

Adventure gurling

Jump, raft, hike, kayak – this is why

you live in the great outdoors

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We can all agree that much of this summer sucked. But this should be the rallying call to enjoy it all the more! Cram as much fun as you can into this pocket of warmth and have a blast. The best part is, you can do all of that around here. And with Three Rivers and Skydive New England, you can do it all together.

Adventure Guru winners!

The Maine Edge recently kicked off our second annual Adventure Guru Contest with our pals at Three Rivers White Water Rafting. We drew Mark Dwyer, 29, of Bangor, in early July and sent him an e-mail to let him know he was a winner. When we hadn't heard from him in a couple days, we gave him a ring with the good news. The reason he hadn't written us back? He thought it was hoax. He brought his friend Michele Prentice, 30, of Bangor, along for the wild ride.



"It kind of hit at the right time," said Mark, who has been working non-stop on his new home for the past several months. "It's definitely a good getaway from the working grind."

They were put up for a night at The Inn by the River, where they enjoyed a sumptuous meal that Prentice described as "the best food I ever had, and I've had a lot of food."

While the winners enjoyed a relaxing evening at the Inn, Terry Jacobs (a friend of mine) and I went to Boatman's to check out the Chris Fitz Band and a rocking bonfire.

Rock the boat

The four of us hit the breakfast buffet of crispy hash browns, scrambled eggs, sausage and French toast, not to mention coffee. Gotta have some coffee. Then we got geared up for the trip.

You have to sign a waiver stating that you understand you aren't in Disney Land and there are inherent risks in rafting. Tom Cost, who was to be the rafting guide for our boat, did an overview of safety for the entire 100-plus rafters going on the trip. Though he wasn't out to scare people, he made sure that he went over the risks you run while running rapids.



The unique thing about going on a trip like this is all the people you meet. From the members of our boat (and we had an awesome bunch of people in the boat) to the more than 100 who made the trek down the Kennebec with Three Rivers, to the other folks who are camping or staying elsewhere who decide to check out Boatman's to see the great band and hang out while having a beer, it was great to see how friendly everyone could be.

Both Mark and Michele had been rafting previously, and we were sharing the boat with two other couples: Vicki Rothwell and Kirk Wilson from Nashua, NH; and Mike Ouellette and Jess Gerrior-Baribault, from Antrim, NH. Kirk and Mike had been rafting previously, but Vicki and Jess were first-timers – and the Kennebec is a great river to raft for the first time.



It has rapids that range from class two to class four, as well as the fantastic "swimmer's rapids" where rafters can jump in and swim through class two rapids. Fun stuff.

"I was nervous at first. I thought I was going to fall out," said Vicki. "It was fun. I think we're going to do the Dead next time."

Kirk said he thought that the Kennebec was a great starting river for Vicki to get her feet wet.

"It's great for a first trip. Only half of it is good rapids and the rest is pretty easy," he said. "I think that was a good choice for us. Now Vicki likes it."

Kirk had wanted to become a guide before some injuries set him back, but he still enjoys rafting – especially with Three Rivers.



"They just have the best guides and the most fun," he said. "Even if you do it [more than once] in the same weekend and you sit in a different part of the boat you get a different ride."

Jess also had a good first-time experience, enjoying in equal parts the incredible rapids and the ability to swim down the river and drift along towards the end.

"The river is a living thing. That's the best impression I got. It was an extraordinary goddess, a living being – pure and powerful," she said.



Despite being a vegetarian, she came up with our "attitude check" chant: Bacon is good. Tom would call out "Bacon" and the rest of the paddlers would yell back "is good." Truer words have never been spoken.

"We had a good crew and good camaraderie," said Mike. "Tom is like the crazy uncle I never had."

Serious fun is serious business

Making sure people have a great time on their vacation is hard work. Tom Cost, our guide on the river, was amazing, seeking out the different holes to ride, the right rapids to run, and making sure everyone was having as much fun as they could be having on the raft.

The staff start their day at 6:45 a.m. to prepare for the trip, and don't stop until late in the evening.

"We have to work extremely hard to get to the point where we can have fun safely," said Tom. He explained that he feels it's his duty to make sure people are having as much fun as they can have on the trip. And he loves it.

"It's totally easy for me. Seeing them smile and giving them more than their money's worth," he said. "Then they come back. And then they come back. And then they come back."

Mark and Michele were thrilled with their experience here, not only with Tom but all of the staff.

"There's a friendly atmosphere," said Michele. "They care and they're genuine about it."

Other adventures

Three Rivers Whitewater Rafting and Skydive New England have teamed up to provide the ultimate Maine adventure for adrenaline junkies here and abroad at their Millinocket location. They host a weekend Jump & Raft, where you can skydive one day, camp out and enjoy a bonfire and wicked cool entertainment and then raft the Penobscot River's class 5 rapids.

If you just want to experience throwing yourself bodily out of an air plane without the hassle of getting wet, check out Skydive New England's location in Lebanon, where jumpers can camp out or rent a cabin, enjoy a bonfire with friends and then jump the next day.

You can also hire guides for overnight river rafting trips, kayak rides or hikes. In the winter there is snow shoeing and snowmobiling. So don't wait for us, go have your own adventure.

If you're looking to have your own adventure on or off the river, visit www.threeriversfun.com or www.skydivenewengland.com or call 1-800-UGO-Raft or 1-800-UGO-JUMP.