

# HOW TO: TUBE THE SALT

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*Victor Palagano*

Somehow the Salt River gets a bad rap.

Sure -- it may not be as impressive as the raging Colorado. It may not be deeper than six inches in most places (depending on the year's monsoon season). It may have a **reputation for carrying diseases**. It may be full of drunk frat boys at times. But hey, it's all we've got.

So we dare you to give the Salt River a try. Living here, you may have learned how to live with extreme heat, dust storms, poisonous insects, and corrupt politicians -- so surely you can handle a lazy river on a summer afternoon.

But just in case you're still a little intimidated, here are some tips:

**1. Bring sheets.** We all know it's really hot outside. And that tube is a big, black piece of rubber. To stay cool and comfortable, take a sheet, wet it in the river, and then drape it over your tube and tie it on the bottom. You'll create a comfy little nest that will keep you from (literally) burning your skin if you decide to move over the course of the few hours.

*More essential tips after the jump*

These essential tips will get you jump ...



*Victor Palagano*



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**6. Don't forget to buy a parking pass before you get there.** This one is a little tricky. A few years ago it became required to have a day long parking pass to park in the lot at the river. The problem is, you can't purchase the pass on site. You have to buy it before you get there. The permit is \$6, and you can get it online, or there are a couple of gas stations along the way that sell them. Just make sure you stop to avoid a twenty minute out of the way excursion. You can find all of the info. on it at the Tonto National Forest site [here](#).

**7. The depth of the river can be deceptive.** Just when you think you've got it all figured out, and you believe that the water underneath you could not possibly be more than a foot deep, you get out of your tube for a minute. You figure you'll stand up, stretch, adjust your bathing suit, and then lay back in. Problem: The water is now six or seven feet deep, and you're only five or five and a half feet tall. When this is the case, it's extraordinarily difficult to pull yourself back into the tube.

**8. Movement requires forethought.** It's not always easy to navigate yourself and a group of people in rubber tubes. So occasionally you'll start to drift to one side of the river or the other. Try to avoid the mud banks along the side where a plethora of beer cans and garbage tend to aggregate.

**9. Wait...there are rapids on this river?** Well, sort of. There are a few spots along the way where the current picks up. When this happens, the water may also be a bit more shallow than you'd expect. Because of this, your ass is apt to hit the rocks just below you. When you see one coming, (and you'll hear people screaming ahead of you as they go over them), prepare.

**10. And don't forget...** Sunscreen, shoes, trash bags, etc. You might remember to put sunscreen on before you go, but if you don't want a gnarly burn, you'll have to reapply a few times along the way. Also, when you get out of the river, you must, must, must have shoes on. It's too hot for bare feet and the rocks are way too sharp to be able to walk back up to where the bus picks you up to take you back to the main lot. And lastly, trash bags. Eat, drink, and be merry. But don't make someone else clean up your mess. Or worse, don't make the desert wildlife suffer because you're a slob.

Now, see? That doesn't sound so bad, does it? One more hint: be sure you've had a tetanus shot ...

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