

Pikes Peak River Runners

Hunker Down Bow Monkeys Sept 1998



By Christina King

Photo Credits: Christina King & Keith Fuqua

Trip Participants: Pete & Christina King, Dick Juetten, JJ (Dick's son?), Jon Sands (permit holder) & many of his friends, Jeff Hodge, Researcher Jeff, Keith Fuqua, Armando, and several others I forgot to write down in my journal.

We left Woodland Park on my birthday (Sept 6) and celebrated our good fortune of being invited on another Grand Canyon river trip. We arrived in Flagstaff 15 minutes before the KC Chiefs football game began. Perfect timing as far as Pete was concerned. For once we did not have any trailer or weather problems on the trip down. (I-25 to I 40 into Flagstaff) By the way, KC won.



We were invited on this 16-day trip by an Arizona friend, Dick Juetten. Dick was asked to be the trip leader by the permit holder in North Carolina. Jon Sands was the permit-holder who had been down the Grand Canyon 9 years earlier as a passenger. Nine long years had passed, and Jon patiently waited his turn. Jon did not have a boat or gear but wanted to go again and asked Dick to coordinate the trip for

him. The entire trip was coordinated via e-mail and that was no easy feat since we were a group of sixteen people plus one researcher. We were spread out over North Carolina, Colorado, and Arizona. I had heard about a "Quality of Experience" research study being funded by the Park Service and carried out by Virginia Tech and asked Dick to see if the group was interested in having a researcher join our group. The Park Service waived our \$200 permit fee, and we got our experiences and opinions documented for 16 days. Jeff, our researcher, was an excellent addition to our trip and we felt lucky to have gotten the opportunity to participate in this study. We hope the Park Service puts our suggestions to good use.

Pete and I got to Flagstaff one day early to bring the empty coolers and dry boxes to PRO, our shuttler and food provider. PRO bought and packed all our food. They did a fair job. When we dropped the boxes off at PRO, we saw our FREE beer. Jon is in the NASCAR business and his sponsor is Coors. Coors had donated 60 cases of FREE beer to our group. We gave 2 cases away but still had to load 58 cases of beer (1392 cans) at Lee's Ferry! Quite a challenge but we did it. All but 12 cans were consumed by Day 16, but I describe that later in this story.

The entire group met at the Walmart parking lot in Flagstaff the next day and we loaded our gear into PRO's 2-ton truck. We looked like we were having a rafting yard sale. Off we went to Lee's ferry in a 16-passenger van and truck. We arrived at Lee's Ferry at 400 PM and started rigging immediately. Our group consists of 9 boats and boatmen plus 7 passengers to make a total of 16 people. There are 14 men and two women. Pete and I end up hauling gear only and the passengers find homes on the other boats. The Marble Canyon van picks us up around 700 PM to eat at their restaurant and they drive us down to the river again after dinner. We all settle down on the boats or in tents and excitedly wait for the morning.



Day 1 (Sept 9) Camp: House Rock

We woke up to heavy dew, cloudy skies, and cool temperatures. Everything was wet from condensation. Quite different from our usual August weather. The ranger checked out our equipment and skipped the orientation (very unusual). Off we launched. The Paria River at mile 1 was muddy from rain and we never had clear water again for the rest of the trip. Badger Creek rapid was the first significant rapid and everyone had great runs.

We scouted House Rock rapid but the water levels (approx. 20,000 cfs) made it a straightforward run on the right. We camped below the rapid on the right. The eddy was quite choppy, and the boats rocked and rolled all evening.



Day 2 Camp: Silver Grotto

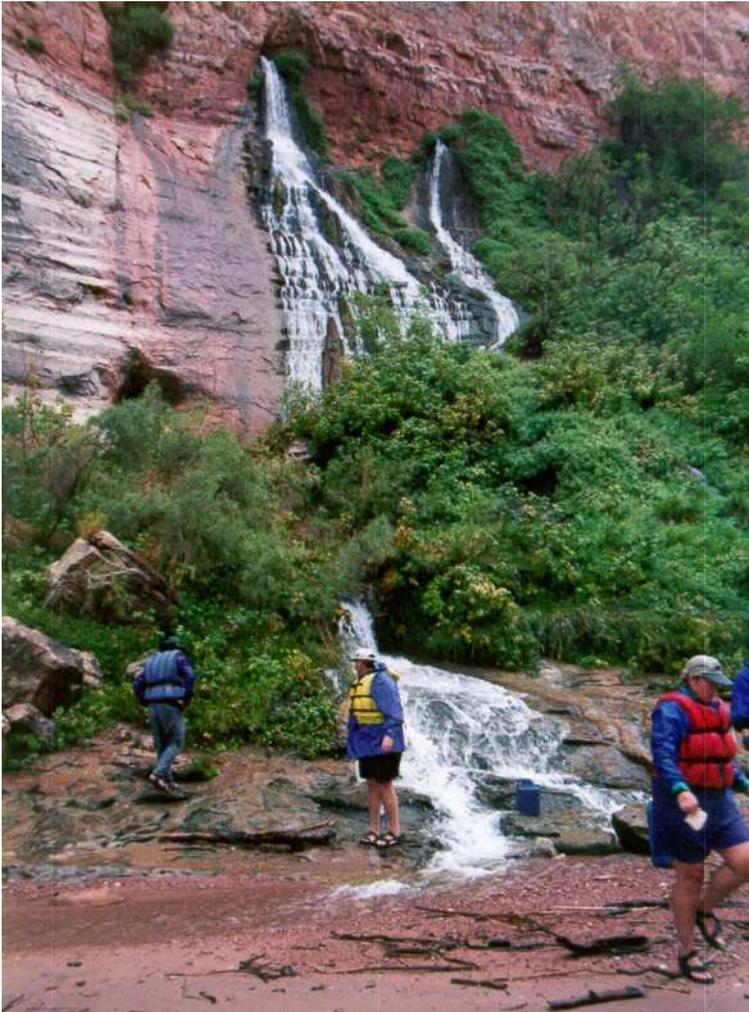
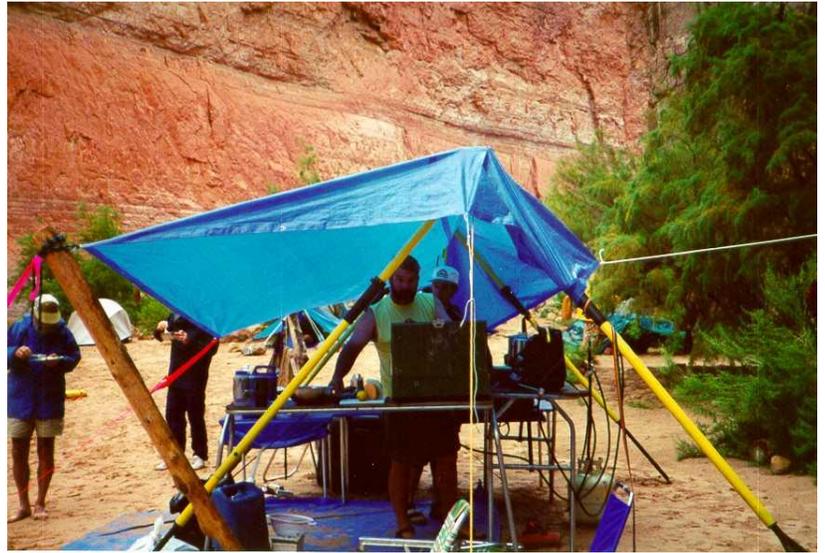
We paid the price for camping at a shallow beach. I got up to check the boats at 1230 PM and all was well. I got up again at 300 AM and the boats were high and dry. A very quick drop. The boats were beached far from water in the morning. No problem. We had 16 people, so we just hauled them down to the water in the morning. We did not have that problem again. We learned our lesson. Today we ran a series of rapids called

the Roaring 20's. This section of the river forms rapids that run together in a series of pool and drop sequences. Lots of fun. Only saw one other group today and they planned to camp at South Canyon. We decided to stop early and camp at Silver Grotto.

The weather had been cold and windy all day. The sun peaked out for about 2 hours this afternoon and we enjoyed a relaxing afternoon on the Silver Grotto beach but as soon as dinner was started, all heck broke loose, and the rain began again. It pelted down and many of us that were not assigned to cook that night hunkered down in our tents. The rain never quit. It rained all night.

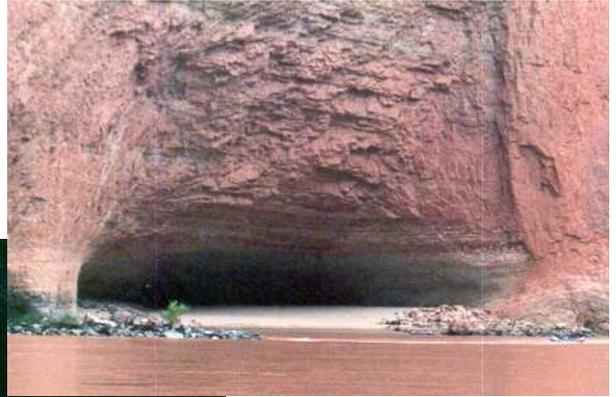
Day 3 Camp: Saddle Canyon

The rain continues to pour down in the morning. We huddled under the kitchen tarp and warm up with coffee and hot chocolate.



We stop at Vasey's Paradise to pump water and fill up our water jugs. We floated past South Canyon because of the rain. Everyone was wearing everything they own. I am wearing fleece, wetsuit, and rain gear. This is very unusual for the Grand Canyon, but it is mid-September.

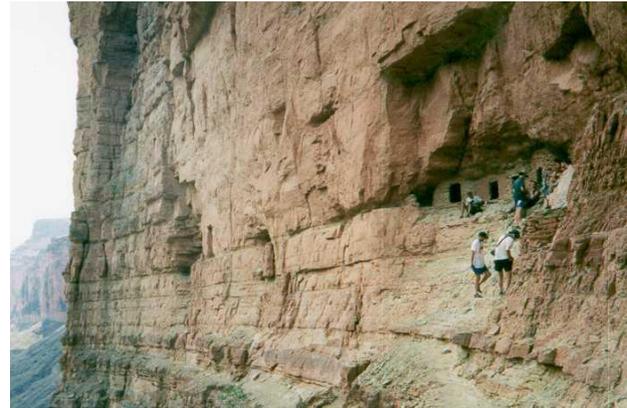
Just below Vasey's is Redwall Cavern and spend at least 3 hours inside out of the rain. The overhang at Redwall is so large that we can stay dry but do not really get warm. A River Ranger Park Service research group pulls in to get out of the rain also and we spend the time visiting.

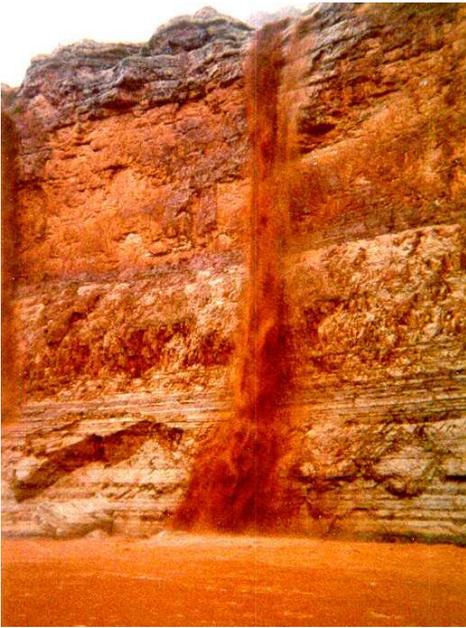


The Park Service is doing a bat survey and spends the nights catching and tagging bats. We finally decide to leave our shelter and go to camp at Saddle Canyon. It ends up being a long afternoon floating in the rain and cold.

Day 4 Camp: Lava Canyon (Chuar) rapid

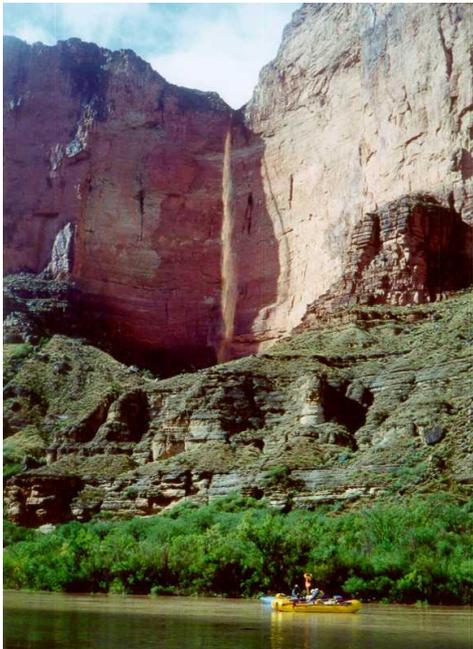
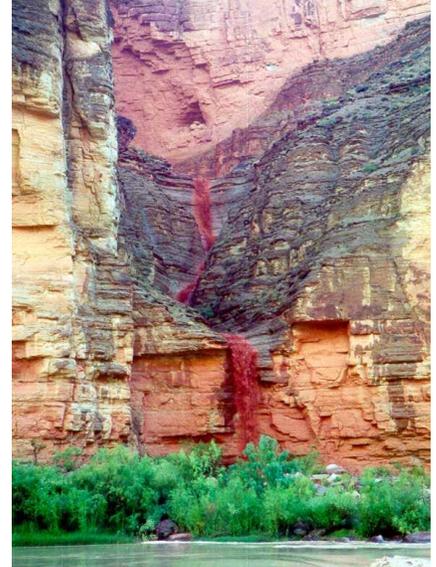
We floated down to Nankoweep in the rain again. It stopped briefly while we hiked up to the Anasazi granaries. But the clouds were threatening and the weather cold.





Lots of waterfalls. The storms have formed spectacular waterfalls at every turn. The mist and fog from the cold weather make our vision poor.

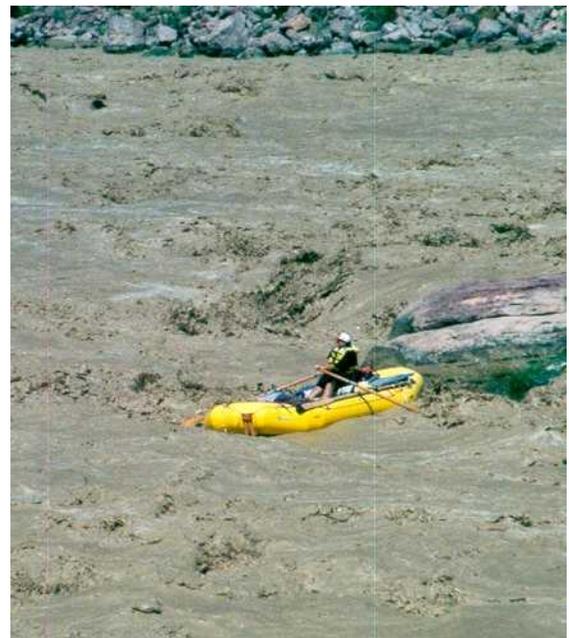
I can hardly see the boat in front of me. Everything is fogged up. We stopped at the Little Colorado (LC) and it was muddy, and weather was poor. We did not spend much time at LC. Waved to a backcountry ranger hiking on the other side of the LC. Camped at Lava Canyon rapid.



Day 5 Camp: Grapevine

The weather has finally improved. The skies are clearing and temperatures warmer. Thank goodness. The backcountry ranger caught up with us in the morning and explained his patrolling routine to us.

Lots of rapids today as we begin the Inner Gorge. (Tanner, Unkar, Nevill's, Hance, and Sockdolager) We stopped at Unkar to check out the Anasazi ruins and pottery chards. Lots of Anasazi artifacts to see.



We scouted Hance to find our drops or bearings in the rapid and everyone did great. I was apprehensive of Sockdolager rapid because the last time we were here I watched



Pete flip in the hole. Sockdolager was not difficult at this level. The hole was more of a wave and we all sneaked it. The river has been blood red with lots of debris. Sediment from the side canyons, driftwood and trash from the Little Colorado river has made the river very dark. We camp just above Grapevine rapid because we have a passenger exchange at Phantom Ranch tomorrow.

Day 6 Camp: Schist (right)

We run Zoroaster rapid and float into Phantom Ranch. Our 4 new passengers have arrived and 5 hike out as planned. We end up gaining another woman, our percentage is increasing. We hike up to the ranch to collect and send mail in the boatmen's mule mailbag. Jeff got a care package full of goodies from home. We also got a message from a club member (Dave Sample) on a trip 4 days ahead of us. He comments that they had to run the Inner Gorge with all the rain. Must have been cold!



The first rapids after Phantom are Horn Creek, Granite, and Hermit. We scout Horn Creek, and it looks tough. Pete and I run right to left using a timing route. It appears that everyone else had other plans, but all made it down okay. It did look like JJ's little 12-foot non-self-bailer got in a little bit over its head, but all was well.

Granite was a right side run through the big waves. I hit the last and biggest wave right as it was cresting, and it swept me off my boat. I grabbed the netting on the way out and scampered back in the boat by the time I cleared the tail waves of the rapid. Quite a surprise but no disasters. Hermit was huge as always and I ran down the gut of the rapid. I pushed for all I was worth and punched through. What a ride! I believe that it is the biggest wave in the Grand. We stop at a horrible camp (Schist-right) above Crystal.



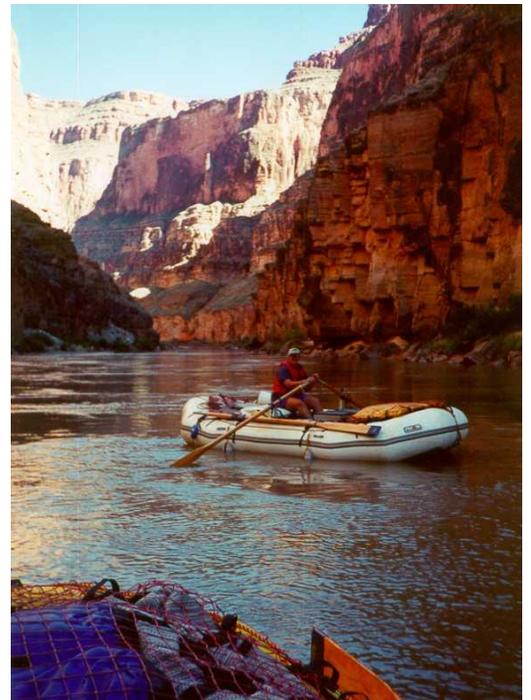


The camp is small and crowded with no beach. All I can think about is Crystal rapid coming up tomorrow morning. Armando, a new passenger, asked if all the days were going to be like today. We said no, but the term **Hunker Down Bow Monkey** has now become an everyday phrase within our group. All the boatmen are searching for weight to put up front in the bow of their boats.

Day 7 Camp: Bass

We awake to the same miserable camp conditions and get the heck out of camp. All we can think about is getting through Crystal.

We float down to the scout and look at the rapid. Everyone runs right of the hole and all is well. We celebrate and enjoy the rest of the "Gem" named rapids. We had one of the best days on the river from a "purely fun" rapids perspective. We stop at Bass for lunch and stay for camp. Short day.



Day 8 Camp: 119.5 on river left.

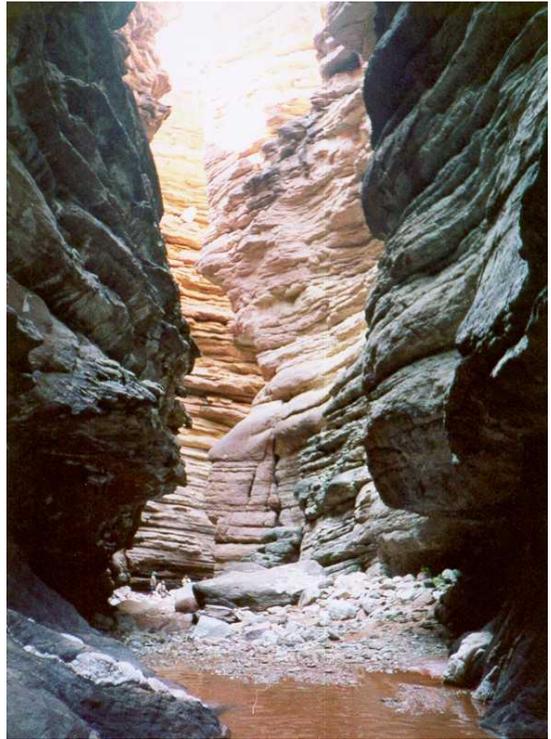
Floated down to Shinumo Creek and hiked up to the falls in the morning. We ate lunch and hiked at Elves Chasm and spent the afternoon enjoying the falls.



Camped at a big sand beach above Blacktail Canyon on the left. Great day.

Day 9 Camp: Racetrack

Stopped at Blacktail Canyon and hiked up the quiet steep-walled canyon. Incredibly beautiful. Stopped at Fossil canyon and hunted for fossils. Almost everyone found a fossil. Everyone did a great job of avoiding the huge rock at Bedrock rapid. The Stone Creek waterfall at Deubendorff rapid was fun to stand in and get pounded by the falling water. The beach at Stone creek has washed away this summer so it is not a good campsite at this time. We floated to a small campsite called Racetrack to be within close striking distance to the hike up Tapeats Creek tomorrow.



Day 10 Camp: Big Eddy

The group split and some went hiking at Tapeats and the rest of us floated down to Deer Creek falls.

The narrowest part of the canyon is at mile 135 (76 feet in width). We visited Christmas Tree cave, which is a bat cave with a tree shaped stalagmite. The Tapeats group hiked 4 miles up to Thunder River springs.

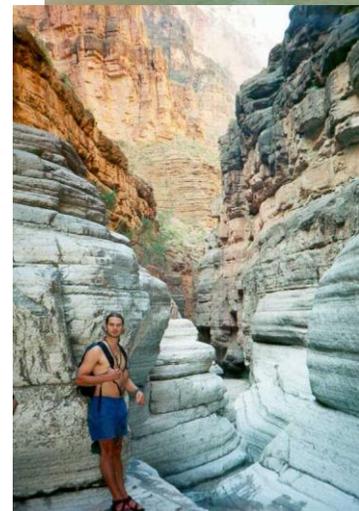
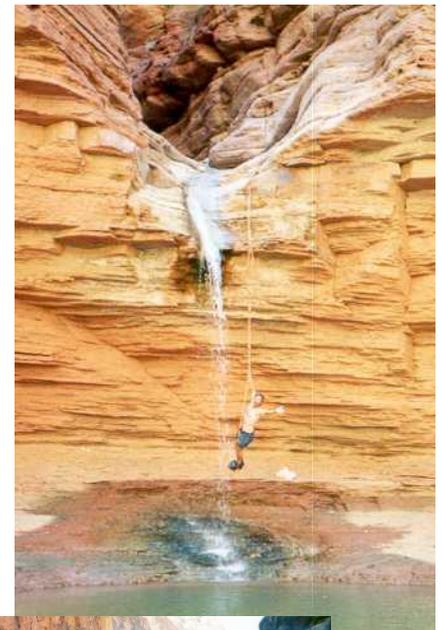
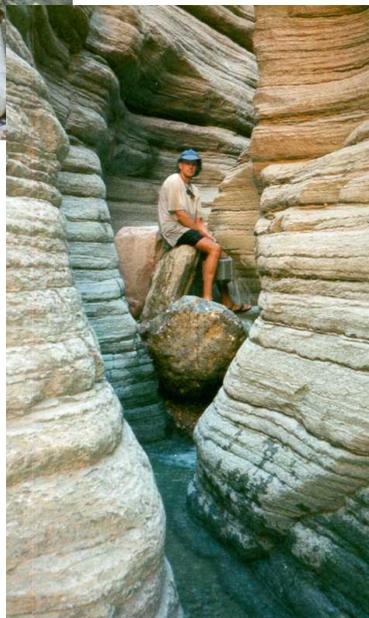
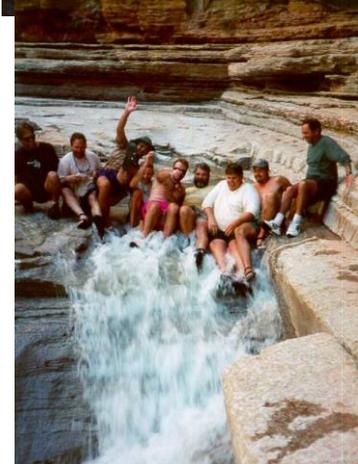




Deer Creek falls was spectacular, and we pumped creek water with the Katadyn water filter and hiked up the creek to the jacuzzi, waterfall spring, and Throne room. The Tapeats hiking group was late pulling into camp because two people had gotten lost, and they waited for them. They pulled in just before dark at Big Eddy camp (mile 137) and we were all reunited with lots of stories to share.

Day 11 Camp: Matkat Hotel

Stopped and played on the rope at Olo Canyon. I found more fossils at Olo. Considered camping but decided to go to Matkatamiba to clamber up the sinuous creek walls. The boys decided to make a "butt dam" at Matkat. We enjoyed Matkat. canyon's unique rock walls. Floated to Matkat Hotel camp (small).

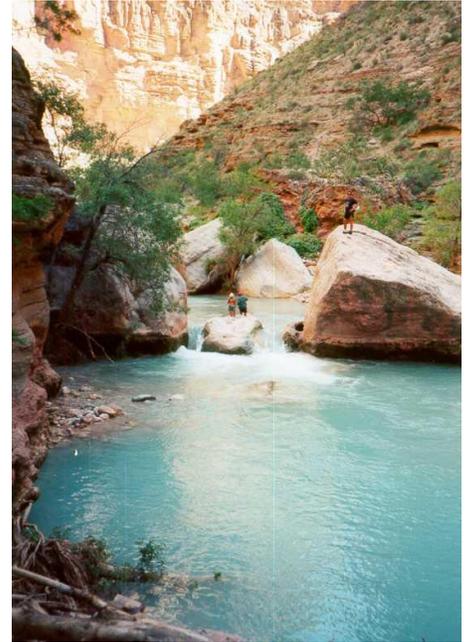


Day 12 Camp: Tuckup

Ran Upset rapid with no problems today. Pulled into the mouth of Havasu Creek, tied the boats up and everyone hiked up the creek to find quiet places. Very peaceful setting. Tuckup canyon was another nice canyon but the eddy was very turbulent. Talked about Lava too much before going to bed. Rattlesnakes were all around camp so not much hiking was done. Jeff set up his tent and went to bed and discovered a rattlesnake curled up on his sleeping bag inside his tent. He wrestled it out with tent pole but never did have a restful night after that incident. Sweet Dreams.

Day 13 Camp: Mile 181? not sure

The mood today is very somber. Everyone is thinking and stressing about Lava Falls rapid. As we hiked up National Canyon in the morning, Jon dubbed it the *Death March*. National Canyon is like Matkat. but starts out open and narrows instead of the other way around.



Today is Lava day. We pushed downriver with Dick setting a quick pace. All attention is on Lava and not on much else. I pass Vulcan's Anvil and touch it for good luck. We scout on the left (and plan left rungs) and the first group runs the rapid. Everyone finds the small left tongue and has good runs. I am in the second group with Keith right in front of me. Yikes! I notice that Keith is too far right and drops into the ledge hole and flips. As I drop in, I still see Keith's boat in the ledge hole getting pounded. Pete is behind me and says that the boat was still in the hole when he went by. I picked up Keith at the end of the rapid and we chase the boat. The rest of our group came through fine. After wrestling Keith's boat to shore we discover a few things missing. His frame is held fast by only one strap. All the other straps are torn. His cooler was emptied, and oars are gone, except for the oar Keith rescued from the river. The frame is bent, and the thole pin stands are ripped but usable. The welds had partially torn. A little blood from small cuts but otherwise Keith and Armando are okay. I was shocked at the destructiveness of the Lava Falls ledge hole. Nothing critical is lost. We camp as soon as possible to regroup. What a day!

Day 14 Camp: below Granite Park on the right Mile 210

Stop to look at the Whitmore pictographs. We had planned a very different schedule but lots of groups were on the river and the campsites were taken. We kept getting pushed downriver. Keith pinned in Mile 209 rapid trying to avoid a big hole. Finally rocked the boat off after about 20 minutes but his frame welds had torn some more. Glad we are near the end of the trip. We rowed about 29 miles today and camp feels good tonight. Cooked and ate dinner in the dark. Tough long day.

Day 15 Camp: Mile 220

Short day because we want to camp just above the takeout at Diamond Creek. Pete and Jeff make an "M" rig (stands for Maravia) out of their boats by strapping them together and run the day's rapids with this rig. We stop at Pumpkin Springs to dip our feet. Three Springs Canyon was another pleasant diversion to pass the time away today. Finally, we hang out in camp under the shade doing absolutely nothing for many hours.



The beer consumption is setting a group record. Our group is vowing not to take any beer out at Diamond. The race is on.

Day 16 (Sept 24) Diamond Creek Takeout Mile 225

We crush 132 empty beer cans in the morning. Not sure if this is a record but a good attempt. Today is rushed in anticipation of the crowd at the takeout. Sure enough the Hualapai are putting on big motor rigs and we are all taking out. We manage to keep our gear together in one pile and PRO arrives right on time with the truck and van.



Delgadillo's is our first stop where we enjoy burgers, shakes, and a 1950's atmosphere. It is a long ride back to Flagstaff and the truck breaks down temporarily. It rejoins us at our vehicle storage area and the trip is over. The final beer count adds up to 12 cans leftover (1380 cans of Coors

consumed in 16 days by 13 people, scary!). That night we celebrate at a Flagstaff brewery (how could the group drink anymore?!). Excellent trip.

Be back next year. Do not forget how to hunker down, bow monkeys.