



Guides operate as a team.

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## It's Hiring Season for Arkansas River Rafting Guides at Echo Canyon River Expeditions

CAÑON CITY, Colo., March 25, 2019 - Even though there is still snow on the Sangre de Cristo Mountains, planning for the fast-approaching whitewater rafting season is in full swing for Jessica Smith and her colleagues at Echo Canyon River Expeditions. This is the time of year that Smith hires the guides.

As operations manager, Smith interviews dozens of potential new whitewater guides to join the senior guides who are critical to the success of Echo Canyon. It's a lengthy process, and Smith is a stickler for detail. She wants to know all kinds of things about applicants when she interviews them by phone, and she asks a series of questions that reflect upon a guide's character, work ethic and ability to work within a team. But rarely does she ask about previous boating experience.



Echo Canyon River Expeditions provides lunch on full-day rafting trips.

“Our objective is to find exceptional people, and we do not factor in boating ability in that quest,” said Smith, a 17-year Echo Canyon River Expeditions employee who began as a summer-season guide herself. “We teach prospective guides everything they need to know about rafting. A guide’s character is more important than the rafting skills they possess at the start of their training.”

Smith, who also oversees the training process, begins the exhaustive and exhausting search for about two dozen guide trainees early in the year.

This year she expects receive more than 200 applications, mostly through employment sites that specialize in seasonal jobs. From those applications, she will interview 75 or more applicants by phone and invite a portion of them to become guide trainees. Of those invited, 20-25 applicants will travel to Echo Canyon for a month-long, unpaid training program while living in their own tents and camping equipment in the “guide village” behind the Echo Canyon River Expeditions headquarters.

Because they must invest in their own personal equipment such as a personal flotation device, helmet, whistle, throw bag and dry bag, prospective guides are demonstrating a commitment and forward-thinking attitude.

#### **Training**

Before they even touch a paddle or oar, the group will learn the basic skills like flipping a boat and getting back in, rigging a raft and basic first aid. They’ll raft the river with seasoned guides and camp out for a few days, learning wilderness skills like camp cleanliness, food handling and knife skills.

While these are critical skills for a successful rafting guide, Jessica and her team of managers are watching for something far more important: people skills.

At the end of the second week, Smith and other managers meet with each guide to discuss the results of peer evaluation forms. Guide trainees must evaluate other trainees on attitude, teamwork, work ethic and other traits.

Once they have learned the fundamentals, guide-trainees spend the next two weeks learning how to handle oars and paddles and, most importantly, how to read the river and successfully navigate it.

Guides who complete the training course and receive a job offer will continue to work closely with more seasoned guides, and as their skills are enhanced, so are the opportunities to lead more challenging whitewater trips.

#### **River Culture**

The guide culture at Echo Canyon is one of support, perseverance and friendship, and it is often on display after hours as guides and guests mingle at the 8 Mile Bar and Grill, look through the images taken from every boat and relive the day.

Echo Canyon River Expeditions welcomes scores of return guides year after year. Jessica Smith was one of them. Upon finishing her final college semester in recreation therapy, the Iowa native and a friend found their way to the Arkansas River in anticipation of a summer of adventure as whitewater rafting guides. That was 16 years ago. With the encouragement of countless seasoned boatmen and boatwomen, she worked her way into a full-time job with Echo Canyon.

Like many guides, Smith fell in love with the community and the river valley as much as the sport itself.

“I get to work with these awesome outdoor professionals and watch them grow and strengthen not only as river rafting guides but also as people,” she said. “Rafting guides may go on to do other things in life, but their lives will be richer because of their time on the river.”

#### **Foodservice, Reservations and other Positions Available**

In addition to guides, Echo Canyon hires several people - usually locals from the Cañon City area - to work in the kitchen, dining room, retail and other departments.

#### **How to Apply**

For more information and to apply for a job with Echo Canyon River Expeditions, go [online](#).

#### **About the resort**

Situated near the famous [Royal Gorge Bridge & Park](#), Echo Canyon operates a variety of rafting adventures on the Arkansas River, the popular [8 Mile Bar and Grill](#), luxury cabins, glamping tents, campground with RV and tent sites. Additionally, the resort offers an array of [group services](#) with special event space and an innovative teambuilding platform.

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[Echo Canyon River Expeditions](#) is the leading whitewater destination resort in central Colorado and one of the country's top [adventure resorts](#), according to *U.S. News & World Report*. The resort is located west of Cañon City, Colo. on U.S. Route 50. Drive time is approximately two and one-half hours from Denver and one hour from Colorado Springs. The Colorado Springs Airport (COS) offers non-stop service from several major cities throughout the country including Dallas, Houston, Los Angeles, Chicago and Phoenix.

Contact Echo Canyon by email at [info@raftecho.com](mailto:info@raftecho.com) or by calling 1-800-690-3246, or follow the resort on [Facebook](#), [Twitter](#), [YouTube](#), [Instagram](#) or by signing up for the resort's [newsletter](#). Travelers can also read about visitors' experiences on [TripAdvisor](#) and see why Echo Canyon is consistently named the No. 1-rated tour in Cañon City.

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