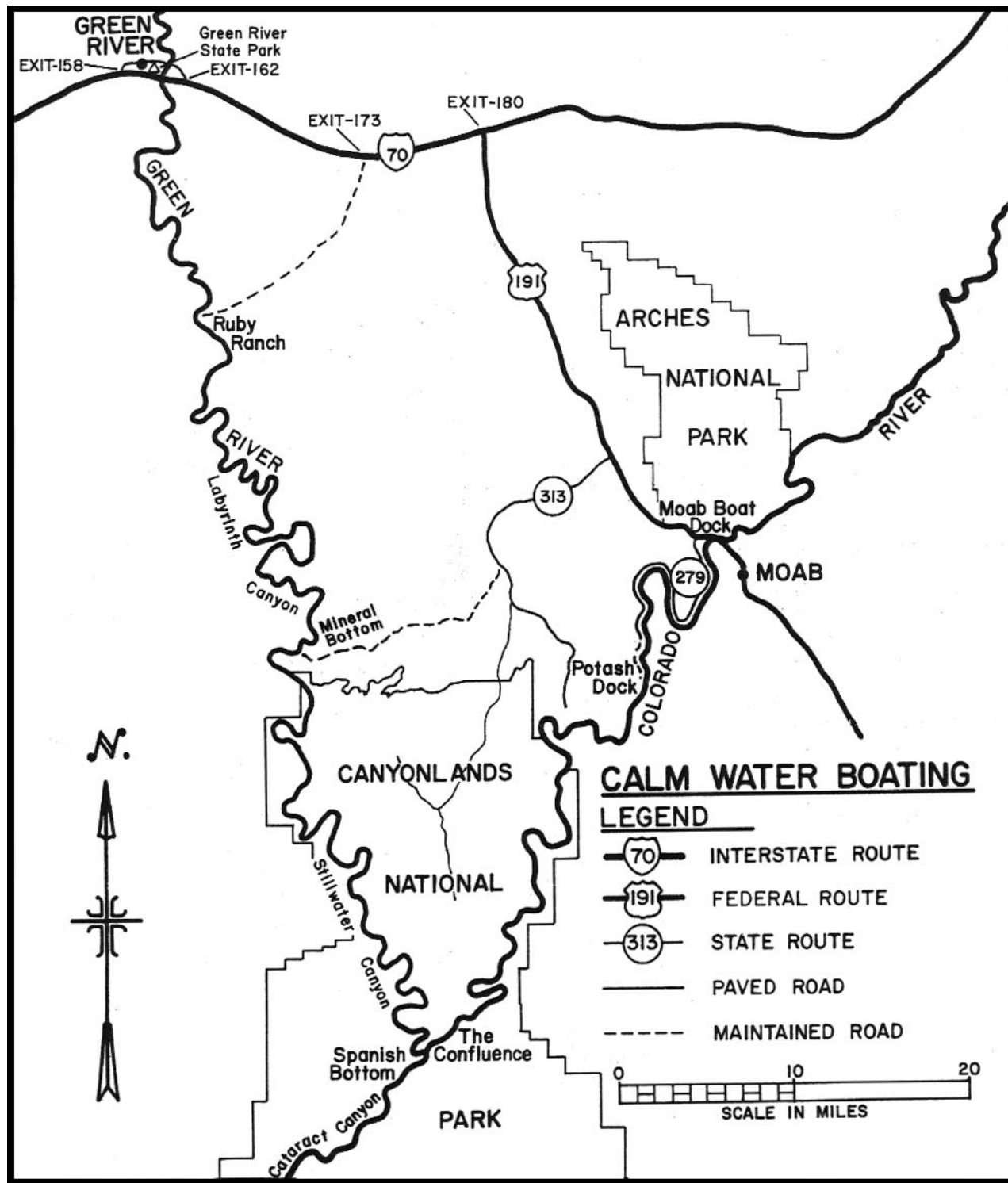
Directly across the river at mile 213 is the Spanish Bottom or Doll House Trail. The lightly used Doll House primitive campground, accessible only by foot, horseback, or four-wheel drive vehicles, is at the end of this mile-long trail that climbs 1,200 feet.

Do not attempt to hike away from the river for help unless you have adequate water and accurate maps. Be certain you know where you are going and explain your plan and route to others in your group.

**Canyon Country Minimum Impact Practices**

1. Tread Lightly when traveling and leave no trace of your camping. Drive and ride only on roads and trails where such travel is allowed; hike only on established trails, on rock, or in washes. Camp at designated sites or, where allowed, at previously used sites. Avoid placing tents on top of vegetation and use a camp stove instead of making a campfire. Unless signs indicate otherwise, leave gates open or closed as you find them.
2. Help keep Canyon Country clean. Pack out your trash and recycle it, clean up after less thoughtful visitors, and dispose of human waste properly.
3. Protect and conserve scarce desert water sources. Camp at least 300 feet from isolated water sources to allow for wildlife access. Where possible, carry your own drinking water. Leave potholes undisturbed and wash well away from pools and springs.
4. Allow space for wildlife. When encountering wildlife, maintain your distance and remain quiet. Teach children not to chase or pickup animals. Keep pets under control.
5. Leave historic sites, Native American rock art, ruins and artifacts untouched for the future. Admire rock art from a distance and never touch it. Stay out of ruins, leave artifacts in place, and report violations.

<p><b>Moab Information Center</b> Main &amp; Center St, Moab</p> <p><b>Moab &amp; Green River</b> <b>Visitor Information</b> (800) 635-6622 (435) 259-6281</p> <p><b>discovermoab.com</b></p>
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**Agency Addresses**

**Canyonlands National Park**  
 2282 SW Resource Blvd  
 Moab, UT 84532  
 435-719-2313 (confirmation)  
 435-259-4351 (reservations)

**Bureau of Land Management**  
 Price Office  
 125 S 600 W – PO Box 7004  
 Price, UT 84502  
 435-636-3622

**Green River State Park**  
 450 S Green River Blvd  
 Green River, UT 84525  
 435-564-3633