



Montana Flyfishing Connection, LLC

Smith River - Planning Your 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 \$300 per person for a \$5000 trip.) To purchase this insurance or learn more please visit travelguard.com (or any other travel insurance company) and tell them that you are traveling with [Montana Flyfishing Connection, LLC](#).

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. If you are flying private, please consult us for best options.

Here are some flight scenarios that we guarantee airport pick-up and drop off services.

1. You can fly in and out of Helena.
2. You can fly into Helena and out of Great Falls.
3. You can fly into Bozeman and out of Great Falls.
*Flying into Bozeman requires a \$100 / person for 3rd party private transport fee due to distance.

The following flight scenarios are possible but may require you to rent a car depending on how many people have different pick – up requirements in your group. **Please consult with us before making these flight arrangements.**

4. You can fly in and out of Great Falls.
5. You can fly in to Missoula and out of either Helena or Great Falls.
6. You can fly in and out of Bozeman – Requires rental car / 3 hour drive after float trip to return to Bozeman

Please coordinate flights with others in your group!

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 small hotel. The following morning we will begin our 60-mile river expedition about 9am.

On the last day of the trip we 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 **Heritage Inn (406-761-1900)** or in Helena by calling the **Best Western Great Northern (406-457-5500)**. Both 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 of bags are important considerations on your trip. Think of your gear in terms of two 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. **You will need to bring your own sleeping bag. If this is a problem, please contact us. We can provide you a brand-new bag for \$85 that will be yours to take home or donate.**

The second group of gear, which you will have with you on the fishing boat each day, should be a small, water resistant duffel or backpack and your fishing gear. In the small duffel you will 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.

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!

Before June 15th your rain jacket and waders are absolutely the most critical gear for your trip. If you have not invested in quality outer wear 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. After June 15th waders are optional. If you don't bring waders pack rain pants for inclement weather. **Studded wading boots (corkers) will not be allowed in the boats.**

CLOTHING

WARM LAYERS

- 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)
- Long underwear
- 1 mid-weight top & bottom

OUTERWEAR

- 1 quality rain jacket (Gore-Tex)
- Before June 15th Gore-Tex waders and 1 pair wading boots (non-spike please)
- After June 15th rain pants and 1 pair wading sandals
- 1 or 2 pair light-weight fishing pants
- 2 fishing shirts, light-weight, long sleeve
- 1 pair waterproof shoes or boots (camp)
- 1 pair sandals (for shower or river bathing)
- 1 wide brim hat, fishing
- 1 polar fleece / wool cap
- 1 pair gloves, cold weather
- 1 pair gloves, fingerless

*** Cold weather gear can be reduced on trips that start after June 15th, but only with a good study of the 10-day forecast ***

GEAR

- Warm sleeping bag (25 to 0 degree) - Available to purchase. Please let us know before your trip.
 - Small inflatable pillow, or even a full-size pillow from home if it will pack down
 - Sport towel & wash cloth
 - Lightweight duffel bag (A soft bag 12" - 15" in diameter - 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)
 - "Cottonelle" or other brand **flushable** wipes. (great for the latrine or a quick "sponge bath")
 - Hand sanitizer
 - Small binoculars (optional)
 - Sunscreen, insect repellent, polarized sunglasses
 - Personal spirits (beer and wine are provided)
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- **Fishing gear:** The most versatile rod to use in Montana is a 9 foot 5-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 the above, please try to keep your gear 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://ols.fwp.mt.gov/>. 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 like the restaurant rule - about 15 - 20% of the cost of the trip, so that computes to \$500 - \$1000 per angler. I am more than happy to collect checks, Venmo, 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.

Joe Sowerby

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