



KAYAKING *the* GUADALUPE RIVER

By Shane Reynolds

With the spring upon us, there is no better way to explore the Guadalupe River than by kayak. The Club has a fleet of kayaks for our members and their guests to utilize and invite you to come give it a try. We'll have several complimentary Learn to Kayak classes offered in March and April. We teach kayaking on Swede Creek Lake, a very controlled environment and great place to learn to paddle before heading out onto the waters of the Guadalupe.

When I mention kayaking to our members, I often get a shocked look and comment of "I don't want to be trapped inside a kayak if it flips." That comment is simply referring to a whitewater or touring kayak with a cockpit and spray skirt. The club has all sit-on-top and inflatable kayaks, which are the easiest and safest kayaks to paddle. Sit-on-tops have similar hull shapes to their traditional counterparts, but instead of sitting inside the kayak,

you sit in a molded-in depression on top. Sit-on-tops share many benefits with traditional sit-insides, but are easier to use. There are sit-on-tops for fishing, surfing, touring, scuba diving and more. Sit-on-tops have a few advantages over sit-insides, one of which is comfort. Paddlers with large body types, long legs, or limited flexibility feel less confined paddling a sit-on-top. One of the biggest benefits, though, is the self-rescue. Because sit-on-tops have an open deck rather than an enclosed one, there is no risk of being trapped in the boat if it tips over - no need to practice rolls or wet exits, which really appeals to new paddlers.

From its headwaters outside Kerrville, the Guadalupe River flows over a limestone bed lined with beautiful, huge, old Cypress trees accented by Pecans, Sycamores, Elms, Live Oaks, and others that add to the scenic attraction of the river. The river is slightly narrower near

the headwaters with shallow banks and gravel bars, with fewer rapids. The gradient increases as it moves towards Cordillera Ranch, where rapids exist just below the ranch at Bergheim as the river makes its way towards Canyon Lake and ultimately towards the Gulf of Mexico.

The water quality in the Upper Guadalupe is generally very good. However, it will become muddy after rainfall, and may become cluttered with debris during flood stage conditions. The river slows down during the dog days of summer unless there is adequate rainfall to keep the water flowing. The Upper Guadalupe is a free flowing river at the mercy of rainfall and spring flow. We have three spring fed creeks on Cordillera Ranch that contribute to this beautiful waterway. The first is Spring Creek, which has steady flow as it drops underground in dry times just south of the bridge across Cordillera Trace. The next is Swede Creek, which has a steady

constant flow and feeds the lake at Swede Creek Park. The last is Panther Creek, which is on the undeveloped tract of the KWW Ranch. This beautiful creek is also lined with Cypress trees and has a steady flow down into the Guadalupe River.

Early spring to late June is generally best, followed by late September through early November. With proper cold weather gear the Upper Guadalupe can be paddled in the winter when temperatures are permissible and adequate flow is available. Summer paddling is fun and adventurous with adequate rainfall, but can be a bit challenging in the small rapids when flows are below about 100 cubic feet per second (cfs). Summer temperatures should be considered a hazard if proper

precautions are not taken. Always have protective clothing, sunscreen and plenty of non-alcoholic liquids to prevent dehydration.

I have paddled every section the Upper Guadalupe between Comfort and Canyon Lake over the past three years. During that time I have witnessed many changes in the character of this river. The Upper Guadalupe is my favorite river to paddle because it is serenely beautiful, seldom crowded, and offers an enjoyable paddle trip for almost any paddler. There are some good Class II drops, and at high water levels some of them can become Class III ratings. The Upper Guadalupe is a pool-and-drop river typical of most Texas rivers. I have paddled the Upper Guadalupe in the heat of the summer and cold of winter.

The giant Cypress trees that line this river make for a beautiful paddling experience in the spring and fall, when the grasses are green and the trees are in full bloom. I highly recommend this river for anybody wanting to experience the joys of kayaking. The river club also has tubes and canoes, but can be challenging when the flow is slow. Headwinds can also be a challenge unless the water is moving, so plan trip distances according to flow rate and wind conditions for the most enjoyable paddle trip. Contact the Club Outfitter, Shane Reynolds (sreynolds@cordilleraranch.com), at 210.616.6051 or the Cordillera Ranch Outfitter Center at 830.336.4823 for detailed float times and current river conditions. 🌳

RIVER DISTANCES AROUND CORDILLERA RANCH

Hwy 474 to Swede Creek at Cordillera Ranch	12 miles
Swede Creek at Cordillera Ranch to Bergheim Campground (FM 3351)	1.8 miles
Bergheim Campground (FM 3351) to Edge Falls Road	3.8 miles
Edge Falls Road to Guadalupe State Park	4.5 miles
Guadalupe State Park to Spring Branch Road	9 miles
Spring Branch Road to Hwy 281	4 miles

