

# Arkansas River Tips

- Launch windows for outfitters in most sections are from 8:30 am – 3:30 pm with the heaviest use between 10:00 am and 2:00 pm. Beat the crowds! Try launching before or after these times.
- In the Numbers section from Granite to Railroad Bridge, all commercial trips must launch before 11:00 am at Granite and before 2:00 pm at the Numbers.
- In the Royal Gorge all commercial trips must launch between 8:30 am and 4:00 pm.
- If you are boating through Browns Canyon, we suggest launching from the Ruby Mountain Recreation Site. This site's for you! No commercial launches allowed at flows above 700 cfs at Wellsville.
- Float fishing and whitewater boating can co-exist. Launch early or late to avoid crowds and consider utilizing less traveled sections of river.
- Pull in behind the last boat. Commercial river trips are run in 10 boat maximum groups.
- Private boats do not have launch windows.

*Have a great time  
on the Arkansas!*



## Arkansas Headwaters Recreation Area

307 W. Sackett Avenue • Salida, CO 81201  
(719) 539-7289 • E-mail: [ahra@state.co.us](mailto:ahra@state.co.us)

[cpw.state.co.us](http://cpw.state.co.us)



For current information on all of your Colorado State Parks visit us online at [www.cpw.state.co.us](http://www.cpw.state.co.us)

Visit Bureau of Land Management  
at [www.blm.gov](http://www.blm.gov)

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COLORADO PARKS & WILDLIFE

## River Safety at Arkansas Headwaters Recreation Area



[cpw.state.co.us](http://cpw.state.co.us)

# River Safety

- The river is powerful and always changing. **Be familiar with current conditions.**
- **Know the section** of river you are boating.
- Your **skills and experience** must equal the river and its conditions.
- Don't be bashful – if you want to scout a rapid, **scout a rapid** if possible.
- Know and **be aware of river "signs"** – both **natural and man-made**: holes, wrap rocks, undercuts, rock sieves, horizon lines across the river, low head dams as well as significant rapids and "strainers" (trees in the river).
- **Watch your surroundings**, this includes the weather.
- **Be aware of your limitations** and those of your fellow boaters and of your equipment.
- Always **consider the consequences** – an accidental swim is always a possibility.
- **Boating alone is not recommended.** Two or more boats are safer.
- You and everyone in your party should **know first aid and CPR**. What if you get hurt?
- **Be prepared for self-rescue** and the rescue of others should an accident occur. It is up to you and everyone in your boat to be able to help each other.
- If you are involved in an **accident, please report it to:**

### Please Report all Accidents to:

Arkansas Headwaters Recreation Area

(719) 539-7289 [ahra@state.co.us](mailto:ahra@state.co.us)

307 West Sackett Avenue, Salida, CO 81201

**In case of emergency, call 911**

# Safety Gear

- **Wear a properly-sized personal flotation device (PFD)** designed for whitewater river use.
- **Helmets** are a must for all canoeists, kayakers and river boarders, and they are recommended for rafters.
- Equip your kayak with **broach loops** in addition to existing grab loops.
- Always **use good, quality equipment**. Carry a first aid and patch kit, an extra PFD, a spare oar or paddle, a pump, a bailing device and bow-stern line. **Have rescue gear**: rescue ropes/throw lines, a knife, carabiners and a whistle.
- **Dress for a possible cold water swim** and changing weather. Wear pile or fleece (no cotton). Protect your feet with sturdy footwear that won't come off in the river. Carry extra clothing, food and water.
- Bring a **wetsuit or drysuit** – and wear it when conditions merit. Hypothermia is a risk any time of the year while boating on the river.

# Colorado Law Requires

- All occupants of inner tubes, air mattresses and similar devices to wear a U.S. Coast Guard approved type I, III or V PFD.
- All persons under the age of 13 swimming in the Arkansas River within the AHRA must wear a U.S. Coast Guard approved type I, III or V PFD.
- All boats must be labeled with the owners name and address. In addition please add your phone number.



**Be River Safe, Wear the Right Gear!**

[cpw.state.co.us](http://cpw.state.co.us)



# River Ethics

- The river draws many different kinds of people. They are enjoying what they are doing as much as you are enjoying what you're doing. Please be respectful of others.
- At low flows, boaters should alert anglers to their presence in a quiet and courteous manner. If possible avoid floating through the water being fished by an angler.
- Please keep noise to a respectable level – for wildlife, nearby homeowners and others enjoying the river.
- The river passes through areas of private property including railroad tracks and right-of-ways. Don't trespass! Be considerate of the river's neighbors!
- Keep a safe distance between your boat and others when approaching rapids.

- You can help minimize the damage rafts and feet do to the shoreline by stopping only at well used sites or rocky areas.
- Trash? Bring it out with you. Someone else left it? Bring it out too!
- The use of fire pans and human waste containers is required when camping in undeveloped areas along the river.
- The put-in and take-out sites are often busy places. Please launch and load your boat as quickly as possible. Most boat ramps have a 15 minute load and unload limit. Separate rigging and deflating areas are available at many boat ramps.



Following the River Ethics ensures we can all have an enjoyable time!



## Watch for These Signs...

Respect Private Property  
and Railroad Right-of-Way

**PLEASE DO NOT  
TRESPASS**



## Rating the Rapids

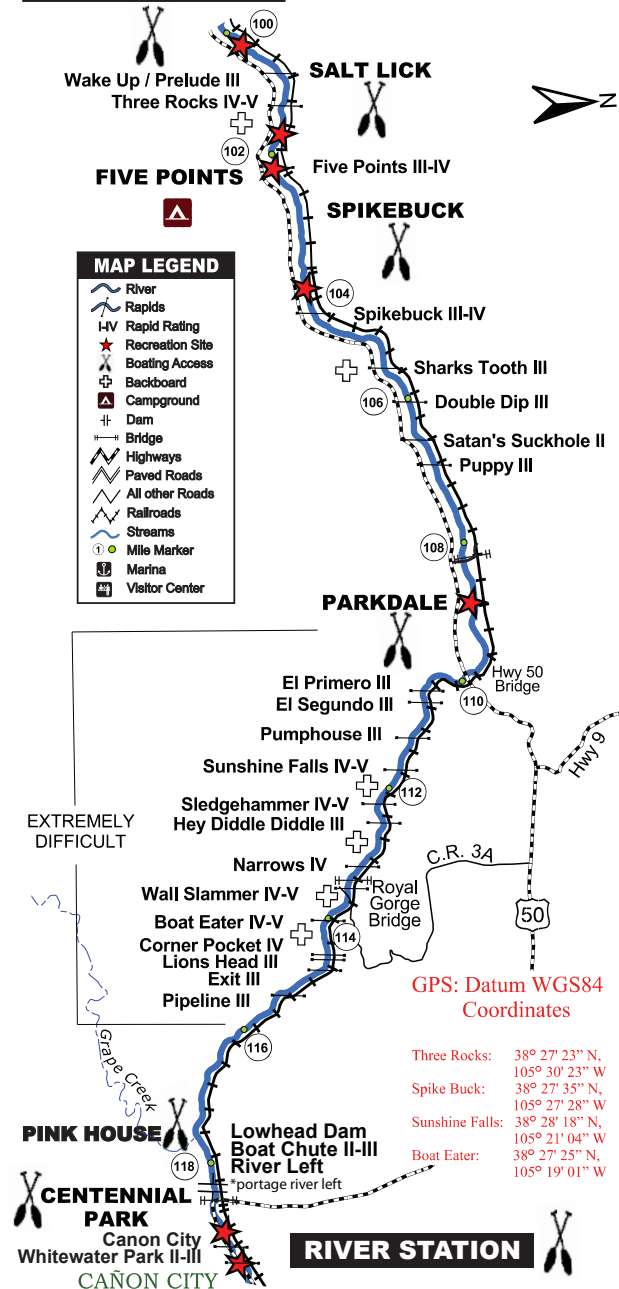
- I** Moving water, riffles, small waves
- II** Easy rapids, waves, clear channels
- III** Large waves, obstacles, narrow passages
- IV** Long rapids, unavoidable waves, many obstacles
- V** Violent rapids, extremely difficult, unseen hazards
- VI** Unpredictable, dangerous, nearly impossible to run

\*River conditions and ratings change with flow levels. Whitewater boating has risks at all ratings and levels.

## Pinnacle Rock ~ River Station

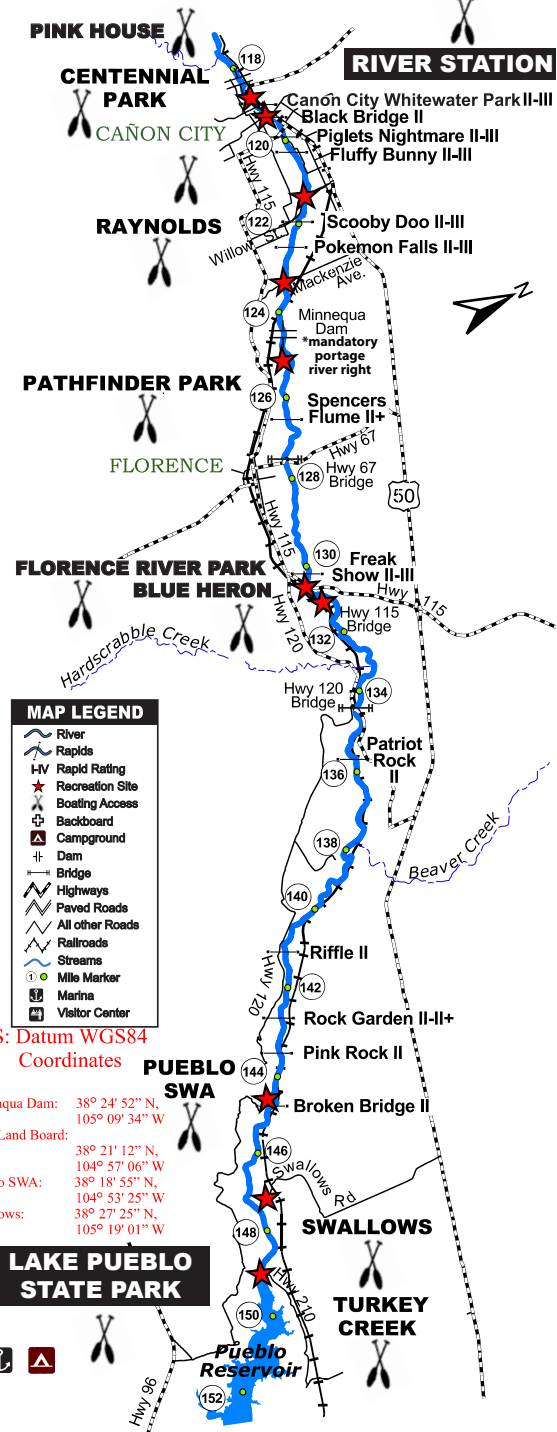
Total length of section is 19.1 miles

### PINNACLE ROCK



## River Station ~ Lake Pueblo

Total length of section is 32.7 miles



# Universal River Signals



## Help! Emergency

Wave the paddle in a circular motion and/or give three long blasts on a whistle.

## Go This Way

Use paddle to point toward direction of travel.



## Are You Okay?

Tap the top of your head three times and point to the person whom you are questioning. If they tap their head three times they are okay. Otherwise assistance is needed.



## Stop

Hold paddle horizontally overhead.



## All Clear

Hold paddle vertical and stationary.



**Water Talk** at 303-831-7135, is a computerized phone service maintained by the Colorado Division of Water Resources. It provides recent flows in cfs for most rivers across Colorado. Users must listen to all phone prompts.

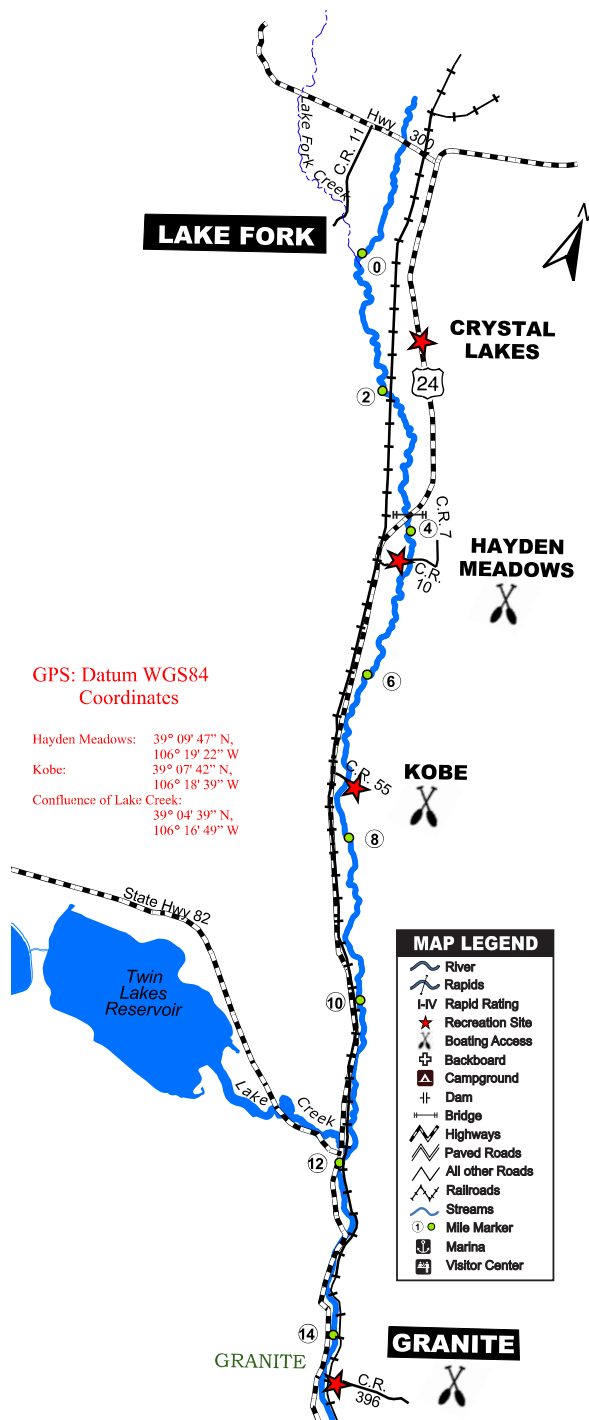
**Press:** 2 to access the Arkansas River in Division II.

**Then:** Granite Gage is 65#  
 Numbers (Below Granite) Gage is 85#  
 Browns Canyon (Near Nathrop) Gage is 59#  
 Salida Gage is 65#  
 Wellsville Gage is 12#  
 Parkdale Gage is 60#  
 Cañon City Gage is 64#  
 Portland Gage is 10#

**Find online flows** at <http://cpw.state.co.us/parks/arkansasheadwaters/riversafetyandflows/riverlevel/>

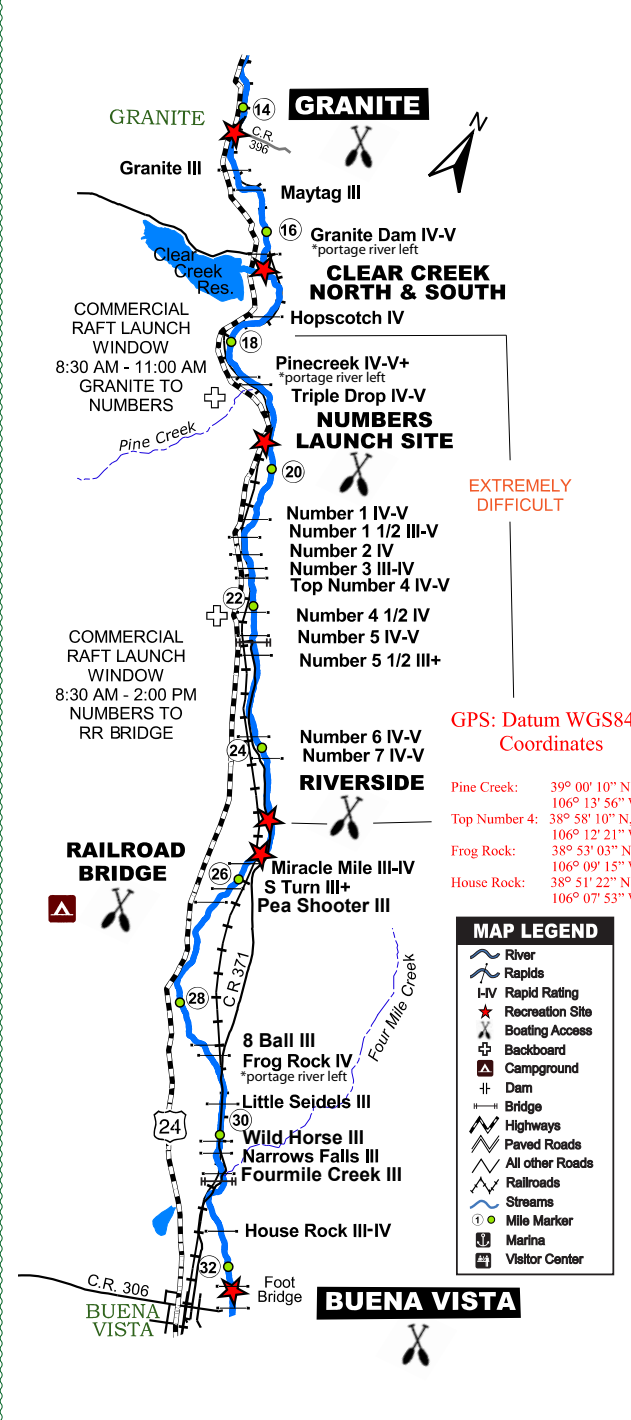
## Lake Fork ~ Granite

Total length of section is 14.4 miles



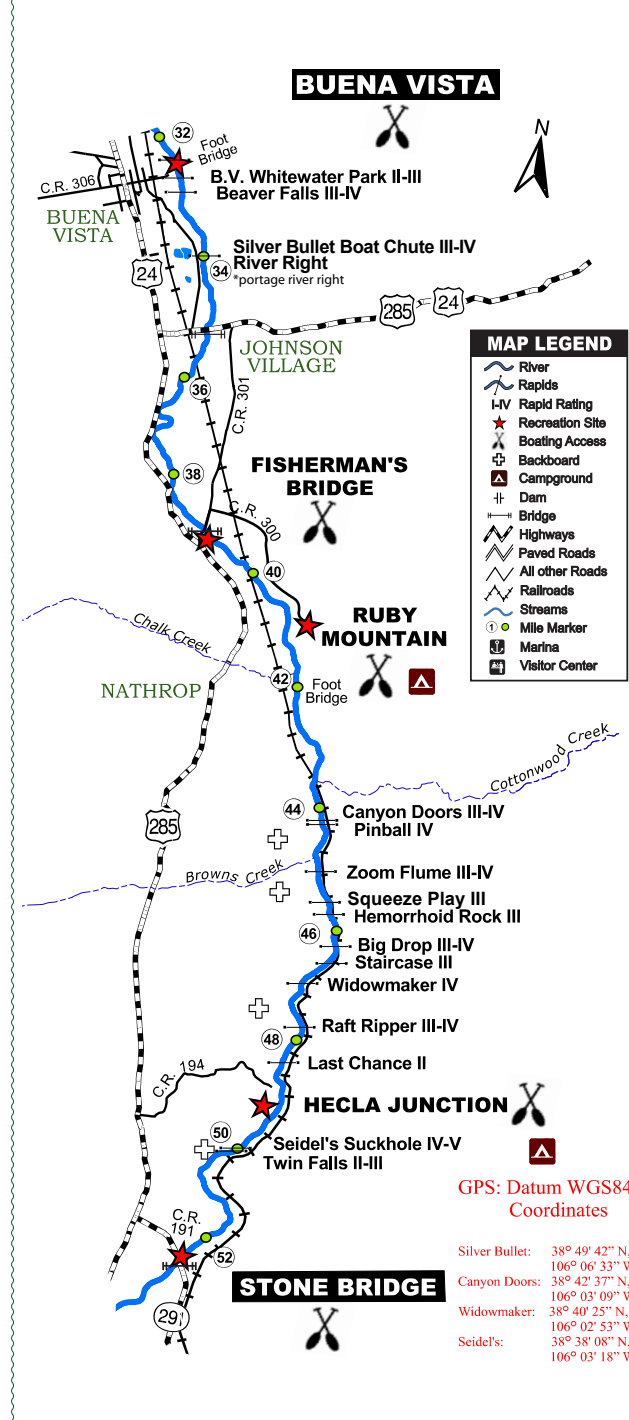
## Granite ~ Buena Vista

Total length of section is 17.9 miles



## Buena Vista ~ Stone Bridge

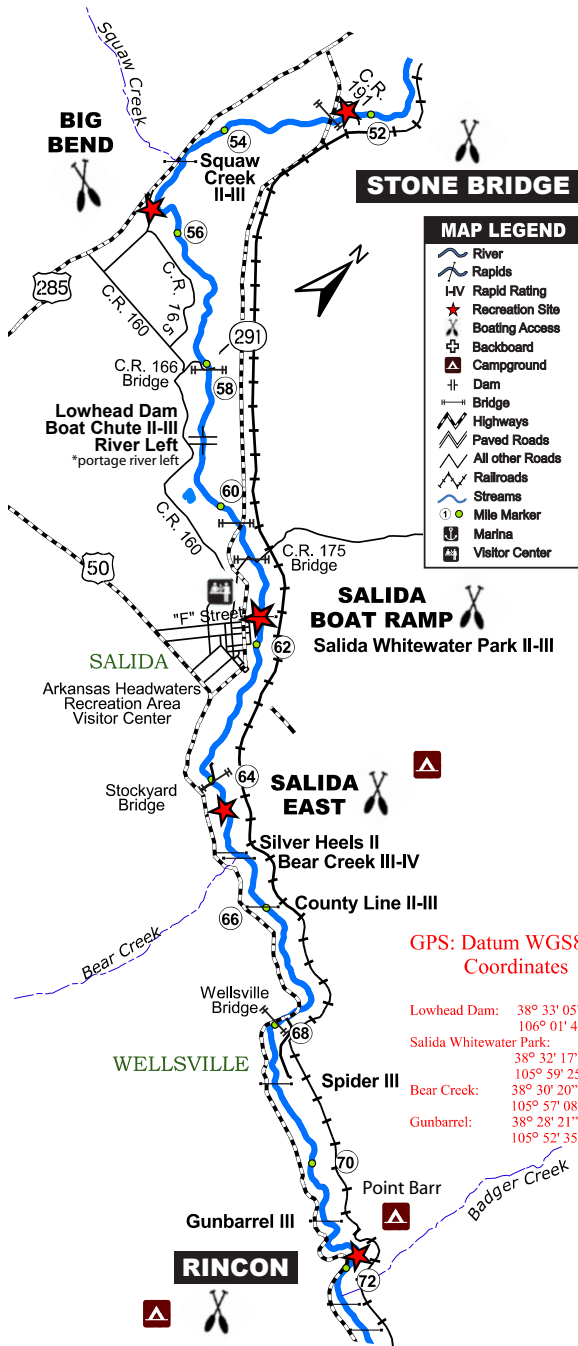
Total length of section is 19.9 miles





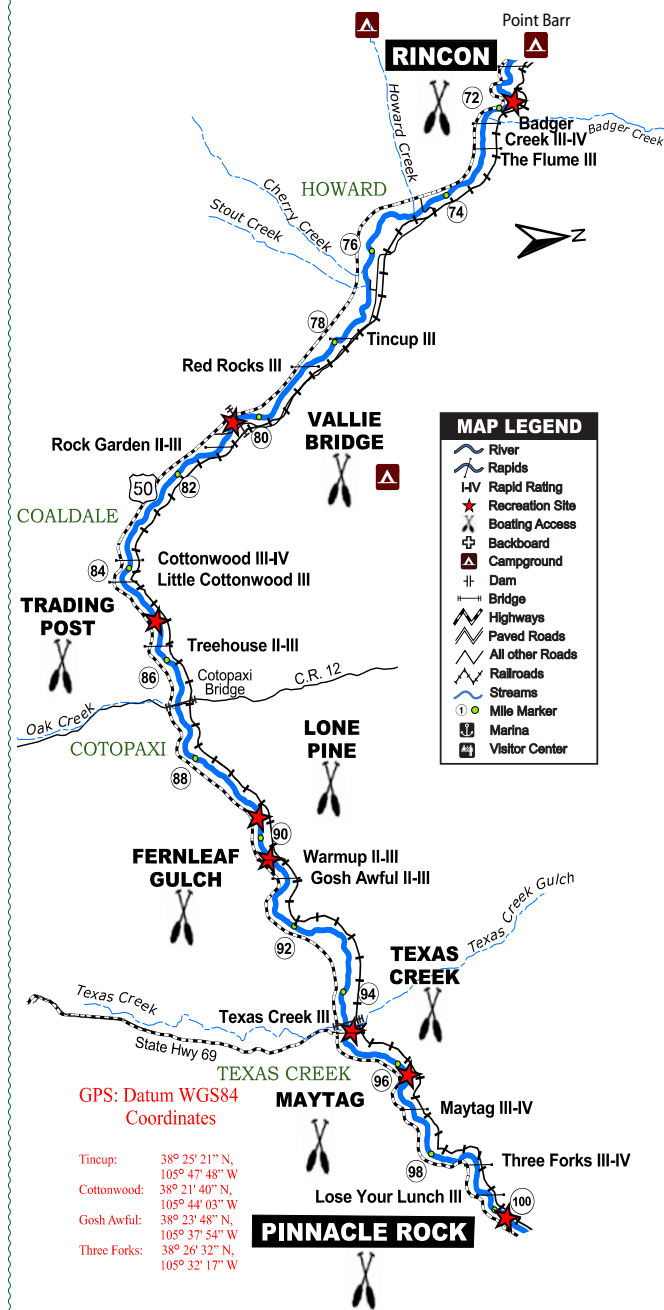
## Stone Bridge ~ Rincon

Total length of section is 19.5 miles



## Rincon ~ Pinnacle Rock

Total length of section is 28.5 miles



## WARNING: High Water Advisements

Arkansas Headwaters Recreation Area has the following standing advisements regarding high flows:

### Pine Creek Rapid:

It is recommended that Pine Creek Rapid (within Section 1B) not be run at flows over 1250 cfs at the Numbers/Below Granite Gage.

### The Numbers:

It is recommended that the Numbers (Section 1C) not be run at flows over 2400 cfs at the Numbers/Below Granite Gage.

### Royal Gorge:

It is recommended that the Royal Gorge (Section 5) not be run at flows over 3200 cfs at the Parkdale Gage.

## Important Safety Information

### Lake Fork ~ Granite

- Flows for this section are measured at the Below Granite Gage. Flows may be significantly lower above the confluences of Clear Creek and Lake Creek.
- Bridge hazards exist at mile 3.7. Portage may be necessary at some flows.
- Bridge hazard exist at mile 7.2. Portage may be necessary at some flows.
- Railroad bridge abutments at mile 12 may be a hazard at some flows.
- The primary use of this section is fishing. Boaters please respect anglers and avoid crossing fishing lines.



### Granite ~ Buena Vista

- Pine Creek is a class IV-V+ rapid. It is recommended that Pine Creek not be run above 1250 cfs and the Numbers not be run above 2400 cfs at the Below Granite Gage. Self-bailing rafts and wetsuits are recommended above 900 cfs.
- Helmets are always recommended!
- Frog Rock Rapid has a significant entrapment hazard on the river right side, especially at flows below 1000 cfs. Portage is recommended when the left channel is impassable.

### Buena Vista ~ Stone Bridge

- Low head dam exists 1.3 mi. below Buena Vista. Scout and portage trail on river right.
- Mile 52.3 Stone Bridge, CR 191, may require portage above 4000 CFS. Portage river right.
- Private boaters - To avoid on-river congestion, plan launches before 9:30 am, 12:00 pm, or after 3:30 pm.

### Stone Bridge ~ Rincon

- Shavano Fish Hatchery Dam exists at mile 59. Scout and run boat chute on river left.
- The Salida Whitewater Park begins at mile 61.5. Expect to encounter hanging slalom gates and congestion around the play hole at the Salida Boat ramp.

### Rincon ~ Pinnacle Rock

- The primary use of this section is fishing. Boaters please respect anglers and avoid crossing fishing lines.
- If you are fishing from a boat, please respect private property and avoid contact with the river bottom.

### Pinnacle Rock ~ Cañon City

- Royal Gorge - It is recommended that self-bailing rafts and wetsuits be used at flows above 2800 cfs and that this section not be run at flows over 3200 cfs.
- Helmets are always recommended!
- Low head dam exists at mile 118.3. Scout and run boat chute on river left.
- Railroad Right-of-Way extends throughout the Royal Gorge. Please keep off the railroad tracks when scouting or portaging. Trespassers may be prosecuted.

### Cañon City ~ Lake Pueblo

- Minnequa Dam exists at mile 124.5. YOU MUST PORTAGE on river right.
- STRAINERS (downed trees and log jams) exist throughout this section.
- Take Outs above Lake Pueblo are suitable for smaller crafts only. Rafts and larger vessels should plan on taking out at Lake Pueblo boat ramps.
- Land Ownership in this section is largely private. Public Lands exist from mile 139.6 to 140.6. Watch for Entering and Leaving Public Lands signs.