



For Immediate Release



When the floodgates are opened at Summersville Dam the Gauley River features the world's best rafting.

Photos Available

Warming up to Whitewater: Water Temperatures Rise for Rafter's Throughout Gauley Season

FAYETTEVILLE, W.V., August 24, 2016 - West Virginia's "[Gauley Season](#)" gets underway in early September and does not end until mid-October. And while the air temperature cools off in that stretch, the water temperature actually goes up for whitewater rafter's who enjoy close to 100 rapids - nine of them Class V - along the 25-mile Upper and Lower sections of the Gauley River, "The Beast of the East."

So, what makes this river so special?



The section of the river that is so famous and popular is located below Summersville Lake which was created 50 years ago when Summersville Dam was completed. In anticipation of winter precipitation, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers releases water from the lake Fridays through Mondays. These releases benefit the local economy and actually occur because rafters and kayakers lobbied with local leaders and their congressman in the 1980s seeking a way to guarantee a weekend whitewater experience with an affirmed daylight schedule.

Because the flows are controlled, rafters are assured of consistent water levels of 2800 cubic feet per second (cfs) throughout the season, assuming appropriate water level is available in Summersville Lake. When the floodgates are opened, the cold water from the bottom of the lake is sent down the river. As the lake is drained over several weeks, it becomes shallower and the overall temperatures gradually increase.

“If you ever swam in a lake, held your breath and went 10 or 12 feet below the surface you know that the water is colder,” says Dave Hartvigsen, CEO of adventure resort and rafting outfitter [Adventures on the Gorge](#) (AOTG). “The reason was you found a thermocline.”

Hartvigsen explains that a thermocline is a distinct layer in a large body of water that separates the turbulent surface from the calm water below. The surface water features more oxygen and is more subject to heating and cooling coming from the sun and air. Deeper water, on the other hand, is denser and less likely to experience significant changes in temperature.

“Generally, as water cools, it increases in density and sinks through warmer layers until it stabilizes,” says Hartvigsen. “Water is at its greatest density at 4 degrees Celsius or 39 degrees Fahrenheit.”

“During Gauley Season, the Corps draws the lake down some 75 feet, and that water is the coldest and densest in the lake on any given day. It is only logical that removing the coldest water first raises the average temperature over time for the reservoir’s outflow. Sure, the lake will cool down as winter arrives, but the rafting season and drawdown of the lake will be complete long before then.”



Rafting the Gauley is a “must” for enthusiasts who have experienced whitewater on rivers around the world. Because most rafting reaches its peak in spring and early summer as a result of rains and melting snow, Gauley Season offers guaranteed big water while most rivers are running low.

The stretch of the Gauley River popular with rafters is 25 miles long and is commonly broken down into two sections called the Upper Gauley and Lower Gauley. Many rafters opt to run the Upper and Lower Gauley on successive days.

Gauley Season kicks off Friday Sept. 9 and concludes Oct. 16, the day after the hugely popular Bridge Day celebration featuring BASE jumpers diving, catapulting and hurling themselves from the 876-foot New River Gorge Bridge.

Gauley Season Packages

Adventures on the Gorge offers several [packages](#) for rafters who want to experience the “Beast of the East.” AOTG offers accommodations for every budget and style, including campgrounds, rustic cabins, luxury cabins and private homes. With two lounges and multiple dining options, the resort’s campus is the center of activity and a gathering place as rafters compare notes after a day on the river.

Examples of rafting packages include the [Upper Gauley 2-Night](#), [Lower Gauley 2-Night](#) and [Gauley Reverse 2-Night](#). Additionally, some rafters choose to run both stretches as part of the [Gauley Marathon 2-Night](#) while others will take on the Upper Gauley twice in one day as part of the [Double Upper Gauley 1-Day 2-Night](#) package, perfect for the adrenaline junkie.

Camping on the Gauley

One of AOTG’s more popular options features a two-day Upper and Lower Gauley rafting experience broken up by [camping at Canyon Doors](#), a permanent campground on the river featuring a wood-fired hot tub, hot showers, bathrooms and gourmet meals prepared by an expedition chef. This is perennially the most sought-after trip AOTG offers.

This year AOTG will offer a \$100 [discount](#) every Monday throughout Gauley season to rafters tackling the Gauley Marathon (Upper and Lower Gauley in one day) or the Double Upper Gauley (Upper Gauley twice in one day).

Travelers can find out more about Adventures on the Gorge [online](#), calling 1-855-379-8738, connecting on [Facebook](#) or [Twitter](#) and signing up for AOTG [e-newsletter](#) and following the AOTG [blog](#).

About Adventures on the Gorge

[Adventures on the Gorge](#) is an adventure resort located on more than 1,000 acres along the rim of New River Gorge near Fayetteville, W.Va. The resort is in a region with three national parks units.

The resort provides an array of outdoor experiences including whitewater rafting on the New and Gauley Rivers; aerial adventures including two zip lines, the world's highest Bridgewalk and an aerial adventure park; rock climbing; rappelling; kayaking, stand up paddleboarding, fishing, mountain biking and hiking. The resort also features a variety of accommodations, restaurants and shops.

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