

White water rafts

Level - 1 The modern raft is an inflatable boat, consisting of very durable, multi-layered rubberized (hypalon) or vinyl fabrics (PVC) with several independent air chambers. The length varies between 3.5 m (11 ft) and 6 m (20 ft), the width between 1.8 m (6 ft) and 2.5 m (8 ft). The exception to this size rule is usually the pack-raft, which is designed as a portable single-person raft and may be as small as 1.5 meters (4.9 ft) long and weigh as little as 4 pounds (1.8 kg).

Rafts come in a few different forms. In Europe and Australasia, the most common is the symmetrical raft steered with a paddle at the stern. Other types are the asymmetrical, rudder-controlled raft and the symmetrical raft with central helm (oars) or Stern Mounts with the oar frame located at the rear of the raft. Rafts are usually propelled with ordinary paddles and or oars and typically hold 4 to 12 persons. In Russia, rafts are often handmade and are often a catamaran style with two inflatable tubes attached to a frame. Pairs of paddlers navigate on these rafts. Catamaran style rafts have become popular in the western United States as well, but are typically rowed instead of paddled.

White-Water Rafts

Most white-water rafting trips are group adventures in rented **paddle rafts** or **oar rafts**. Choosing which type of raft will depend on what type of outing you're planning.

Paddle rafts usually seat a group of four to eight people and a guide. These inflatable, plastic rafts are quick in the water and may be taken out on any level of whitewater. Most commercially guided services use paddle rafts. Everyone is expected to paddle while a guide positioned at the rear of the boat shouts out instructions. There's also a small version of a paddle raft, the sporty and challenging **R2**, made for two people.

If you're looking for a less-participatory adventure, try renting an oar raft. Oar rafts are inflatable and powered by a guide with a set of long wooden oars. These rafts usually seat three to five people and are taken on easy to moderate river runs.

There's also a hybrid -- oar rafts with paddle assist. These rafts are inflatable and maneuvered by a guide with a set of long wooden oars, but the passengers help with the paddling. These rafts are used on intermediate to advanced rapids.

Rafts are also categorized as either **self-bailers** or **catarafts**. Self bailers look like traditional inflated rafts but the edges of the base are laced to the sides of the raft allowing water to flow across the floor, down the edges and out through the lacings. Most modern rafts are self bailers.

Catarafts are made of two inflatable tubes held together by a metal frame and are easier to maneuver than self bailing rafts. They're designed to hold fewer passengers and are good options for people who want to own their own raft.

There are many other alternative white-water river crafts, big and small, that you may encounter as you become more skilled with white-water expeditions. For example, if you take a rafting trip in the Grand Canyon, you may come across a **J-rig** -- a big pontoon-style boat that's often motorized.

For people who are interested in solo or two-person adventures, **ducks** are small, inflatable and self-bailing kayaks that can be paddled down easy to moderate rapids. For the more performance-oriented river runners, hard-sided kayaks (made of rigid plastic) and canoes (made of fiberglass, Kevlar or plastic) are popular choices.