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SOUTHWEST PADDLER

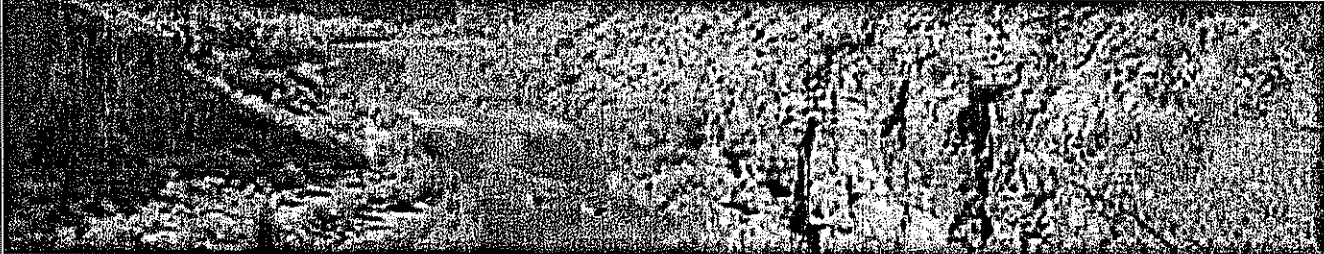
Outdoor Recreation Guide for
Texas, Oklahoma, Arkansas, Missouri, New Mexico, Arizona, Colorado and Utah



Salt River

Report by Marc W. McCord



The Salt River forms on the Apache Indian Reservation in Graham County, in the Apache National Forest, then flows northeast to southwest through the Sierra Ancha Mountains into Tonto National Forest, and finally into the cities of Scottsdale and Tempe in Maricopa County. The headwaters are located above US Highway 60, just northeast of Globe and southwest of Pinetop-Lakeside near Chrysotile, though running the river above US Highway 60 is illegal.


The Salt River is free-flowing from its headwaters down to Theodore Roosevelt Lake, where the first of four hydroelectric generating dams are located. Customarily, the Salt is described as either the Upper Salt River (above Roosevelt Lake) or the Lower Salt River (below Roosevelt Lake). Class II to IV whitewater is the primary attraction to the Upper Salt, though the desert scenery rates a very close second for many people. Below Roosevelt Lake the river is flatwater with little current except during periods of dam release. Flow is controlled by releases from the four dams at the mouths of Roosevelt, Apache, Canyon and Saguaro Lakes.

Both sections offer spectacular Sonoran Desert topography that includes tall mountains, mountain valleys, Saguaro cactus, sagebrush, tumbleweeds, a wide variety of desert flowers that bloom for a few short weeks in the spring and a remoteness that escapes the hustle and bustle of nearby big city life. The Salt River generally has a short season from March through May, depending upon winter snowpack and spring rainfall.

Click the links below for information regarding the section of the Salt River and its tributaries where you want to paddle.


[\[Upper Salt River \]](#)
[\[Roosevelt Lake to Apache Lake \]](#)
[\[Apache Lake to Canyon Lake \]](#)
[\[Canyon Lake to Saguaro Lake \]](#)
[\[Saguaro Lake to Granite Reef Dam \]](#)
[\[Big Bonito River \]](#)
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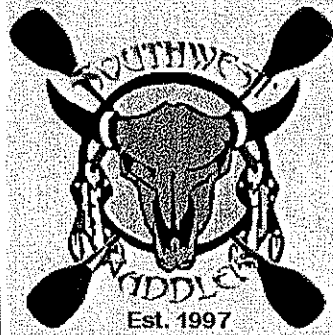
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Salt River

Report by Marc W. McCord

US Highway 60 to SH 288
~ 51.9 Miles

General Description

Due to wildfire and the ensuing danger of flooding from a glacier melt condition the Upper Salt River is temporarily closed for recreation access starting in July, 2011, and will be re-opened at a later date to be determined by the White Mountain Apache Nation on whose land the accesses are located.

The historic Fort Apache Indian Reservation, ancestral home to brave Native Americans such as Geronimo and Cochise, is the source of Arizona's Salt River, a seasonal stream that is usually navigable from March through May, depending upon snowpack in the mountains and rainfall within the drainage basin. The headwaters are located within the boundaries of Fort Apache National Forest in Graham County, east-northeast of Phoenix.

The Upper Salt River is generally described as that section from the headwaters down to Roosevelt Lake in the Sierra Ancha Mountains of southcentral Arizona. The desert environment offers spectacular vistas seldom seen where most people paddle and camp. The primary attraction of the Upper Salt River is its exciting Class II to IV whitewater rapids that can be challenging for canoeists, kayakers and rafters. A major rapid, Apache Falls, is located just above the US Highway 60 crossing, but running it is strictly prohibited by ancient Apache Nation laws. Please respect the ancient customs of the indigenous people and do not attempt to run this drop. The penalty for getting caught, and you probably will, is stiff fines and probably some time in jail!

Paddling the Upper Salt is like stepping back in time by at least 150 years. Natural beauty abounds, and you will find

Technical Data	
Class Rating	II to IV
Length	51.9 miles
Minimum Flow	300 cfs (Canoes & Kayaks) 1,200 cfs (Rafts)
Optimum Flow	2,000-3,000 cfs
Maximum Flow	20,000 cfs
First Put-in	US Highway 60 Bridge RAP
Lat. / Long.	
Last Take-out	Highway 288 Bridge RAP
Lat. / Long.	
Elevation	2,120 msl
Gradient	fpm
USGS Gauge	Web:Roosevelt
Boats	Canoes w/ flotation, Kayaks, Rafts
Season	Late-February through May
Permits	Yes, White Mountain Apache Nation and US Forest Service (see "Permit Requirements" section at the left)

few signs of civilization or modernization. However, you may find snakes, mountain lions, black bears, coyotes, bobcats, eagles, hawks, falcons, mountains standing 500 to 1,000 feet above the river and Sonoran Desert flora and fauna as far as the eye can see. Because of the short season and the relative scarcity of navigable rivers in Arizona you may encounter crowds of boaters (especially on weekends - Easter weekend is the most crowded) seeking a wilderness paddle trip under big, blue skies and amid giant Saguaro cactus everywhere you look. There is a "no-stop" zone starting at 41.3 miles and continuing for about 1 mile between December 1 and June 30, in a nesting area for Bald Eagles.

The navigable section of the Upper Salt River is about 52 miles with numerous Class II to IV (mostly Class III) rapids and small waterfalls. These drops are not particularly challenging for boaters having intermediate or higher level whitewater skills. Plan on taking 3-5 days for this trip. However, a shorter run can be made from US Highway 60 down to Mescal Road (about 7 miles of Class III to IV whitewater). Setting up a shuttles on the Upper Salt River can eat up one day, so be prepared for the total time it will take to prepare and run this river. The first 50 miles drops at a gradient of about 26 feet per mile (fpm), then flattens a little as the river approaches Roosevelt Lake. The Upper Salt River is a permit-regulated river (see "Permit Requirements" below.)

Location

The section of the Upper Salt that is legal to run begins at the US Highway 60 crossing in Gila County and runs to Roosevelt Lake in the Sierra Ancha Mountains of Tonto National Forest.

Distance from Major Cities

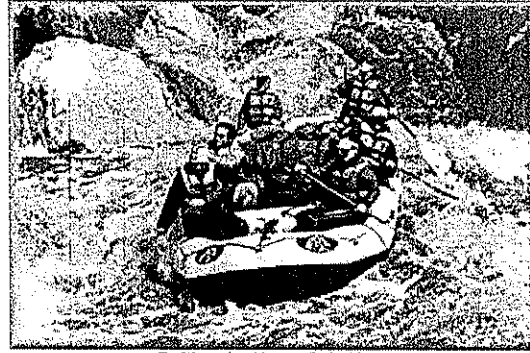
Phoenix 135 miles; Tucson 170 miles; Flagstaff 185 miles; Salt Lake City 700 miles; Albuquerque 330 miles; Denver 690 miles; Dallas 950 miles; Austin 1,070 miles; San Antonio 1,050 miles; Houston 1,250 miles; Oklahoma City 880 miles (all distances are approximate and depend upon starting point, destination point on the river and route taken.)

Water Quality and Flow

The Upper Salt River flows clean, clear and usually cold because of its snowmelt source waters. There is very little to cause pollution, contamination or litter, so the water quality is usually very high during periods of sustainable flow.

Best Times to Go


Generally, the optimum season is a short two or three months in March through May, though the season may be extended or reduced according to the depth of the snow pack and/or recent local rains. The river will run very low in dry winter years.



Rafting the Upper Salt River
photo courtesy Wilderness Aware Rafting



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Lone Star Paddler

Permit Requirements

Running the Upper Salt River requires permits. For sections above Tonto National Forest (US Highway 60 to Gleason Flat RAP) permits are obtainable from the White Mountain Apaches at the store on US Highway 60 at the river. Store hours are daylight only, so plan accordingly. Permit fees are \$10 per person Monday through Thursday, and \$15 per person Friday through Sunday. For paddlers entering Tonto National Forest between March 1 and May 15, permits must be obtained from the forest office in Phoenix. Maximum group size is limited to 15 persons. Applications for permits **MUST** arrive at the forest office between December 1 and January 15. You may contact the Tonto National Forest office at:

River Permits and Information

Tonto National Forest

Globe Ranger District
7680 S. Six Shooter Canyon
Rd.
Globe, AZ 85501
(928) 402-6200 / Fax: (928)
402-6292

White Mountain Apache Tribe
Wildlife & Outdoor Recreation
Div.
PO Box 220
White River, AZ 85941
928-338-4385

Hazards to Navigation

There are numerous rapids and small waterfalls in the Class II to IV category, any of which can be a danger to paddlers and gear if not executed properly. Paddlers in rafts will have little difficulty, especially if guided by an experienced river guide, but canoeists and kayakers should have solid intermediate or higher level whitewater skills and be swiftwater rescue trained. Due to the remote nature of this trip it is recommended that a fully-equipped First Aid kit be carried on the Upper Salt River. **DO NOT** attempt to run the river between the SH 288 RAP and Roosevelt Lake! For a full description of the many rapids along this reach of the river click [HERE](#).

River Access Points

US Highway 60 Bridge River Access Point (RAP) on river right at 0.2 miles; Mule Hoof RAP on river right at about 0.5 miles; Exhibition RAP on river right at about 6.0 miles; Cibecue Creek RAP on river right at about 6.9 miles; Sandy Beach RAP on river right at about 9.4 miles; Hoodoo RAP on river right at about 9.8 miles (last take-out above Gleason Flats); Upper Gleason Flat RAP (4WD recommended) on river left at about 19.5 miles; Gleason Flat RAP (4WD recommended) on river left at about 19.7 miles; Gleason Flat RAP (4WD recommended) on river right at about 19.7 miles; Horseshoe Bend RAP (on private land - use for emergencies only) on river left at about 39.0 miles; Highway 288 RAP (LAST TAKE-OUT POINT) on river right at about 51.9 miles.

NOTES: Mileage is calculated from the uppermost access about 0.2 miles above US Highway 60. ALL access points above Gleason Flat are along Road # 1 on the White Mountain Apache Reservation and require a permit from the Apache Nation for access or camping. Permits can be obtained during daylight hours **ONLY** at the store located at

the intersection of US Highway 60 and the Salt River. Access points at the Gleason Flat sites are along very primitive roads where 4-wheel drive vehicles are strongly recommended. The road to Horseshoe Bend was washed out by a flood in September, 2003, and probably is not passable, but this access is on private land, through a locked gate, and should be used for emergencies ONLY. Do NOT leave vehicles parked at the access points, which are for unloading and loading only. Use parking lots nearby so that others can have access to the river.

Campgrounds and Accommodations

There are no public or private campgrounds located along the Upper Salt River. Natural campgrounds are abundant all along the river, but most of this section requires a permit from the White Mountain Apaches, National Forest Service, or both. Be sure to inquire about available campsites when applying for permits.

Ryers, Outfitters & Shuttle Services

Wilderness Aware Rafting (800-462-7238) offers guided raft trips and private shuttles on the Upper Salt River in Arizona between US Highway 60 and SH 288. There are numerous other commercial outfitters offering rentals, shuttles, guide trips and/or river information for the Upper Salt River.

Reviewer's Comments

If you are attracted to unadulterated natural beauty, then you would be hard pressed to find a more idyllic place to paddle - that is, if you like Class III and IV whitewater! The Upper Salt offers remoteness, wilderness, desert topography and Saguaro cactus everywhere you look. The water flows clean and clear most of the time, but its season is very limited because of the desert setting and dependence upon winter snowpack and spring rainfall. Unfortunately, Arizona is not blessed with many rivers or long seasons, so you can expect to paddle with crowds of others, especially on weekends. Avoid Easter weekend unless you can handle big crowds and severe limitations on available riverside campsites. Do NOT forget to obtain your necessary permits for the reach you intend to paddle, and do NOT run any part of the river above US Highway 60 - it is a violation of law that will net you heavy fines and possibly a few days in jail.

Click the links below for information regarding the section of the Salt River and its tributaries where you want to paddle.

- [[Salt River Homepage](#)] [[Roosevelt Lake to Apache Lake](#)] [[Apache Lake to Canyon Lake](#)] [[Canyon Lake to Saguaro Lake](#)]
- [[Saguaro Lake to Granite Reef Dam](#)] [[Big Bonito River](#)] [[Black River](#)] [[Canyon Creek](#)] [[Tonto Creek](#)]

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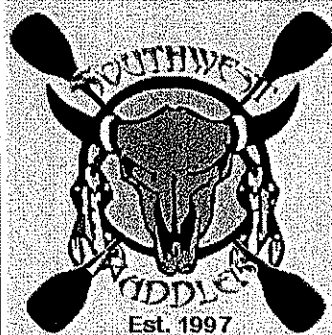
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Salt River

Report by Marc W. McCord

Roosevelt Lake to Apache Lake ~ 15 Miles

General Description

The Middle Salt River begins immediately below Roosevelt Dam at a pocket park operated by the National Forest Service and continues downriver to Apache Lake, then from Horse Mesa Dam down to Canyon Lake, below Mormon Flats Dam down to Saguaro Lake above Stewart Mountain Dam. The section from Roosevelt Dam down to Apache Lake is the only section between the lakes where paddlers can put in upriver, then paddle downriver. The other sections require putting in on one of the lakes, then paddling upriver, turning around and paddling back down river. There are no access points below Apache Lake other than at USFS parks located on the lakes.

The section from Roosevelt Dam to Apache Lake is very beautiful, but flatter than the Arizona desert. It features an abundance of water for paddling almost all the time, and is vested with beautiful, rough-cut mountains in the Sierra Ancha Range where the river has cut a deep channel. Arizonans refer to the Lower Salt River as the "Mini Grand Canyon". Paddling here will let you know why. The current is gentle, with lake effect waves that can get rough if the wind is up. The only real hazards to navigation are the powerboats that frequently make their way up or down the river carrying fishermen, skiers and others just out for a great time on a gorgeous section of river. Along the path of the Lower Salt River you will see Saguaro cactus, many birds of prey and occasionally a few small animals. There are larger animals that live here, but they are seldom seen. There are also several species of poisonous snakes, but they are also a rare sight. However, it is advisable to exercise caution when walking away from your campsite at night, if you should camp along the river - walk heavily, make a lot of noise and vibration, carry a bright light and a long pole or stick, and follow the rules about hiking in snake country. The author has made numerous trips on the Salt River, and has yet to actually see any snakes, though they

Technical Data

Class Rating	I
Length	15 miles
Minimum Flow	cfs
Optimum Flow	cfs
Maximum Flow	cfs
First Put-in	Pocket park below Roosevelt Dam
Lat. / Long.	
Last Take-out	any USFS park on Apache Lake
Lat. / Long.	
Elevation	msl
Gradient	fpm
USGS Gauge	Web:
Boats	Canoes, Kayaks, Rafts (?)
Season	Year-round, weather permitting
Permits	No, but camping fees may apply and access fees are required



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are there.

The section from Roosevelt Lake to Apache Lake is definitely one for taking photos. The tall mountains are awesome, and depending upon the time of day, sunlight and shadows make for some very interesting shots. There are no public or private services of any kind along this section of the Salt River, but numerous natural campsites are available, including some that have been developed by the USFS and the Bureau of Land Management (BLM). There is a small fee (\$4 per day per car or \$6 per day per car with a boat) that you will pay at the self-serve pay stations at each of the USFS parks on the lakes. There are no fees for use of campsites along the river, though USFS permits may be required, depending upon the time of year.

One note about paddling the Lower Salt River between Roosevelt and Apache Lakes - most of the road is unimproved dirt and rock, with mountains on one side and a steep drop to the river on the other side. High clearance is not necessary, but the switchbacks can cause minor nausea, so go slow and keep an eye out for on-coming traffic. There are about 21 miles of dirt road, and it gets a lot of winter visitor traffic, especially from the snowbird older crowd.

Location

Located in Pinal County, the section from Roosevelt Lake to Apache Lake is in the Sierra Ancha Mountains of Tonto National Forest. Nearby cities include Globe to the south and Phoenix to the west. The road to the put-in (from Phoenix) passes through Apache Junction and Tortilla Flat. US Highway 60 runs east-to-west just a few miles away.

Distance from Major Cities

Phoenix 85 miles; Tucson 170 miles; Flagstaff 160 miles; Salt Lake City 775 miles; Albuquerque 406 miles; Denver 785 miles; Dallas 910 miles; Austin 1,030 miles; San Antonio 1,010 miles; Houston 1,200 miles; Oklahoma City 950 miles (all distances are approximate and depend upon starting point, destination point on the river and route taken.)

Water Quality and Flow

The Middle Salt River flows clean and clear from its dam release source waters. There is very little to cause pollution, contamination or litter, so the water quality is usually very high during periods of sustainable flow, though it may have a slightly stagnant odor that is typical of impounded bodies of water.

Best Times to Go

Generally, the Middle Salt River is navigable year round, though the current will be slower when no dam releases are occurring. Because of the need for hydroelectric generation there is almost always adequate water for paddling.



Hazards to Navigation

The only real hazards on any section of the Middle Salt River are headwinds and occasionally powerboats, which are more prevalent on weekends. There are no rapids or waterfalls on the section from Roosevelt Dam to Apache Lake.

River Access Points

USFS pocket park immediately below Roosevelt Dam at 0.9 miles; Apache Lake USFS parks starting at about 22.0 miles. The final (and only) take-out points on this section of the Salt River are any of the USFS parks located on Apache Lake (unless you paddle back upriver to the pocket park below Roosevelt Dam.)

Campgrounds and Accommodations

There are no public or private campgrounds located along the Middle Salt River. Natural campgrounds are abundant all along the river, but most of this section requires a permit from the U.S. Forest Service (Tonto National Forest office in Phoenix.) Be sure to inquire about available campsites when applying for permits.

Liveries, Outfitters & Shuttle Services

There are no liveries or outfitters located along the Middle Salt River. Take everything you need, and arrange to run your own shuttles. There are several outfitters in the Phoenix, Flagstaff and Tucson areas, as well as in adjoining states, that frequently run guided trips on the Upper Salt River. Rentals and/or shuttles MAY be available from some of them.

Reviewer's Comments

The Middle Salt River is a trip that anybody can enjoy regardless of paddling skills or experience. The section between Roosevelt Dam and Apache Lake has excellent access from the pocket park off Apache Trail, with a sandy beach from which to launch. The flow is usually slow and there are no natural hazards except occasionally strong headwinds. While powerboats do frequent the river, it is plenty wide and avoiding boats and their wake turbulence is generally easy. You will be rocked by wake turbulence, but there is plenty of room for avoiding the worst of it. The scenery along the Lower Salt River is just awesome. Sometimes, it is hard to realize that you are paddling a boat through the heart of the Sonoran Desert. Be sure to take a camera and plenty of film or digital media because the topography is simply spectacular. It is easy to see why locals call this place the "Mini Grand Canyon" because you are definitely paddling through a mountain canyon and it is definitely grand (though not as much so as its cousin to the north.)

Click the links below for information regarding the section of the Salt River and its tributaries where you want to paddle.

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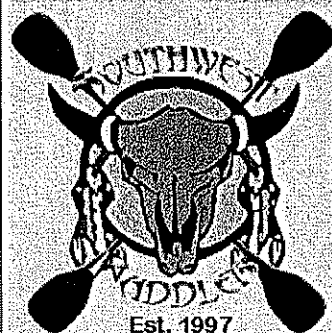
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Salt River

Report by Marc W. McCord

Rapids of the Upper Salt River US Highway 60 to SH 288 ~ 51.9 Miles

Baptism Rapid (II to III) - located immediately below access above the US Highway 60 RAP, may be unrunnable in low-water conditions, and features large holes in high water conditions.

Island Rapid (III to IV) - at about 0.4 miles, is characterized by dangerous boulders in both channels, and should be avoided except in high-water conditions.

Bump and Grind Rapid (II to III), - at about 1.5 miles, starts easy before a concealed rocky ledge across the river at the lower end of the drop. Rafts should be lined in low-water conditions.

Maytag Chute (III to III+) - features chutes on either side of a small island - GO FAR RIGHT immediately after clearing Bump and Grind. The drop may be scouted from the island.

Reforma Rapid (III+ to IV) - at about 2.3 miles, features deep holes, huge boulders and technical difficulty. It is dangerous, especially in high-water conditions, and should always be scouted before running.

Mother Rock (II to III) - at about 2.4 miles, is characterized by a huge boulder in river center, with a boulder garden rapid immediately below the rock. Start right of Mother Rock, enter the rock garden on the far right to set up for Overboard Rapid.

Overboard Rapid (III to IV) - at about 2.7 miles, features a large boulder on river right at the end of the rapid. Start far right, then work left to avoid the rock and a huge hole that can flip canoes, kayaks and rafts. Overboard Rapid should be scouted from the rock garden above BEFORE running.

Exhibition Rapid (II to III) - at about 6.0 miles, features haystacks and hidden holes, especially in high-water conditions. The rapids starts wide, then narrows at the end.

Three-Way Rapid (II to II+) - at about 7.7 miles, starts as two channels with the left channel going straight downriver through a rock garden at the bottom with a sneak to the right channel about half-way through it, and an easier right channel passing through bushes.

Salt River Draw Rapid (III+ to IV) - at about 9.1 miles, is dangerous at all flow levels and should be scouted from the river left bank before running. Avoid the huge reversal wave on river left at all times! Below this rapid, the river drops at about 26 fpm for the next 4 miles.

Salt Banks Rapid (II to II+) - is fairly easy and straightforward. However, it is located at a sacred Apache site where ALL land access is prohibited. Do NOT disembark along this section of the river!

Ledges Rapid (II to III) - at about 11.0 miles, features several drops in quick succession, with big boulders and holes, especially along the river left side, which should be avoided.

Little Boat Eater Rapid (III to III+) - at about 11.6 miles, is located along the left bank and features a definite keeper hole at the bottom - stay right. This rapid is more trouble in low-water conditions. Below this rapid the river drops at a rate of about 29 fpm for the next 3.5 miles.

Rat Trap Rapid (III+ to IV) - at about 13.9 miles, is more technical in low-water conditions. It features a steep but short drop into submerged rocks and holes that offers a good sneak route on river right in high-water conditions.

White Rock Rapid (II to III) - at about 14.1 miles, is a long rock garden along river right around a sharp right bend - follow the main current to the right.

Granite Rapid (III to IV) - at about 16.5 miles, features a river center boulder, a right side line that requires careful steering and boat control, and a left side line that may have a huge hole that can flip boats, sending paddlers swimming. Below this rapid the river drops at a rate of about 21 fpm for the next 5 miles through Gleason Flat, then at about 24 fpm for the following 8 miles.

Eye of the Needle (III+ to IV) - at about 21.7 miles, is potentially dangerous at any level. The approach is not always obvious. On river left is a very narrow passage with a significant drop between boulders. The best line usually is to the left. A river-wide reversal wave can be created in high-water conditions, in which the far right line is preferred by most experienced boaters. Always scout this drop before running!

Black Rock Rapid (III+ to IV) - at about 22.3 miles, is a major rapid with technically difficult maneuvering required. It is characterized by an entrance from a right turn into a big drop and tricky cross currents. It can be run or lined through the left channel in high-water conditions, but in low-water conditions a technically difficult waterfall is created. This drop should ALWAYS be carefully scouted before running or lining.

Pendejo Wall - at about 26.7 miles. Keep away from the left wall to avoid trouble, especially in low-water conditions.

Upper Corral Rapid (II to III) - at about 27.2 miles, features a strong current into lower river right boulders.

Lower Corral Rapid (II to III) - at about 29.0 miles, is a long rapid starting at Jump Off Canyon around a sharp left bend into about a 3/4 mile-long pinball table of boulders to be avoided. This rapid should be carefully scouted before starting, and eternal vigilance is required while running it.

The Maze (III to III+) - at about 29.7 miles, begins around a sharp right bend into strong currents, huge boulders and potentially keeper holes in higher flow conditions. The most difficult hole is near the top of this drop, where the natural current takes boats. Many paddlers choose to enter along the far river right wall. Always scout this rapid before running it. Below this point the river drops at a rate of about 31 fpm for the next 3 miles.

Quartzite Rapid (III+ to IV, with Class V consequences) - at about 31.6 miles, was formerly a solid Class IV to IV+ rapid with Class V to V+ consequences before being illegally dynamited in 1993. The upper drop is still very challenging and not easy to scout. A significant drop on river left can be run in high-water conditions (above about 4,000 cfs). At optimum flows (about 750-4,000 cfs), the line of choice for most boaters is around the huge boulder on far river right. At flows below about 750 cfs boats can be lined long the river left side. Extreme caution is urged at ALL flow levels. This remains a dangerous drop at all times.

Corkscrew Chute (III to III+) - at about 31.7 miles, is a strong hydraulic below the pool after Quartzite Rapid, characterized by a strong current that flows into the canyon wall, then into the meat of the hydraulic, where a drowning occurred in 1999. At lower flows there may be an island in the pool just below Quartzite Rapid.

The Sleeper (II+ to III+) - at about 31.9 miles, is a sneaky hole on river right. Keep left to avoid the hole. Below this hazard the river drops at a rate of about 16 fpm for the next 12 miles.

Cliff Hanger Rapid (I to III) - at about 34.2 miles, features a strong current into a river right bluff with an eddy pool to the left. This hazard is primarily more difficult for rafts than for kayaks and canoes, though all should carefully choose their lines and control their boats through it.

Wake-Up Rapid (II to II+) - at about 36.2 miles, is fairly easy most of the time, but in low-water conditions the best line is along the far river right bluff.

Five-Way Riffle (II) - at about 42.1 miles, is an easy rapid where the far river left chute is usually the line of choice for most boaters.

Ten-Way Riffle (II) - is fairly easy technically, though it can be a pain in the butt at flows below about 600 cfs, increasing in its "pain" factor inversely proportional to decreasing flows. Starting about 3 miles below Ten-Way Riffle the river drops at about 17 fpm for the next 6 miles.

There are no other significant rapids or drops on the Upper Salt River. However, the remoteness and difficulty of access over land all along the river, as well as possible encounters with some potentially harmful animal-type critters and hot, summertime temperatures with a LOT of solar exposure, make the Upper Salt River a place requiring careful preparation and attention at all times. Flash flooding is always a possibility, though rare in its occurrence.

Do NOT attempt to run the diversion dam at about 52.7 miles, just below the SH 288 take-out! It is a dangerous low-head dam where several drownings have occurred in recent years.

The information presented herein reflects the collective experience of many river runners over a period of several years, and is not intended to be the last word on difficulty or best lines to run. All river runners should know their skills and limitations, as well as limitations of their boats and gear. Swiftwater rescue and First Aid training are recommended. Except for professionally-guided raft trips, this river should ONLY be attempted by experienced whitewater boaters having at least strong intermediate level whitewater skills. All river runners should know the river conditions, forecasts for weather conditions, and then decide upon running the river according to their capabilities as individuals and as a group. This reach of the Salt River should NEVER be attempted alone, or in very small groups because of its remoteness and technical difficulty. The life you save MAY be your own!

[[Back to Upper Salt River Description](#)]

Click the links below for information regarding the section of the Salt River and its tributaries where you want to paddle.

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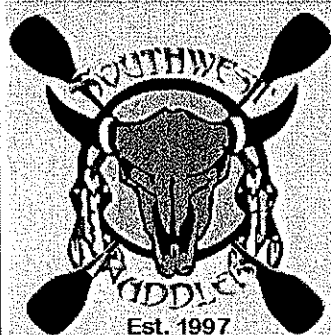
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Salt River

Report by Marc W. McCord

Horse Mesa Dam (Apache Lake) to Canyon Lake ~ 15 Miles

General Description

The Middle Salt River begins immediately below Roosevelt Dam at a pocket park operated by the U.S. Forest Service and continues downriver to Apache Lake, then from Horse Mesa Dam down to Canyon Lake, below Mormon Flats Dam down to Stewart Mountain dam on Saguaro Lake. The section from Roosevelt Dam down to Apache Lake is the only section between the lakes where paddlers can put in upriver, then paddle downriver. The other sections require putting in on one of the lakes, then paddling upriver, turning around and paddling back down river. There are no access points below Apache Lake other than at USFS parks located on the lakes.

The section from Horse Mesa Dam on Apache Lake down to Canyon Lake is very beautiful, but flatter than the Arizona desert. It features an abundance of water for paddling almost all the time, and is vested with beautiful, rough-cut mountains in the Sierra Ancha Range where the river has cut a deep channel. Arizonans refer to the Middle Salt River as the "Mini Grand Canyon". Paddling here will let you know why. The current is gentle, with lake effect waves that can get rough if the wind is up. The only real hazards to navigation are the powerboats that frequently make their way up or down the river carrying fishermen, skiers and others just out for a great time on a gorgeous section of river.

Along the path of the Middle Salt River you will see Saguaro cactus, many birds of prey and occasionally a few small animals. There are larger animals that live here, but they are seldom seen. There are also several species of poisonous snakes, but they are also a rare sight. However, it is advisable to exercise caution when walking away from your campsite at night, if you should camp along the river - walk heavily, make a lot of noise and vibration, carry a bright light and a long pole or stick, and follow the rules about hiking in

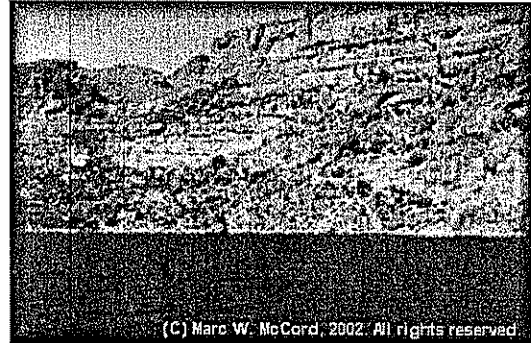
Technical Data

Class Rating	I
Length	15 miles
Minimum Flow	cfs
Optimum Flow	cfs
Maximum Flow	cfs
First Put-in	any USFS park on Apache Lake
Lat. / Long.	
Last Take-out	any USFS park on Apache Lake
Lat. / Long.	
Elevation	msl
Gradient	fpm
USGS Gauge	Web:
Boats	Canoes, Kayaks, Rafts
Season	Year-round, weather permitting
Permits	USFS permits are required March through May. Camping fees may apply and access (parking) fees are required at all times.

snake country. The author has made numerous trips on the Salt River, and has yet to actually see any snakes, though they are there.

The section from Apache Lake to Canyon Lake is definitely one for taking photos. The tall mountains are awesome, and depending upon the time of day, sunlight and shadows make for some very interesting shots. There are no public or private services of any kind along this section of the Salt River, but numerous natural campsites are available, including some that have been developed by the USFS and the Bureau of Land Management (BLM). There is a small fee (\$4 per day per car or \$6 per day per car with a boat) that you will pay at the self-serve pay stations at each of the USFS parks on the lakes. There are no fees for use of campsites along the river, though USFS permits may be required, depending upon the time of year.

Apache Trail, the road leading from Phoenix to the mountain lakes area, is a hard-surface, two-lane blacktop running right through the heart of the Apache Nation. Upon leaving US Highway 60 from Phoenix or Globe you will turn onto Apache Trail at the Town of Apache Junction, then wind through the Tonto National Forest past an abandoned goldmine ghost town that is now a tourist trap, out through the Superstition Mountains past the Lost Dutchman State Park. As you approach Canyon Lake you will be winding through mountains offering excellent vistas, many of which have turn-offs where you can stop to shoot photos. Beyond Canyon Lake the road leads to the tourist trap of Tortilla Flat, where the hard surface ends and the dirt road begins.



Typical desert topography on the wide and flat Lower Salt River between Apache Lake and Canyon Lake

Location

Located in Pinal County, the section from Apache Lake to Canyon Lake is in the Sierra Ancha Mountains of Tonto National Forest. Nearby cities include Globe to the south and Phoenix to the west. The road to the put-in (from Phoenix) passes through Apache Junction and Tortilla Flat. US Highway 60 runs east-to-west just a few miles to the south.

Distance from Major Cities

Phoenix 70 miles; Tucson 160 miles; Flagstaff 145 miles; Salt Lake City 790 miles; Albuquerque 420 miles; Denver 800 miles; Dallas 900 miles; Austin 1,020 miles; San Antonio 1,000 miles; Houston 1,190 miles; Oklahoma City 970 miles (all distances are approximate and depend upon starting point, destination point on the river and route taken.)

Water Quality and Flow

The Middle Salt River flows clean and clear from its dam release source waters. There is very little to cause pollution, contamination or litter, so the water quality is usually very high during periods of sustainable flow, though it may have a slightly stagnant odor that is typical of impounded bodies of water.

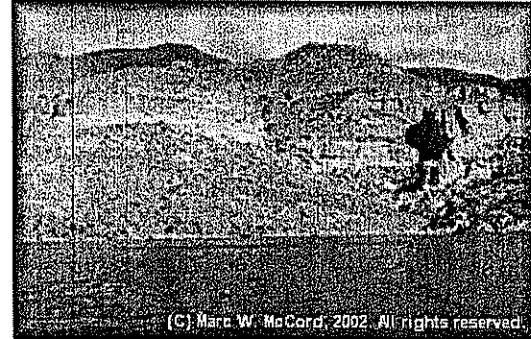
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Typical desert topography on the wide and flat Lower Salt River between Apache Lake and Canyon Lake



Lone Star Paddler

Generally, the Middle Salt River is navigable year round, though the current will be slower when no dam releases are occurring. Because of the need for hydroelectric generation there is almost always adequate water for paddling.

Hazards to Navigation

The only real hazards on any section of the Lower Salt River are headwinds and occasionally powerboats, which are more prevalent on weekends. There are no rapids or waterfalls on the section from Apache Lake to Canyon Lake.

River Access Points

The only access points on this section of the Salt River are any of the USFS parks located on Apache Lake. Several parks along the south side of Canyon Lake offer excellent launch points for trips up and back down the river. There are self-serve pay stations at all the pocket parks on Salt River lakes for day-use parking. There is no access from the top of this section.

Campgrounds and Accommodations

There are no public or private campgrounds located along the Middle Salt River. Natural campgrounds are abundant all along the river, but most of this section requires a permit from the U.S. Forest Service (Tonto National Forest office in Phoenix.) Be sure to inquire about available campsites when applying for permits.

Liveries, Outfitters & Shuttle Services

There are no liveries or outfitters located along the Middle Salt River. Take everything you need, and arrange to run your own shuttles.

Reviewer's Comments

The Middle Salt River is a trip that anybody can enjoy regardless of paddling skills or experience. The flow is usually slow and there are no natural hazards except occasionally strong headwinds. While powerboats do frequent the river, it is plenty wide and avoiding boats and their wake turbulence is generally easy. You will be rocked by wake turbulence, but there is plenty of room for avoiding the worst of it. The scenery along the Lower Salt River is just awesome. Sometimes, it is hard to realize that you are paddling a boat through the heart of the Sonoran Desert. Be sure to take a camera and plenty of film or digital media, because the topography is simply spectacular. It is easy to see why locals call this place the "Mini Grand Canyon", because you are definitely paddling through a mountain canyon and it is definitely grand (though not as much so as its cousin to the north.)

Click the links below for information regarding the section of the Salt River and its tributaries where you want to paddle.

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[[Saguaro Lake to Granite Reef Dam](#)] [[Big Bonito River](#)] [[Black River](#)] [[Canyon Creek](#)] [[Tonto Creek](#)]

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Salt River

Report by Marc W. McCord

Morman Flat Dam to Saguaro Lake ~ 10 Miles

General Description

The Middle Salt River begins immediately below Roosevelt Dam at a pocket park operated by the U.S. Forest Service and continues downriver to Apache Lake, then from Horse Mesa Dam down to Canyon Lake, below Morman Flats Dam down to Stewart Mountain Dam on Saguaro Lake. The section from Roosevelt Dam down to Apache Lake is the only section between the lakes where paddlers can put in upriver, then paddle downriver. The other sections require putting in on one of the lakes, then paddling upriver, turning around and paddling back down river. There are no access points below Apache Lake other than at USFS parks located on the lakes.

The section from Morman Flat Dam on Canyon Lake down to Saguaro Lake in Maricopa County is very beautiful, but flatter than the Arizona desert. It features an abundance of water for paddling almost all the time, and is vested with beautiful, rough-cut mountains in the Sierra Ancha Range where the river has cut a deep channel. Arizonans refer to the Middle Salt River as the "Mini Grand Canyon". Paddling here will let you know why. The current is gentle, with lake effect waves that can get rough if the wind is up. The only real hazards to navigation are the powerboats that frequently make their way up or down the river carrying fishermen, skiers and others just out for a great time on a gorgeous section of river. Along the path of the Middle Salt River you will see Saguaro cactus, many birds of prey and occasionally a few small animals. There are larger animals that live here, but they are seldom seen. There are also several species of poisonous snakes, but they are also a rare sight. However, it is advisable to exercise caution when walking away from your campsite at night, if you should camp along the river - walk heavily, make a lot of noise and vibration, carry a bright light and a long pole or stick, and follow the rules about hiking in snake country. The author has made numerous trips on the Salt River, and has yet to

Technical Data	
Class Rating	I
Length	10 miles
Minimum Flow	cfs
Optimum Flow	cfs
Maximum Flow	cfs
First Put-in	any USFS park on Canyon Lake
Lat. / Long.	
Last Take-out	any USFS park on Canyon Lake
Lat. / Long.	
Elevation	msl
Gradient	fpm
USGS Gauge	Web:
Boats	Canoes, Kayaks, Rafts
Season	Year-round, weather permitting
Permits	USFS permits are required March through May. Camping fees may apply and access (parking) fees are required at all times.



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actually see any snakes, though they are there.

The section from Canyon Lake to Saguaro Lake is definitely one for taking photos. The mountains are not quite as tall as upriver, but still quite awesome, and depending upon the time of day, sunlight and shadows make for some very interesting shots. There are no public or private services of any kind along this section of the Salt River, but numerous natural campsites are available, including some that have been developed by the USFS and the Bureau of Land Management (BLM). There is a small fee (\$4 per day per car or \$6 per day per car with a boat) that you will pay at the self-serve pay stations at each of the USFS parks on the lakes. There are no fees for use of campsites along the river, though USFS permits may be required, depending upon the time of year.

SH 82, the road leading from Phoenix to Saguaro Lake, is a hard-surface, four-lane concrete running through the Fort McDowell Indian Reservation on its way north. The drive from Phoenix takes about 30-40 minutes, depending upon traffic conditions in Phoenix. Saguaro Lake is the closest and easiest of the mountain lakes to access from the Phoenix area.

Location

Located in Maricopa County, the section from Canyon Lake to Saguaro Lake is in the Mazatzal Mountains of Tonto National Forest. Nearby cities include Phoenix, Scottsdale, Tempe, Mesa and the rest of the Phoenix metro area to the southwest. The road to the put-in (from Phoenix) passes through Apache Junction and Tortilla Flat. US Highway 89 runs north-to-south just a few miles to the west, and IH 10 enters Phoenix from the south before turning west, also just a few miles away.

Distance from Major Cities

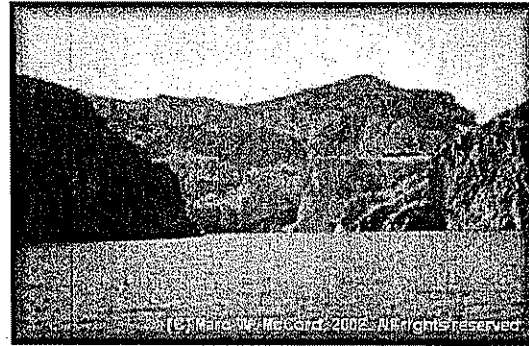
Phoenix 40 miles; Tucson 160 miles; Flagstaff 180 miles; Salt Lake City 680 miles; Albuquerque 500 miles; Denver 850 miles; Dallas 1,030 miles; Austin 1,020 miles; San Antonio 1,040 miles; Houston 1,200 miles; Oklahoma City 1,020 miles (all distances are approximate and depend upon starting point, destination point on the river and route taken.)

Water Quality and Flow

The Middle Salt River flows clean and clear from its dam release source waters. There is very little to cause pollution, contamination or litter, so the water quality is usually very high during periods of sustainable flow, though it may have a slightly stagnant odor that is typical of impounded bodies of water.

Best Times to Go

Generally, the Middle Salt River is navigable year round, though the current will be slower when no dam releases are occurring. Because of the need for hydroelectric generation there is almost always adequate water for paddling.



Approaching Saguaro Lake on the Lower Salt River

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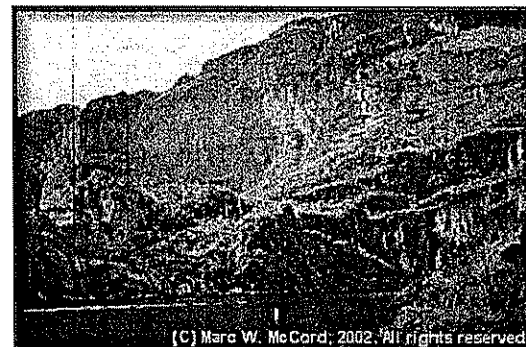
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Looking at the entrance to the Lower Salt River from Saguaro Lake



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Looking across Saguaro Lake from the north

Hazards to Navigation

The only real hazards on any section of the Middle Salt River are headwinds and occasionally powerboats, which are more prevalent on weekends. There are no rapids or waterfalls on the section from Canyon Lake to Saguaro Lake.



River Access Points

The only access points on this section of the Salt River are any of the NPS parks located on Saguaro Lake. Several parks Saguaro Lake offer excellent launch points for trips up and back down the river. There are self-serve pay stations at all the pocket parks on Salt River lakes for day-use parking. There is no access from the top of this section.

Campgrounds and Accommodations

There are no public or private campgrounds located along the Middle Salt River. Natural campgrounds are abundant all along the river, but most of this section requires a permit from the U.S. Forest Service (Tonto National Forest office in Phoenix.) Be sure to inquire about available campsites when applying for permits.

Liveries, Outfitters & Shuttle Services

There are no liveries or outfitters located along the Lower Salt River. Take everything you need, and arrange to run your own shuttles.

Reviewer's Comments

The Middle Salt River is a trip that anybody can enjoy regardless of paddling skills or experience. The flow is usually slow and there are no natural hazards except occasionally strong headwinds. While powerboats do frequent the river, it is plenty wide and avoiding boats and their wake turbulence is generally easy. You will be rocked by wake turbulence, but there is plenty of room for avoiding the worst of it. The scenery along the Lower Salt River is just awesome. Sometimes, it is hard to realize that you are paddling a boat through the heart of the Sonoran Desert. Be sure to take a camera and plenty of film or digital media, because the topography is simply spectacular. It is easy to see why locals call this place the "Mini Grand Canyon", because you are definitely paddling through a mountain canyon and it is definitely grand (though not as much so as its cousin to the north.)

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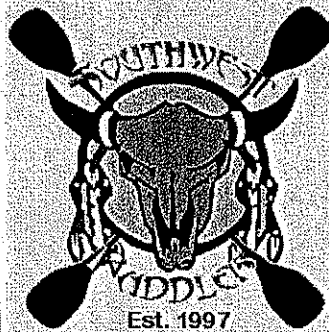
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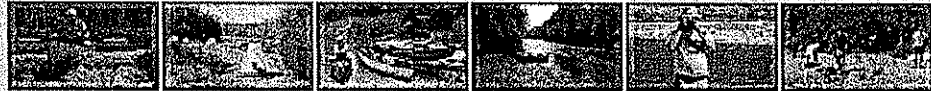
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Salt River

Report by Marc W. McCord
with significant contributions by [Helen Howard](#)

Stewart Mountain Dam to Granite Reef Dam ~ 14 Miles

General Description

The Lower Salt River begins immediately below Stewart Mountain Dam and continues down to Tempe Town Lake. Below Granite Reef Dam the river is usually not navigable, and may in fact be dry. Tempe Town Lake is supplied with water from a diversion channel.

The section from Stewart Mountain Dam on Saguaro Lake down to Granite Reef Dam in Maricopa County is a run of about 12.5 miles through mostly flat Sonoran Desert. The mountains are gone and the presence of anything except sand, dirt, rocks and small, crawling creatures is almost non-existent. The area begins to take on a look of civilization, though it still starts away from settled areas. There is an abundance of water for paddling almost all the time. The current is gentle on this flatwater section of river.

Along the path of the Lower Salt River you will see Saguaro cactus, many birds of prey and occasionally a few small animals. The area is home to nesting bald eagles, ospreys, herons and egrets. There are larger animals that live here, but they are seldom seen. These may include coyotes, foxes and mountain lions, as well as herds of horses from the Fort McDowell Reservation. There are also several species of poisonous snakes, rattlesnakes being the most prevalent, but they are also a rare sight. Camping is minimal, if at all, along this very short section of the Lower Salt River. Most adjoining land is privately owned or part of the Fort McDowell Indian Reservation. Do not camp along this section without first obtaining permission.

SH 82, the road leading from Phoenix to Saguaro Lake, is a hard-surface, four-lane concrete road running through the Fort McDowell Indian Reservation on its way north. The drive from Phoenix takes about 30-40 minutes, depending

Technical Data

Class Rating	I to II
Length	14 miles
Minimum Flow	300 cfs
Optimum Flow	cfs
Maximum Flow	cfs
First Put-in	Dam access road off Bush Hwy.
Lat. / Long.	33.5667 / -111.5350037
Last Take-out	Granite Reef Dam
Lat. / Long.	33.5161018 / -111.6905975
Elevation	1,400 feet msl
Gradient	fpm
USGS Gauge	Web:
Boats	Canoes, Kayaks, Rafts
Season	Year-round, weather permitting
Permits	Access (parking) fees are required at all times.



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upon traffic conditions in Phoenix. Saguaro Lake is the closest and easiest of the mountain lakes to access from the Phoenix area.

Location

Located in Maricopa County, the section from Stewart Mountain dam on Saguaro Lake to Granite Reef Dam is in the Mazatzal Mountains of Tonto National Forest. Nearby cities include Phoenix, Scottsdale, Tempe, Mesa and the rest of the Phoenix metro area to the southwest. The road to the put-in (from Phoenix) passes through Apache Junction and Tortilla Flat. US Highway 89 runs north-to-south just a few miles to the west, and IH 10 enters Phoenix from the south before turning west, also just a few miles away.

Distance from Major Cities

Phoenix 30 miles; Tucson 140 miles; Flagstaff 170 miles; Salt Lake City 690 miles; Albuquerque 480 miles; Denver 830 miles; Dallas 1,050 miles; Austin 1,040 miles; San Antonio 1,060 miles; Houston 1,220 miles; Oklahoma City 1,040 miles (all distances are approximate and depend upon starting point, destination point on the river and route taken.)

Water Quality and Flow

The Lower Salt River flows clean and clear from its dam release source waters. There is very little to cause pollution, contamination or litter, so the water quality is usually very high during periods of sustainable flow, though it may have a slightly stagnant odor that is typical of impounded bodies of water whenever flows are low.

Best Times to Go

Generally, the Lower Salt River is navigable year round, though the current will be slower when no dam releases are occurring. Because of the need for hydroelectric generation there is almost always adequate water for paddling. March 16 through October 14 is limited to day use only, and camping along the river is not allowed. Between October 15 and March 15, camping is allowed in designated areas (fees will apply.)

Hazards to Navigation

The only real hazard on this section of the Lower Salt River is seasonally strong headwinds. There are no major rapids and no waterfalls on this Class I to II section from Saguaro Lake to Granite Reef Dam, where the Salt River terminates into the desert floor. NOTE: Due to much higher than normal rainfall in 2005, area lakes are far above normal and dam releases are much greater than usual. Be sure to check gauges and expect higher flows on this reach of the Salt River that is normal.

River Access Points



Put in just below Stewart Mountain Dam near the end of the dam access road off Bush Highway at Water Users Park (USFS) on river right at 0.0 miles; Blue Point Bridge Picnic Area off Bush Highway (access from 3 parking lots) at about 3.0 miles; Goldfield recreation Site on river left at about 7.0 miles; Jeep Trail near Coon Bluff Forest Camp on river left at about 8.5 miles; Phon D. Sutton Recreation Area near Verde River confluence on river left at about 9.5 miles; Take out at Granite Reef Dam on river left at about 12.5 miles. This section can be run from the top down. Parking is available at all access points for \$4.00 per vehicle per day. Parking fees can be paid in cash or by credit card at the electronic pay stations located at each parking lot.

Campgrounds and Accommodations

There are no public or private campgrounds located along this section of the Lower Salt River. The area is not ideally suited for camping, and is better accessed as a day trip.

Liveries, Outfitters & Shuttle Services

There are at least two known liveries or outfitters located along the Lower Salt River. Take everything you need, and arrange to run your own shuttles if not contracting from one of them.

Reviewer's Comments

The Lower Salt River is a trip that anybody can enjoy regardless of paddling skills or experience. The flow is usually slow and there are no natural hazards except occasionally strong headwinds. The scenery along the Lower Salt River is just awesome. Sometimes, it is hard to realize that you are paddling a boat through the heart of the Sonoran Desert. Be sure to take a camera and plenty of film or digital media, because the topography is simply spectacular. This reach of the Salt River flows through the southern edge of Tonto national Forest and the Salt River Indian Reservation near Fort McDowell. It is just a few miles north of the Greater Phoenix area and is easily accessible as a day trip for paddlers in canoes, kayaks and rafts.

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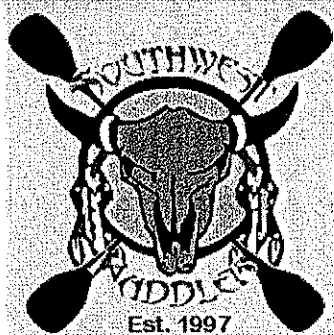
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SOUTHWEST PADDLERS

Outdoor Recreation Guide for
Texas, Oklahoma, Arkansas, Missouri, New Mexico, Arizona, Colorado and Utah



Canoes, Kayaks & Rafts

Gear

River Outfitters

Campgrounds

Apparel

Instruction

Big Bonito River

Report by Marc W. McCord

~ Miles

Information for this river coming soon!

General Description

Location

Distance from Major Cities

Phoenix miles; Tucson miles; Flagstaff miles; Salt Lake City miles; Albuquerque miles; Denver miles; Salt Lake City miles; Dallas miles; Austin miles; San Antonio miles; Houston miles; Oklahoma City miles; Little Rock miles; Kansas City miles (all distances are approximate and depend upon starting point, destination point on the river and route taken.)

Water Quality and Flow

Best Times to Go

Hazards to Navigation

River Access Points

Campgrounds and Accommodations

Tyeries, Outfitters & Shuttle Services

Technical Data

Class Rating	I
Length	22 miles
Minimum Flow	cfs
Optimum Flow	cfs
Maximum Flow	cfs
First Put-in	any USFS park on Saguaro Lake
Lat. / Long.	
Last Take-out	Tempe Town Lake
Lat. / Long.	
Elevation	msl
Gradient	fpm
USGS Gauge	Web:
Boats	Canoes, Kayaks, Rafts
Season	Year-round, weather permitting
Permits	Access (parking) fees are required at all times.



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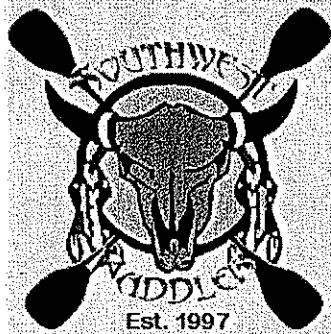
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Black River

Report by Marc W. McCord

Big Lake to the Salt River Confluence ~ 90 Miles

General Description

The Black River flows east out of Big Lake in the Apache Sitgreaves National Forest of Greenlee County, then turns south near Alpine, then turns southwest before flowing into Graham County. Between Maverick Mountain and Willow Mountain the river turns northwest, flowing past the confluence of the Big Bonita River before reaching its confluence with the Upper Salt River just southwest of Fort Apache. Altogether, the Black River flows about 90 miles. Beginning just west of the Arizona-New Mexico state line, its headwaters are very near those of the Blue, White, Big Bonita and Little Colorado Rivers and some of their tributary streams.

Known mostly for its excellent smallmouth bass, catfish and rainbow, native, brook and brown trout fishing, the Black River also offers very challenging Class II to IV whitewater with some Class V rapids and drops in high-water conditions during a short season of a couple of months in Spring during years when a significant winter snowpack in the surrounding mountains occurs. The river flows through the San Carlos Apache Reservation. This river is NOT recommended for inexperienced whitewater paddlers due to its potential difficulty and very remote location. Just getting to the Black River can be more difficult than paddling it, though anglers can gain access at numerous points along its reach. It is necessary to obtain permits for paddling or fishing from the San Carlos Apache Nation, and camping is restricted to specified areas, so be sure to inquire as to allowable campsites along the river before beginning a trip.

The upper river begins in mountain vegetation of trees and shrubs, then descends toward the Salt River confluence through desert scrub brush, chaparral and typical prairie vegetation. Along the way you may be treated to sightings of beavers, bears, turkey, elk and various species of birds. The surrounding area is remote and undeveloped, though there

Technical Data

Class Rating	I
Length	90 miles
Minimum Flow	cfs
Optimum Flow	cfs
Maximum Flow	cfs
First Put-in	
Lat. / Long.	
Last Take-out	
Lat. / Long.	
Elevation	7,900 to 4,400 ft. msl
Gradient	39 fpm (average)
USGS Gauge	Web:
Boats	Canoes, Kayaks, Rafts
Season	March thru July
Permits	Yes. See "Permit Requirements" at left



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are some camping areas and access points strategically located along the river off forest roads, state highways and US highways. The river will freeze in winter, and road conditions will be treacherous, so know the conditions before you go.

Location

Situated in east central Arizona in Greelee, Graham and Gila Counties, the Black River flows through Apache Sitgreaves National Forest and the San Carlos Apache Reservation near the towns of Eagar, Alpine and Fort Apache. The nearest significant town is Safford a few miles to the south. The headwaters are just a few miles west of the New Mexico state line. Flagstaff is about 180 miles to the northwest. Phoenix and Tucson are each about 225 miles away to the west and southwest, respectively.

Distance from Major Cities

Phoenix 225 miles; Tucson 225 miles; Flagstaff 180 miles; Salt Lake City 702 miles; Albuquerque 260 miles; Denver 697 miles; Dallas 1,017 miles; Austin 1,036 miles; San Antonio 1,017 miles; Houston 1,222 miles; Oklahoma City 1,125 miles; Little Rock 1,469 miles; Kansas City 1,470 miles (all distances are approximate and depend upon starting point, destination point on the river and route taken.)

Water Quality and Flow

Water quality is usually very good to excellent, flowing clean, clear and cold from mountain snowmelt in an area of very limited development. Normal flows are low, and will be too low for boating except during the snowmelt runoff season or after a significant rainfall within the drainage basin. Fishing can be enjoyed for a much longer season in spring and early summer months.

Best Times to Go

Optimum canoeing, kayaking and rafting can be usually be enjoyed in March and April providing there is sufficient winter snowpack in the surrounding mountains and/or winter rains to feed the river. May through July is usually the best time for fishing, especially for bass and trout. The East Fork tributary is stocked with trout on a weekly basis in the summer, and some of that release finds its way into the Black River, as well. Avoid winter trips to this stream - it will probably be frozen and road conditions are hazardous with precipitation.

Permit Requirements

The Black River forms the boundary between the San Carlos Apache and the White Mountain Apache Nations. Permits from the appropriate nation are necessary for activities along the Black River involving using the lands of either reservation. These can be obtained from any of the San Carlos or Fort Apache Game and Fish vendors in the area. Sportsmen interested in applying for one of the trophy elk tags or wanting information about the other hunting and



fishing opportunities available and permit requirements on the San Carlos Apache Reservation should contact the Wildlife & Recreation Department at 1-928-475-2343 or 1-888-475-2344. The department's fax number is 1-928-475-2701, and their address is P.O. Box 97, San Carlos, Arizona 85550. Visitors wanting additional information about the other recreational opportunities offered by the San Carlos Apache Tribe can call the Administration Offices at (928) 475-2361. Further information on permit fees, etc. can be obtained by calling the numbers above or visiting the web site of the San Carlos Apache Nation at <http://www.sancarlosapache.com/>.

To contact the White Mountain Apache Nation for information and permits regarding the Black River and adjacent lands write to The Outdoor and Recreation Division at 100 West Fatco Road, P.O. Box 220, Whiteriver, Arizona 85941, or Phone: 1-928-338-4385 / Fax: 1-928-338-1712.

Hazards to Navigation

The Black River has numerous boulder garden rapids and occasional outcroppings that are rated in the Class II to IV category, but some of the larger rapids can escalate to Class V in high-water conditions. The river should generally be considered to be a Class III to V stream due to the remoteness and difficulty of getting outside assistance in an emergency situation. Snowmelt waters will be very cold and rapids will soak paddlers, so dressing for the conditions is recommended. Strong intermediate whitewater boating skills, expedition paddling, Swiftwater Rescue and Wilderness First Aid training are highly recommended for boating the Black River and its tributaries.

River Access Points

Campgrounds and Accommodations

Liveries, Outfitters & Shuttle Services

There are no known liveries, outfitters or shuttle services operating along or near the Black River. Plan on bringing everything you need and running your own shuttles. Allow adequate time for setting up shuttles due to the long driving distances and sometimes difficult road conditions.

Reviewer's Comments

The Black River is a seldom runnable, exciting, and very scenic whitewater river that is suitable for canoes, kayaks and rafts paddled by seasoned whitewater boaters. The rugged, remote location of the river demands that paddlers be self-sufficient and capable of self-rescue in an emergency situation. Fishermen love this stream because it is secluded, clean and clear, loaded with bass, trout and catfish, and only about four to five hours from Phoenix, Tucson or Flagstaff. Late spring through mid-summer are the best times to visit the Black River, and winters are to be avoided because of dangerous road conditions.

The mountains and trees of the Apache Sitgreaves National Forest offers spectacular natural beauty, and the river flows

through this majestic landscape near the New Mexico state line until it enters the desert of the San Carlos Apache Nation Reservation in Graham and Gila Counties as it approaches its Salt River confluence a few miles southwest of fabled Fort Apache. The water will be cold and the rapids will insure a wet ride, so be prepared. With no commercial services available along the river paddlers and campers will need to be thoroughly prepared for whatever conditions they encounter. Be sure to check current conditions before making a trip to the Black River, and be certain that you carry a camera - packed in a waterproof and impact-resistant case. The Black River, especially in high-water conditions, can be an E-ticket ride!

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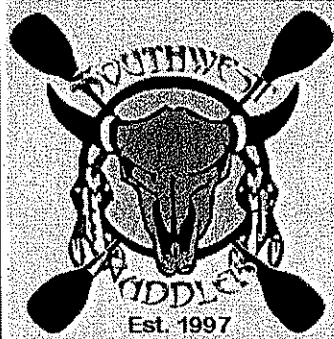
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Canyon Creek

Report by Marc W. McCord

~ Miles

Information for this river coming soon!

General Description

Location

Distance from Major Cities

Phoenix miles; Tucson miles; Flagstaff miles; Salt Lake City miles; Albuquerque miles; Denver miles; Salt Lake City miles; Dallas miles; Austin miles; San Antonio miles; Houston miles; Oklahoma City miles; Little Rock miles; Kansas City miles (all distances are approximate and depend upon starting point, destination point on the river and route taken.)

Water Quality and Flow

Best Times to Go

Hazards to Navigation

River Access Points

Campgrounds and Accommodations

Tyeries, Outfitters & Shuttle Services

Technical Data	
Class Rating	I
Length	22 miles
Minimum Flow	cfs
Optimum Flow:	cfs
Maximum Flow:	cfs
First Put-in	any USFS park on Saguaro Lake
Lat. / Long.	
Last Take-out	Tempe Town Lake
Lat. / Long.	
Elevation	msl
Gradient	fpm
USGS Gauge	Web:
Boats	Canoes, Kayaks, Rafts
Season	Year-round, weather permitting
Permits	Access (parking) fees are required at all times.



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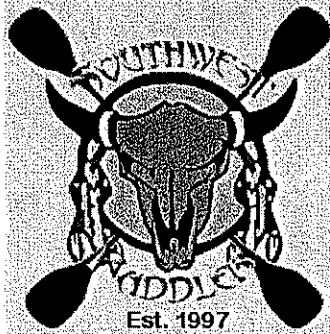
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Tonto Creek

Report by Marc W. McCord

SH 260 to Roosevelt Lake ~ 50 Miles

General Description

Tonto Creek forms as a runoff stream in the high elevations of the Sierra Ancha Mountains of Tonto National Forest near SH 260, then flows south by southwest to Roosevelt Lake, running parallel and in close proximity to SH 188 from southeast of Payson to the lake. Normally, the creek does not flow, but during the fall monsoons, or after a significant rainfall in the surrounding mountains, this dusty, rocky creek can quickly transform into a raging torrent of Class IV to V whitewater rapids and drops where boaters have died in recent years. Below the SH 188 turn-off from SH 87 is Rye Creek, which feeds Tonto Creek just above a 2-mile box canyon of considerable difficulty, where paddlers sometimes encounter barbed wire fences strung across the creek to contain cows. This section is particularly dangerous because of boulder garden rapids, moderate drops of 8-10 feet, keeper holes, dead-fall strainers, a constricted channel, sticky pourovers, few places for good portages and difficult access, just to name a few reasons why most paddlers would avoid this place like they would the plague.

A couple of USFS campgrounds are located between Tonto Creek and SH 260 just east of Payson, and just below the first access point where SH 260 crosses the creek about 2 hours northeast of Phoenix. To be sure, this is a kayaker-only stream that is not well-suited for canoes and rafts due to difficult access and the tight, twisting channel that demands quick and effective boat control at all times. With adequate water Tonto Creek can be paddled about 50 miles from its headwaters to Roosevelt Lake, but not in a single day unless it is so high that you should not be there anyway. It falls about as quickly as it rises, and getting out on foot would be a formidable task. Watch for rattlesnakes and copperheads in the rocks along the creek. Watch for natural and man-made hazards in the creek. Watch for a psychiatrist if you are thinking about running Tonto Creek in high water.

Technical Data

Class Rating	II to IV (V)
Length	~ 50 miles
Minimum Flow:	200 cfs
Optimum Flow:	300-1,000 cfs
Maximum Flow	1,750 cfs
First Put-in	SH 260 Crossing
Lat. / Long.	
Last Take-out	USFS Parks on Roosevelt Lake
Lat. / Long.	
Elevation	msl
Gradient	fpm
USGS Gauge	Web:
Boats	Kayaks only
Season	
Permits	

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Location

In the Tonto National Forest of Gila and Maricopa Counties of central Arizona. Phoenix is about 2 hours to the southwest of the headwaters, and Flagstaff is about 3 hours to the northwest. Payson, the near town, is about 20 miles to the west.

Distance from Major Cities

Phoenix 95 miles; Tucson 212 miles; Flagstaff 100 miles; Salt Lake City 622 miles; Albuquerque 553 miles; Denver 755 miles; Dallas 1,097 miles; Austin 1,116 miles; San Antonio 1,097 miles; Houston 1,302 miles; Oklahoma City 969 miles; Little Rock 1,308 miles; Kansas City 1,294 miles (all distances are approximate and depend upon starting point, destination point on the river and route taken.)

Water Quality and Flow

Water quality, when it flows, is generally good to very good, though muddy and gritty due to the large volume of sand being carried along. Flow is traditionally non-existent except during periods of high runoff in the fall monsoon season or after a significant local rain even near its drainage basin in the Sierra Ancha Mountains.

Best Times to Go

The best time to run Tonto Creek is right after it peaks following a heavy rainfall in its drainage basin. The creek drops about as quickly as it rises, so there is a short window of opportunity unless in the midst of a prolonged period of rainfall.

Hazards to Navigation

For the most part, everything about Tonto Creek is a hazard to boats and boaters. It begins rather tamely on modest Class I to II rapids, then gets progressively more technical and difficult as it approaches the box canyon a few miles above Roosevelt Lake. Hazards may include, but not be limited to, barbed wire fences strung across the creek, dead-fall strainers in the channel, live tree strainers overhanging the creek along its banks, boulder garden rapids dropping into keeper holes, ample opportunities for pinning and wrapping, narrow slot drops of 8-10 feet, or more, rattlesnakes and copperheads hiding in the rocks alongside the creek, and very difficult access for emergency personnel in the event of an accident.

River Access Points

SH 260 crossing just east of Payson; Rye Creek confluence just east of the SH 188/SH 87 intersection; Any USFS park on the banks of Roosevelt Lake

Campgrounds and Accommodations

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Canoe Club
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Christopher Creek (USFS) and Ponderosa (USFS) Campgrounds, both primitive forest campsites, are located between Tonto Creek and SH 260 just east of Payson. There are no other campgrounds located along or near Tonto Creek.

Liveries, Outfitters & Shuttle Services

There are no liveries or outfitters located along Tonto Creek. Take everything you need, and arrange to run your own shuttles.

Reviewer's Comments

Tonto Creek is one of those playgrounds for hairboat kayakers only, and as such, will never be a major paddling destination, as if it usually had a navigable flow anyway. This is a very seasonal stream where major rain events are necessary to raise it to boatable levels, but when it flows the creek becomes a challenging and potentially dangerous place where those of at least strong advanced level whitewater kayaking abilities can ply their skills in a very remote area of Tonto National Forest, where few others will ever come. Most boaters will forego the upper 30+ miles, putting in off SH 188 and SH 87 northeast of Phoenix, along Rye Creek, which then feeds into Tonto Creek just above the box canyon where the most technical part of the creek will be found. Be sure to go with a group of other paddlers, all of whom are experienced hairboat paddlers, most of whom are swiftwater rescue trained, and at least one of whom has substantial First Aid training.

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