Know What to do in an Emergency

Asking about emergency procedures can also reveal a great deal about the level of expertise and legitimacy of a whitewater rafting outfitter. Often, river rafting courses are close enough to roads that guides (if need be) will be able to shoot flares from the river. If you are especially concerned about the certifications or qualifications of your outfitter, you can double-check the company's references with state and local park commissions.

Before you start follow these basic safety rules:

- **NEVER PANIC**, because that's the only thing that can lead to drowning or death. Deaths are incredibly infrequent on guided rafting tours.
- Remember, your guides are equipped with all sorts of first aid and emergency equipment.
- In addition to having your capable river guides in tow, most expeditions have a lead guide in a kayak equipped with buoys, ropes and lifesavers, and you will be required to wear a life saving flotation device (usually a vest).
- If you fall out of your raft, float downstream on your back until a guide can get to you. The guide will tow you to shore and (if you're lucky), perform mouth-to-mouth.

Most people's attitudes change drastically from the beginning of a rafting expedition to its end: they go from being apprehensive and nervous to confident and boisterous.

A white-water rafting trip will leave you with memories to last a lifetime.