

# Colorado River tour makes for memorable day

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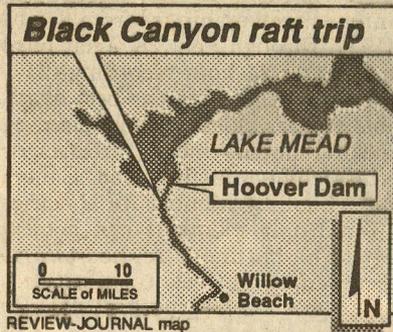
After its annual winter hiatus, Black Canyon Incorporated has resumed its scenic Colorado River raft runs. The day-long trips from below Hoover Dam to Willow Beach are scheduled from now through Nov. 30.

Few tours around Las Vegas are more scenic, interesting or relaxing than the beautiful float trip through the forbidding Black Canyon of the Colorado. Inflated pontoon-style rafts hold as many as 35 passengers, a pilot and a tour guide. The raft trip operators are a subsidiary of Willow Beach Resort and Marina, authorized concessioners of the National Park Service.

The rafting adventure is a still modestly priced tourist treasure, despite recent price increases. The river run costs \$59.95 for adults and \$35 for children under 12 years. Price includes transportation to and from the point of origin, luncheon at Willow Beach, and friendly and informative narration en route. A round trip package from Las Vegas costs an additional \$10.

The tour begins at the Gold Strike Inn on U.S. 93 between

## Trip of the week



Boulder City and Hoover Dam. Raft riders board a small bus at 10 a.m. for the trip down a twisting access road to the launching area on the river below the dam. Many choose to breakfast at the casino before departure since lunch will not be served until mid afternoon.

In the more than 10 miles of river covered in the four-hour raft trip, participants will see evidence of man's efforts to harness the mighty river, a feat not accomplished until Hoover Dam was built. Launching under power, the rafts challenge the force of the river to enter

one of the huge diversion tunnels in the canyon walls on either side of the dam.

Downstream in an area that used to be wicked with rapids, raft riders will spot enormous metal rings set in the canyon walls. The huge ringbolts are remnants of a colorful era in the mid-1800s when steamboats plied the Colorado River. Navigation through this canyon would have been impossible if the steamboats had not used the ringbolts to winch themselves upstream by cables. Cables, cable cars and precarious catwalks along sheer cliffs seen en route are leftovers from preconstruction efforts at gathering information vital to engineering studies before the dam was built in the 1930s.

Raft adventurers are often treated to the sight of the desert bighorn sheep, a magnificent native of the rugged canyons and cliffs. There will be plenty of time to observe other river dwellers such as herons, hawks, ravens, cormorants, canyon wrens, cliff swallows, geese and several species of ducks.

In spring, the wildflowers put on a show along the shoreline and high up on the cliffs.

Although this will not be an outstanding wildflower year, the show among the cliffs is usually fair. Watch for earliest blossoms right away, followed by the cactus show in late March and April.

River runners will encounter generally mild days on the river, but bring a light jacket in spring for cool breezes. Layer clothing so you can shed down to a bathing suit on hot days. You will be in the sun most of the day, so wear a hat and slather on sunblock lotion. Wear sneakers that you don't mind getting wet. Bring a small carry-all for loose items such as camera, film, binoculars, jacket and lotion.

This leisurely day trip down the river is a relaxing time away from the pressures of jobs and city living. It can be a great way to entertain out-of-town guests. This is a nice alternative to more expensive raft trips on the Colorado that involve a longer period of time.

Reservations are necessary for the Black Canyon raft trip. To make arrangements, call 293-3776 (Boulder City) or (602) 767-3311 (Willow Beach). If your party is large, inquire about group rates and reservations.