



Montana Flyfishing Connection Planning Your Smith River Trip

INSURANCE

The first step in planning your Smith River trip is to take a serious look at whether travel insurance is something you might want to consider. An experienced angler knows that the best-planned trip can be impacted by the unexpected, that's why we recommend Sportsman's Travel Insurance to protect your financial investment. This valuable protection covers Trip Cancellation, Medical Evacuation, Sporting Equipment Coverage and much more. It is reasonably priced (about \$150 per person for a \$3000 trip.) To purchase this insurance or learn more please visit our website or call (406) 370-2868 and I can walk you through the process.

FLYING

If your plan is to fly to Montana on a commercial airline we recommend that you make reservations as soon as possible once you have firm river dates. You'll want to fly into Montana the day before your first scheduled river day arriving in the afternoon.

Here are some flight scenarios in order of preference.

- 1) You can fly into Helena and out of Great Falls.**
- 2) You can fly into Missoula and out of Great Falls.**
- 3) You can fly in and out of Great Falls.**
- 4) You can fly in and out of Missoula.**
- 5) You can fly into Missoula and out of Helena.**

When you arrive you will be greeted by one of our crew at the airport and we will make the drive to White Sulphur Springs. There will be a room waiting for you at a B&B. The following morning we will begin our 60-mile expedition about 9a.m.

On the last day of the trip we usually plan to get off the river between 1 and 3 in the afternoon. Once off the river at the Eden Bridge take-out, we are 1 hour from Great Falls, 2 hours from Helena, and about 3 hours from Missoula. Most of our guests make reservations to stay overnight in either Helena or Great Falls after their last day on the river and fly home the following day.

We recommend you make reservations in Great Falls at the Best Western Heritage Inn (406-761-1900), or in Helena by calling the Wingate Inn (406-449-3000). All have excellent accommodations and a shuttle service to the airport. If, however, you will be driving and want your car waiting for you when you get off the river, we can arrange to have it shuttled for you.

THERE ARE MID-LATE AFTERNOON FLIGHTS OUT OF GREAT FALLS, WHICH CAN GET YOU HOME THE SAME DAY THAT YOU GET OFF THE RIVER. Most people, however, prefer to overnight at a hotel and have a nice shower before getting on the plane.

PACKING YOUR BAGS

Weight and size are important considerations on our trips. Think of your gear in terms of two separate groups. The first group is gear that is packed away on our large cargo boats each day and goes down ahead of the fishing boats to the evening campsite. This gear should consist of a sleeping bag and one large, soft duffel that contains your clothing and other personal items. We will provide you with a rubberized “dry-bag” to put this duffel inside of. Hard sided duffels will not go inside the dry-bags (this includes bags like Simms duffels with handles and wheels.) If you choose to fly with hard sided luggage be prepared to re pack into the dry-bag for your time on the river. Your luggage will be waiting for you at the end of the trip.

Montana Flyfishing Connection provides an extra-long, extra-wide Therma Rest air mattress and comfortable cot for each guest. **We will provide a sleeping bag upon request.**

The second group of gear, which you will have with you on the fishing boat each day, should consist of a small duffel or backpack and your fishing gear. In the small duffel you’ll want to carry such items as your rain gear, a light sweater and jacket, camera, binoculars, sunscreen, and fly-vest. An extra rod is welcome but not necessary since each boat is always equipped with one.

Lightweight chest waders are generally all that are necessary on the Smith. The river is easy to wade, but felt-soled boots are imperative. Most of our guests wet-wade after the 15th of June in a pair of shorts, or lightweight pants and wading shoes. But bring waders just in case we have inclement weather. **Studded wading boots (corkers) will not be allowed in the boats.**

Regardless of when your trip is booked, long underwear, wool socks, warm hat and gloves should be included in your gear. In fact, don’t come without them!

EQUIPMENT LIST

First a few words of wisdom. “Having the right tool for the job” makes any task easier and more enjoyable. The same goes for preparing for a big trip. Start preparing and organizing now!

Your rain jacket and waders are absolutely the most critical gear for your trip. If you have not invested in quality outer gear yet, this is the year to do it. It only takes one day of cold rain in a cheap rain jacket or leaky waders to make you miserable. Simms and Patagonia are both great brands.

CLOTHING

WARM LAYERS

- Long underwear
- 1 mid-weight top & bottom
- 1 light-weight top and bottom
- 1 pair polar fleece pants 1 fleece or “Windstopper” type vest
- **1 warm jacket (even in July)**
- 3-5 pair warm socks, expedition weight, mid-weight, etc. (My feet are always cold. Polar fleece socks, wool socks, silk socks, whatever it takes for warm feet.)
- 1 fishing shirt mid-weight, long sleeve
- 1 pair pants (jeans, canvas, etc.) for camp wear
- 1 pair shorts (lightweight, quick drying, use for bath)
- 1 fleece or “Windstopper” type vest

OUTERWEAR

- 1 quality rain jacket (Gore-Tex)
- Gore-Tex waders
- 1 or 2 pair light-weight fishing pants
- 2 fishing shirts, light-weight, long sleeve
- 1 pair boots, wading (**non-spike**)
- 1 pair waterproof shoes or boots (camp)
- 1 pair sandals (for shower or river bathing)
- 1 pair gravel guards (optional)
- 1 wide brim hat, fishing
- 1 polar fleece / wool cap
- 1 pair gloves, cold weather
- 1 pair gloves, fingerless

GEAR

- Warm sleeping bag- I can provide this upon request
- Small inflatable pillow
- Sport towel & wash cloth
- Lightweight duffel (A soft bag or duffel bag up to 12" around or loosely packed so that it can be stuffed into our dry bags).
- Day pack, waterproof for gear you might need on the river. (You will carry this with you each day.)
- Toilet kit (small)
- Flashlight or headlight with extra batteries
- Heavy drawstring trash bags (2)
- "Huggies" or other brand sanitary wipes. (great for the latrine or a quick "sponge bath")
- Hand sanitizer
- Clothesline & pins (20' of nylon cord and 10 clothes pins) (optional)
- Camera with extra battery (optional)
- Small binoculars (optional)
- Sunscreen, insect repellent, polarized sunglasses
- Personal spirits (beer and wine are provided)
- Fishing gear: The most versatile rod to use in Montana is a 9 foot 6-weight medium or fast action rod with a weight-forward or floating fly line. If you'd like to bring more rods, no problem. We also provide all the flies you will need for the river but you are more than welcome to bring your own selection.

Having listed all of the above, please try to keep as light and compact as possible due to limited space on the rafts.

FISHING LISENCE

Please purchase your license online before you arrive. This can be done at <https://app.mt.gov/Als/Index>. There is a link to this site from my website as well.

GRATUITIES

I only mention this because it is by far my most frequently asked question. The tips that you provide for the staff will be pooled and split equally among the crew. A general rule is about 10% of the cost of the trip, so that usually computes to \$300-\$350 per angler. If you feel that one of the staff really went above and beyond for you, you are of course welcome to address that separately. I am more than happy to collect checks or add an amount on your credit card, but tips are always easier distributed in cash. That may be something you want to plan for before you depart.

We are really looking forward to sharing the Smith River with you! Please feel free to contact me if you have any further questions.

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