

OUTDOORS

Sunday, June 24, 2007 **3D**
Features: Robyn Rison (304) 526-2799

So you want to go white water rafting/boating

Boating

WEST VIRGINIA

DAY USE AREA: Now open, the Overlook day use area at East Lynn Lake. The Lick Creek and East Fork areas now open for boaters and fishermen. Call (304) 849-2355.

OHIO

CANOE MEETING: The non-profit Symmes Creek Restoration Committee meets the first Monday of each month at the Grandview Inn at 11:45 a.m. to discuss events and work being done on Symmes Creek and its tributaries. Call the group's chairman, Grayson Thornton, at (740) 643-0522.

KAYAKING: July 21, August 4, Sept. 15, Touch the Earth Adventures presents Birding by Kayak: Kayaks, equipment, instruction provided on lakes of southeast Ohio. Lake Hope State Park St. Rt. 278 Vinton County Cost: \$40 or \$20 if you bring your own kayak: 7:30 a.m. - 10:30 a.m. and 4:30 p.m. - 7:30 p.m. Registration/Reservations required. (740) 592-3496.

TORCH LIGHT

CANOE TRIP: July 3, and Sept. 2, Torch Light Canoe Trip of the Hocking River Experience the wonders of night time canoeing, followed by a bonfire, old fashioned hot dog roast, and entertainment. Cost: \$33 per canoe Time: 7 to 10 p.m. at Hocking Valley Canoe Livery in Logan, Ohio. Call (800) 686-0386. Whitewater

WEST VIRGINIA

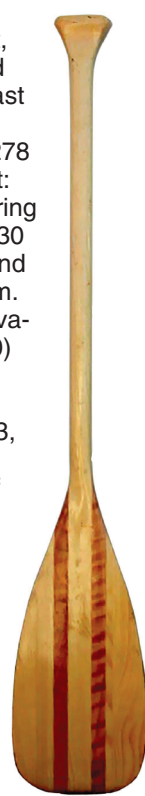
SEASON OPEN: Now open, the summer season on the New River through the Grand Canyon of the East and those 1,000 foot high sandstone cliffs. Check out a full day Lower New River rafting trips for as low as \$70 at the 16 or so professional whitewater rafting resorts. Get the full list at www.callwva.com.

JULY FOURTH CELEBRATION: July 6-8, at Songer Whitewater. The fifth annual celebration includes disc golf tournament, horseshoe tournament scavenger hunt and whitewater rafting. Call (304) 658-9926 or www.songer-whitewater.com.



WebEXTRA

Find more outdoors events — from biking to kayaking, whitewater to wildlife — at www.herald-dispatch.com.



Hold on tight



Rachel Gensler/The Herald-Dispatch

Former Herald-Dispatch reporter Rachel Gensler braves the rapids of the Double Z, a class V rapid in The New River. Knowing what to do in and out of the boat is essential to safe rafting and can be life-saving information.

WHITE WATER

Preparation, respect is a must for West Virginia's world-class rapids

Rachel GENSLER

FAYETTEVILLE, W.Va. — In the blink of an eye, the water grabbed me from behind and sucked me right out of the raft and into the swirling rapid.

As I began to get by bearings, the bright yellow raft that was safely holding my fiancé, my friends and my rafting guide seemed close, so I started swimming toward it. But the raft and my clan, I found out quickly, were not coming to rescue me. They were strategically stuck on a hidden rock.

Before I realized it, the water whisked me into the Double Z, a class V rapid in The New River, and all I could recall were Marvin the guide's words of wisdom: "If you do this right, you will think the Double Z is a piece of cake. If you don't and you end up swimming, you will know why it is a Class V."

Great. It wasn't my first time rafting or being on the New River. I've even rafted the Upper Gauley, which consistently ranks among the best white water in the world. But this trip did provide another valuable learning experience for this adventure seeker. West Virginia offers some world-class white water rafting that shouldn't be missed. However, there are some things you should be aware of in order to make your trip more fun and most importantly, safe.

Being able to swim through a Class V rapid is one of them. I wasn't exactly sure how to do it, but my Gauley training kicked in.

I wrapped my fingers tightly around my paddle and tried to get my feet up (in the safe position) to protect my body from the potentially fatal rocks that surrounded me. It was then that I heard someone behind me. My best friend Natosha had fallen in too and was gasping for air behind me.

When we watched the video later, we were both surprised to see how close together the two of us were through most of the long rapid.

The further we went into it, the harder the water pushed and pulled and jammed down our throats. The struggle served as an immediate reminder of just how dangerous white water rafting can



Photo courtesy of W.Va. Division of Tourism

ABOVE: White water rafting requires preparation and respect for the water. West Virginia's New River offers some of the state's world-class rapids.

RIGHT: Rafters traversing the upper Gauley River help pull an overboard man back on board Saturday, Sept. 24, 2005. Controlled by the Summersville Dam, the Gauley fills when the dam's reservoir is lowered annually, providing a rafting season that is several weeks long.

File photo/The Herald-Dispatch

be and how important it is to listen to the instructions that your guide gives you. It's not just casual conversation, it's life-saving information.

Eventually we floated out of the rapid and a tiny woman pulled me out of the river into the safety of her boat while people watched and cheered from the banks and other boats.

This certainly didn't diminish my enjoyment of the trip, but it could have if I hadn't been armed with the proper safety knowledge.

White water rafting is a trademark of West Virginia and can be a fantastic experience on many levels. Seeing the New River Gorge Bridge (or just the bridge, as they call it in Fayetteville) and the towering mountains from the water are more than enough



to make the trip worthwhile and is a view all West Virginians need to experience. It's literally breathtaking, especially when you drink half of the river while swimming through Double Z.

It's extreme for sure. But, respect for the water and respect for the beauty of our state and culture are the real secrets for survival and fun on the river.

Rachel Gensler is a former reporter for The Herald-Dispatch. She's a white water rafting enthusiast and seeks out the rapids as often as possible. Most of the time she stays in the boat.

How to:

Get the most out of your rafting trip

Before you go:

Don't Get A Redneck: Lather up in some waterproof sunscreen. The rays get extreme on the water.

Say Cheese: Grab a waterproof disposable camera and record your trip. Don't take anything expensive as it will get wet.

The Real Big Dipper: Know what you are getting into. Understand that white water rafting isn't like a Log Flume ride. You will be in rapids, and you are counting on your guide and your raftmates to control your ride.

Be Prepared: Get ready to swim. You will be wearing a life jacket and helmet, and even if you aren't the one jumping out to swim, get ready for the raft to flip or be knocked out. Your guide will let you know what to do if this happens.

Stretch Armstrong: Be sure to spend a few minutes before you board stretching your muscles and getting loose.

During the course:

Dig It In: Get ready to paddle, and don't be shy when your guide says to "dig it in."

Work Together: Play on the team. Everyone in the raft simply has to work together.

Have Ears, Do Listen: The guides aren't talking just to hear their voices echo off 1,000 foot cliffs. Follow his or her instructions QUICKLY.

Pay Attention: Know the code. Your guide will tell you what all of his or her verbal signals mean. Learn them and follow them.

Be in the Moment: Thinking about work or next week or anything else is strictly prohibited on the river. Be in the moment and soak up the unforgettable views and experiences.

THIS WEEK:



Large format film: 'Africa: The Serengeti'

WHAT: Take a journey with more than 1.5 million animals on the African Serengeti.

WHERE: The ElectricSky Theatre at the Clay Center.

WHEN: Open now through July 6. Showtimes are noon, 1, 3 and 4 p.m. Wednesday through Saturday and 1, 3 and 4 p.m. Sunday.

MORE INFO: Running time is 46 minutes. Admission is \$5.50 for children and \$6.50 for adults. Call (304) 561-3570.

Places to go: Pipestem Resort State Park

Nestled in the mountains of southern West Virginia, Pipestem Resort State Park offers a wide variety of outdoor recreation suitable for the entire family. Two on-site lodges cottages and a campground cater to all guests, whether you're looking for a rustic experience or a comfortable, relaxing stay.

Location: Pipestem, W.Va. (14 miles north of Princeton and 12 miles south of Hinton)

Directions: Take I-64 East to Exit 139. The park entrance is 22 miles

south on WV 20.

Phone: (304) 466-1800 or (800) CALL WVA

Web site: www.pipestemresort.com

Accommodations: Two lodges, cottages, campground

Amenities: Restaurants, aerial tramway, gift shops, conference facilities, picnic shelters

Things to do: two golf course (18-hole and 9-hole), horseback riding, outdoor amphitheater, nature center, recreation center (including swimming pool, tennis courts, miniature golf and more), boating, canoeing,

hiking and much more.

Nearby attractions: Tamarack, Exhibition Coal Mine, New River Gorge National River, commercial rafting companies, historic towns of Hinton and Bramwell, WinterPlace Ski Area, Concord College.

The Mountain Creek Lodge is accessible only via a 3,600-foot aerial tramway that descends into the Bluestone Gorge. The rooms offer cable TV, telephones and a relaxing view of the Bluestone River.

Photo courtesy of Pipestem Resort State Park

