

SPORTS

PACKSADDLE RUN: whitewater on the North Santiam



Casey Beall kayaks through Mill City Falls on the North Santiam River. MOLLY J. SMITH / STATESMAN JOURNAL

North Santiam features Salem area's most thrilling whitewater rapids

Zach Urness Salem Statesman Journal | USA TODAY NETWORK

There are few activities more fun on a hot summer day than standing above Spencer's Hole rapids and watching boats explode. • Not literally, of course, but the notorious rapid on the North Santiam River has a way of sending kayakers and rafters skyward, or at least knocking them sideways, often leading to an unexpected swim and scramble to retrieve boats and gear floating downstream. • Spencer's Hole is one of three Class III rapids on what's known as the "Packsaddle run" on the river east of Salem. So-named because it begins at Packsaddle County Park off Highway 22, this stretch features the river's best scenery and thrills for boaters looking for a summer challenge. • "I love Packsaddle for the multitude of different types of rapids it has — big waves and swirly rapids, boulder gardens, small drops plus an end with an awesome horizon line at Mill City Falls," said Will Howerton, a kayaking instructor from Bend who paddles Packsaddle on a regular basis. "You can literally work on almost every skill in kayaking on one run."

(There are harder rapids and bigger scenery upstream, but it's generally only open to expert kayakers and those willing to paddle during the rainy season with a drysuit).

The Packsaddle run is most commonly done in inflatable or hardshell kayaks, smaller paddle rafts or, though it's not advised, inner tubes. Drift-boats and larger rafts with oars do it as well, but the larger the



Kayaking on the North Santiam River. PHOTO COURTESY OF TRAVEL SALEM; USA TODAY NETWORK ILLUSTRATION

boat, the more challenging it is to navigate the boulders and narrow rapids such as Carnivore, Spencer's and Mill City Falls.

Either way, wearing a lifejacket is crucial. eNRG Kayaking in Mill City offers commercial trips down the Packsaddle section and through the more family-friendly rapids below that we featured last week.

A good warmup

One of my favorite things about the Packsaddle run is that it gives you a minute to warm up before you hit

the biggest rapids, which arrive in the middle and end of the run.

The run starts off with a handful of boulder gardens, where it's fun to navigate around big rocks and find the right slot. The beginning is a good time to work on kayak skills like catching eddies and navigating to the points on the river you want your boat to go. If you're in a paddle raft, it's a great place to get your teamwork dialed in.

The first rapids of note, The Swirlies, come just a

See RAPIDS, Page 3B

How bait, sunscreen and sweat are like garlic



Fishing
Henry Miller
Guest columnist

The thought occurs to me that fishing and camping are kind of like eating garlic

The smell doesn't offend if everybody is doing it.

I was mulling that home-brewed analogy after stumbling upon wine and craft beer reviews in the Leisure Food & Drink pages in several back issues of The Week magazine.

It's pretty interesting reading, with reviewers such as Zachary Sussman, who writes for the periodical Punch, describing the taste of something named

Cinque Campi Lambrusco Rosso as "a mouthful of blackberry, violet and damp earth."

As in "mud" one wonders?

At least one ponders the question if they have camped in Oregon and consequently basked in multiple pungent clouds of damp earth.

"A little piney, with a hint of mulch, compost and, sniff, sniff; is that raccoon poo?"

At \$24 a bottle, we (as in the royal we) will never know about the joys of Cinque Campi Lambrusco Rosso.

Similarly, in a set of reviews about "low-cal keepers" Josh Noel of the Chicago Tribune describes Good Behavior, a Colorado-brewed craft beer as having a "lush, fruity, hops character."

Who knew that you could buy a bit-

See MILLER, Page 3B