

James River, Buchanan VA, August 19-21, 2022

Trip Point of Contact: Mr. Eric, [ericcutright@comcast.net](mailto:ericcutright@comcast.net)

### **Our Outfitter and Trip Overview**

Troop 1028 and 1029 has done this river kayaking trip many times and we work with Twin River Outfitters. You can find out more about TRO here:

<https://canoevirginia.net/>

We love the two river day trip from Eagle Rock to Buchanan, and camp midway in the private Horseshoe Bend Campground which is owned by the outfitter. The first day on the river is 14 miles (about 7 hours counting stops) and we end at the campground. The second day is 8 miles (about 4 hours counting stops) and we end up at the outfitter.

A good overview of the trip/campground is here:

<https://canoevirginia.net/river-trips/multi-day-trips/>

We typically arrive Friday night (but see note in next section if you just want to do half the trip) and all of our camping gear stays in the campsite, so we don't have to haul it along with us.

If you want to read about a "typical" kayaking trip (note: magical shenanigans possible but unlikely), check out Mr. Eric's book *Cartouche Chronicles 2: Pursuit in Pompeii*, chapters 5-6, see: [www.cartouchechronicles.com](http://www.cartouchechronicles.com)



### **Who's Invited and Trip Cost**

Webelos/AOL & a parent (required) are welcome to join us on our river adventure, and siblings of Webelos age or higher are also welcome. The per-person cost for this trip should be around \$80-90 which covers the boat/PFD rental and camping fees, and the Troops cover food costs. *Webelos can either travel with us Friday for two nights of camping and both days on the river, OR can arrive Saturday afternoon for one night of camping and just Sunday on the river.*

### **Swim Check Requirements**

Webelos/siblings are required to take the BSA Swim Check within the last year to go on this trip, and we follow BSA Safety Afloat rules similar to boating at Camp Shenandoah.

- Non-swimmers are a no-go.
- Beginners have to share a boat with a Swimmer, typically the Webelos parent.
- Swimmers can either share a boat or get a solo boat (more fun without a boring parent).

If you haven't taken the Swim Check in the last year, I can meet you at a pool to give the test, OR I can give you a form with test instructions that any lifeguard can fill out and sign after watching you do the test. For adults, our unofficial policy is that they can waive the swim test if they are not able to schedule/manage it. NOTE: We wear PFDs the whole time even when taking swimming breaks, so there is not any what I would call "real swimming," just floating.

### **Our Rental Boats**

We always rent sit-on-top kayaks for Scouts (see pictures above), which are impossible to swamp and easy to jump off and on when you do get stuck in low water (which will happen).

## **River Kayaking Training and Safety**

We have a nice river kayaking safety training presentation here which everyone should review:

[https://www.troop1028.org/uploads/1/1/0/6/110687961/t1029\\_river\\_boating\\_safety\\_course\\_july\\_2020.pdf](https://www.troop1028.org/uploads/1/1/0/6/110687961/t1029_river_boating_safety_course_july_2020.pdf)

The key is learning to read the river and look for vees in the water – a vee pointing towards you means there is a submerged rock, a vee pointing away from you means you have a nice flow between rocks so aim for that.

The other keys are staying away from downed tree branches (strainers) and watching for horizon lines. For example, at Richie Falls you can see a perfect horizon line across the whole river which tells you there is a cool drop coming. See picture above for a summary.



## **What to Expect on the River**

It depends on the water level, but the entire trip is fairly tame with nothing above a Class II rapid, and all the rapid zones are fairly short and spaced far apart from each other (one of the exciting parts for Scouts is hearing the rapids before we get to them, so they definitely can't just sneak up on you). There are a few exciting parts, but we follow our safety protocol to wait for everyone at any tricky parts. Usually, the bigger problem is getting stuck on rocks in the shallow rapids and having to step out to push your kayak free (which will happen).

*Richie Falls:* Richie Falls (10 minutes into day 2) is definitely the craziest part of the whole trip, but the drop depends on the water level and to be honest last year I went over it and then said, "wait, was that really it?" Normally the drop most years is about 2-3 feet so it is not bad at all. I've done this trip a dozen times and never seen worse than that. The protocol is I go over first, and then everybody follows one by one, spread out, and we all wait in the river edge shallows near the bottom until everybody makes it (and also to catch paddles/gear if anyone loses anything going over). If you hug the left side of the river per the outfitter advice, there is an easy path and nice flow to get through. Last year I actually saw a guy totally ignore the outfitter advice about the left side and go over the middle of it sideways in a canoe and we all clapped for him when we made it over just fine. Last year, I made the mistake of saying to Atlas, "wow, amazing, nobody had any trouble at all this year" right before the last person (Christian) went over, and of course then he fell out (but was fine) totally because I jinxed him.

## **What to Bring**

Our suggested kayaking trip gear list can be found here:

[https://www.troop1028.org/uploads/1/1/0/6/110687961/kayak\\_gear\\_list\\_2019.pdf](https://www.troop1028.org/uploads/1/1/0/6/110687961/kayak_gear_list_2019.pdf)

A water bottle, boating shoes, a good hat, and sunscreen are absolute essentials. Also, not on the list but a good idea are a pair of fingerless kayaking gloves so your hands don't get sore. Dick's has them for \$20, but they are NOT absolutely required. I bought a pair for previous trips and was very glad I brought them.

Dress code: Please wear Class B all weekend so we look like Scouts (but no Class A fancy uniforms)

## **Trip Schedule**

Friday August 19:

- rally at 5th St County Office building (near Mr. Eric's) at 5:00pm, dinner in you or on you
- We'll drive directly to our campsite (about 90 minutes away) on the river and set up camp. Campsite address: 6869 Narrow Passage Rd., Buchanan, VA 24066
- Light snacks in camp, crazy campfire games as always
- 10:00pm - Quiet time starts
- 11:00pm - Lights out

Saturday August 20:

- Early start at 7:30am, quick breakfast in camp, pack lunch for river
- Late arrivers get there by 8:30am
- 8:30am Outfitter comes to our campsite to give safety training (no worse than Class II rapids, unless there is major rain ahead of event)
- Outfitter shuttles us to launch point
- On the river by 9am, kayaking 14 miles with a long break for a picnic lunch, and several smaller breaks for swimming (PFDs required at all times, sorry!)
- 4:00pm or so - arrive by boat at our campsite, pull up boats and relax
- Hot dinner in camp, crazy campfire games as always
- 10:00pm - Quiet time starts
- 11:00pm - Lights out

Sunday August 21:

- Relaxed start at 8:00am, breakfast in camp, pack lunch for river
- Late arrivers get there by 8:30am
- Pack up most of camp and stow back in trucks
- Hit the river around 9:00am, kayaking 8 miles
- 1:00pm - get picked up by outfitter and driven back to camp
- Quick lunch back at camp
- Return to Cville rally point by 3:00pm

# River Map – Day 1



# River Map – Day 2

