Rafting the Deschutes River

Due to the many variables of outdoor trips, it's impossible to describe exactly what the trip will be like but this will give you a sense of what to expect. Questions? Get in touch at: outdoors@lclark.edu

About the Location:
The Deschutes River Basin is found in the rain shadow of the Cascade Mountains and a 3-4 hour drive from Portland. Its high desert landscape provides a wide variety of outdoor enthusiasts nearly endless opportunities for recreation, education and pure enjoyment. Since 1855, much of the upper Deschutes has served as the border to the Warm Springs Indian Reservation, the largest reservation in the state and home to several Native American tribes. The Deschutes River is known for its exciting whitewater, as well as peaceful flatwater floating opportunities. You'll be rafting through canyons of golden hillsides with green alder trees lining the riverbanks. While sagebrush and juniper trees are common companions, there are also occasional glimpses of ospreys, mergansers, beavers, and deer. The Deschutes offers a great setting for a rafting trip. Listening to a coyote howl at night, being serenaded by a colorful oriole in the trees above your raft, watching a red tail hawk circle in the blue desert sky, and being splashed by a huge native trout jumping next to your boat are things not easily forgotten.

What to Expect:
Participants will all get the chance to enjoy the calm serenity of central Oregon and get some sun, as well as gear up for the fun Class III (and the occasional Class IV) rapids. We expect to spend the first night at the launch site. Along the way, we'll be camping along the river route. A typical day will include lots of time on the river as well as many opportunities to participate in the everyday activities of camp: preparing meals for the group, setting up camp, loading and unloading the boats, journal writing, hikes up to the rimrock cliffs, and, of course, just hanging out. On the last day of the trip, we'll arrive at the pickup point and head to Portland the night before New Student Orientation begins. Weather is generally warm and dry, but desert nights will get cool. Rainy days are possible, even though this is the desert. All trips are non-smoking.

New to rafting?
No problem! This trip is designed for beginners.

How to Prepare:
- **Break in your boots:** Since we'll be day-hiking remember that new boots can cause painful blisters. It is *very important* to break in your boots by wearing them for extended periods prior to your trip.
- **Get moving**: it's a great idea to walk or run this summer to get yourself into shape. If you have the chance to paddle, do it! It's great to start getting those muscles ready for the river.

What will we eat?
Rafting trips are well stocked when it comes to food--you may never have eaten this well on a camping trip! Some examples of typical meals include: curry, pizza, mac & cheese and much more.

What if I don't have outdoor clothing or equipment?
No problem! Check out our packing lists (located on your trip page) for a description of the essential and optional gear for your trip. To help prevent foot injuries, we do not allow open-toed sandals on our rafting trips. If you don't have your own sandals/boots, outdoor clothing or equipment, we provide what you'll need. You must request the equipment ahead of time using this form: http://tinyurl.com/c4d5g2r

What are the risks?
The most common injury on this trip is sunburn from people not applying enough sunscreen. Other possible injuries include blisters on hands from paddling, blisters on feet from new hiking boots, cuts resulting from walking barefoot or use of pocket knives, burns from handling pots on a stove without hot pads or gloves, and spilling boiling water. *These are all preventable with a little caution and common sense.*

The Deschutes is an extremely high fire danger area due to the dry grass and brush everywhere at this time of the year. No open flames are allowed on shore, with the exception of white gas and propane stoves and lanterns. Swift water and rapids present hazards, and the river is a force to respect. Participants should be comfortable swimming and are required to wear lifejackets at all times when on the water. Trip leaders will cover river safety issues at the beginning of the trip, and repeat them as needed. Participants will learn how to paddle rafts and what to do in case they fall out. Learn more about possible risks here.

Please note that our trips go to remote areas and medical help is usually at least one day away. There is no road access to much of the river. Our trips carry satellite phones, but remember satellite service is sometimes not available in certain areas. All our trip leaders are trained as Wilderness First Responders.

Complete and return the online Health & Diet Questionnaire to inform our trip leaders of any conditions or illnesses that you have.

Have a great summer, and we'll see you in August!