

FAQ About Summit

1. What river will we be on?

The New River. Its name is actually a misnomer because the river is the fourth-oldest river in the world. The river's course transects every ridge of the Allegheny Mountains. It begins in the mountains of western North Carolina, crosses Virginia, then enters West Virginia at the state's southern tip before heading north, where the Lower Gorge is known for its colossal rapids, up to Class V.

2. Will we be in a National Park?

Yes. New River Gorge National Park and Preserve is next to Summit Bechtel Reserve, and our five days of kayaking and rafting will be in that park. There are 53 miles of the New River running through deep gorges in the park, starting at Bluestone Dam and ending at Hawks Nest Lake.

3. Who is in which crew?

Summit's "New River Experience" combines four eight-person crews into a single crew of 32, plus five river guides. Troop 509 is contributing two of the four crews. We haven't assigned our scouts to separate crews, we are just a total of 16. On the first day at Summit the four crews meet each another, and then jointly elect a crew leader, a chaplain aide and an outdoor ethics guide.

4. When do we kayak, and when do we raft?

We spend the first four days on the water in single-person inflatable kayaks on Class 1-III rapids, and the fifth day in eight-person rafts on Class III-IV rapids.

5. How far do we paddle each day in the kayaks?

About 10-15 miles.

6. Where do we sleep?

The first and last nights are in platform tents at Summit. The other four nights we are on the water and sleep in tents, three nights by the river (at Meadow Creek, Terry Beach & River Run Park campsites) and one night on a mountain top (Stone Cliff campsite), all campsites owned by Summit.

7. What do we eat?

At base camp we eat in a dining hall, and on the water we eat at the campsites. We eat regular food, not dehydrated. The scouts do the cooking, on large propane stoves. Breakfast and dinner are hot, lunch is cold. Drinks are powdered mixes for adding to our water bottle. All the food, cooking gear, tents and personal gear are transported on a gear raft that accompanies us on the water.

8. Can we keep food in our tents?

No, smellables go in designated secure containers at each campsite.

9. What about bathrooms, showers and drinking water?

Each campsite on the water has chemical toilets. Showers (ambient temperature, unheated) are at Summit's base camp on the first and last days, none on the water. Plentiful drinking water is in tanks at the campsites, requiring no filtering or purification.

10. How wet will we get?

We will get wet mostly when entering and exiting our kayaks and rafts, and from random paddle splashes. The odds are we won't fall out of our kayaks or rafts, but it could happen, especially for those who are more aggressive in how they approach rapids.

11. Do we have to wear a personal floatation device?

Yes, any time we are in a kayak or raft, no exceptions. Summit provides the PFDs.

12. What are the water shoe requirements?

Water shoes are worn in the kayaks and rafts. Summit requires they be closed-toe, but otherwise there are few rules. We will be walking on rocks and sand on the river bottom and along the shore. Our water shoes can be sneakers, or aqua shoes, or foot gloves, or open-heeled sandals, just about anything with a closed toe that stays secure on the feet. Flip-flops and Crocs are NOT acceptable as water shoes as they can slip off in the water. If you want to invest in quality water shoes (which is not necessary), take a look at Chaco, Teva, Keen and Astral. (The lead guide at Summit says he wears Astral Rassler because he finds it provides the best grip on rocks.)

13. Can my water shoes double as camp shoes?

No. Camp shoes (sneakers) are a separate pair of shoes, worn only on land. At the end of the day when we stop to camp, we'll change from our wet water shoes to our dry camp shoes and socks. The next morning after breakfast we'll take off our camp shoes and put our water shoes back on.

14. I have a tent, should I bring it?

Generally, no. Summit supplies the tents, which sleep up to four people. But if you have a one-person tent and want to bring it, go ahead, but it's got to fit in your (small) duffel bag with the rest of your stuff - we aren't checking any luggage.

15. Do I need to buy a dry bag?

No, Summit provides each person with two dry bags, a 110-liter "Camp Bag" and a 5-liter "Day Use Bag." At the end of the trip the Day Use Bag is yours to keep and take home.

16. What goes in the dry bags?

At base camp, in a locker, we'll be leaving the clothing we wore on the plane, along with our end-trip shower supplies, our travel comfort kit and our money, keys, rings, jewelry and valuables. *Bring nothing on the water that you can't lose!*

Your Day Use Bag will stay with you in the kayak and raft and hold your water bottle, sunglasses, sunscreen, insect repellent, lip balm, camera, vital medications, and rain jacket if rain is forecast.

Your Camp Bag will hold everything else. Each morning the Camp Bags go onto the gear raft, so we'll have no access to our Camp Bags until the end of the day when we stop to camp.

17. How many carabiners should I bring, and what type?

Bring one or two LOCKING carabiners, ideally with a screw-down lock and a wide opening. One carabiner is used to attach your Day Use Bag to your kayak or raft so it doesn't go overboard. If you bring a second (locking) carabiner, you can separately attach your water bottle to your kayak or raft, making it unnecessary to first open your Day Use Bag to get to the water bottle. One carabiner or two, it's your choice, but they have to be locking.

18. What kind of hat should I bring?

We will always be wearing helmets in the kayaks and rafts, so whatever hat we wear has to fit under a helmet. No straw or other stiff material. A baseball hat works, but only your face will be shaded, plus the button on the top of the hat needs to be removed to fit under the helmet. A full-brim hat provides more shade, and even more shade is provided by a "flap-happy" hat. We spend lot of time on the water in the sun, with little shade.

19. Pants or shorts? Long- or short-sleeve shirts?

Bringing pants that zip off to become shorts provides the greatest flexibility to adapt to conditions. Bringing both long- and a short-sleeve shirts also provides flexibility. Most people wear pants and a long-sleeve shirt, for their superior sun protection.

20. Why must my pants be nylon, and shirts and underwear synthetic? Why no cotton or denim?

Nylon and polyester dry fast. Cotton and denim take a long time to dry, are uncomfortable when wet, and can cause chafing. All underwear worn on the water, including bras, should be synthetic. Cotton is okay, however, for plane travel or for sleeping or for wearing at the campsites.

21. Can I bring my cell phone?

Yes. Cell phones may be used when traveling to and from Summit - within reason, don't bury your nose in it and ignore others. Cell phones can be left at base camp in a secure lock-up. If you choose to take your cell phone on the water to take photos, it is recommended that you take photos only while on land, not when you're in your kayak or raft, unless the phone is on a lanyard or harness.

22. Will there be cell reception or Wi-Fi?

On the water there will generally be no or a spotty cell signal. In base camp there is a strong cell signal and free Wi-Fi.

23. Will I be able to charge my phone?

There will be NO electrical plugs during four of the five days we are on the water. It is possible to charge at the Stone Cliff (mountain top) campsite on Day 4 as there is an outlet there. If planning to take videos, consider bringing a backup battery. There are charging stations at base camp, but they are unsecured. Airports have charging stations.

24. Can I bring a GoPro?

Yes, you can strap the GoPro onto your helmet. But bring zip ties to secure it, in case the GoPro slips off.

25. Can I bring a drone?

No.

26. Do I need a wetsuit?

No, the water is warm, about 80 degrees. It's been warming all summer in a dam upstream.

27. How are the mosquitos?

There will be mosquitos, but they aren't bad. You won't need any netting over your head, just a small container of your preferred repellent.

28. Can I fish?

Yes, but you have to bring your own fishing gear. Fishing on the New River is excellent, mostly smallmouth bass and walleye, but also rock bass, bluegill, hybrid striped bass, catfish and maybe even muskellunge. Fishing cannot be done from the kayaks or rafts, only from shore on the first three evenings. Ages 14 and under do not need a fishing license, but ages 15 and above need to purchase a West Virginia fishing license before leaving California, about \$25 for three days (7/27, 28 & 29). See Summit's New River Experience planning guide for suggested baits and rods.

29. Is there a store at Summit?

Yes, Summit's base camp has a couple of trading posts that sell everything from clothing to

camping equipment to snacks to souvenirs.

30. Will there be a first aid kit?

Our river guides will have a comprehensive first aid kit, and the troop will have a basic first aid kit.

31. What are TSA rules regarding liquids, creams, pastes and gels?

Each container can be no more than 3.4 ounces or 100 ml, and they all have to fit into a quart-size clear plastic bag.

32. Why do we need to bring extra prescription medicines?

Summit recommends that anyone with prescription medicines, especially vital medications, bring an extra set and leave the extra set back at base camp's Health Lodge, in case something happens to the medications on the water.

33. What patches can we earn?

There are patches for Duty to God and for Sustainability.

34. What awards can we earn?

The mileage covered at Summit will satisfy the miles needed for the 50 Miler Award, but that award also requires 10 hours of conservation work. We will be doing three hours of conservation work as part of the trek, so seven more hours will be needed for the award. Those seven hours can be work done either before or after Summit. Other awards you can earn are the Grand Slam Award if you previously went to Philmont, Sea Base and Northern Tier, or the Triple Crown Award if you went to three of the four National High Adventure bases.

35. What can I do to prepare?

To make the paddling a little easier, it's a good idea to strengthen arms and shoulders by lifting simple weights at home.