# Horseback Riding

There is a long, rich culture of equestrian use along the Buffalo River. From the time of the early settlers until today, horses and mules have been used to support the commerce of the region. Farming and logging with stock was once a common practice in the rural counties along the river. Mail delivery and traveling "circuit rider" judges and preachers depended daily on their horses and mules. Today, equestrian use is one of the popular recreational activities along the Buffalo River, giving visitors access to many of the areas scenic features and the rich history of the Ozark Mountains.

Whether a developed campground or a wilderness adventure, Buffalo National River offers visitors several options for equestrian camping and trail riding. The park encompasses over 95,000 acres that surround the free-flowing Buffalo River with over 75 miles of designated equestrian trails. Many miles of primitive trails and old road traces are also available to equestrian use. The most extensive horse trail network is in the upper section of the river. Due to the extensive network of trails, horseback riders are advised to purchase a Trails Illustrated® map from any of the park visitor centers, park concessionaires, area Arkansas Game & Fish Commission offices, or local area businesses to properly identify park approved equestrian trails. If you wish to ride your horse in the park, please read the park's rules and regulations concerning equestrian use at Buffalo National River.

**Horse Health:** Proof of a negative Equine Infectious Anemia test, commonly known as a Coggins test is required in the state of Arkansas by act 1306 of 1997.

**Wilderness:** The Park's wilderness areas are managed as natural areas where man is but only a visitor. The forces of nature determine the trail conditions to a greater degree than in other

areas of the national river. Be prepared for swollen streams, washouts, downed trees and trail obstacles that may require dismounting during any time of the year. Many of the trails along the Buffalo River are designated for both hiking and equestrian use. Shared use Equestrian trails are marked with a yellow blaze. Please keep horses off trails marked with a white blaze and designated for hiking only. Many of these trails are extremely steep and are not designed or safe for equestrian travel. Each Visitor should make decisions and choose practices that will minimize damage to help preserve the natural and cultural landscape of the river, *"Leave No Trace"*.

## Checklist for Horseback Riders:

- ☐ Halter/lead rope for trail use
- ☐ Insect repellent for horse and rider
- ☐ First aid for horse and rider
- ☐ Adequate food and water for rider and horse
- ☐ Tack
- ☐ Camera
- ☐ Hat
- ☐ Raingear
- ☐ Extra Clothing Layers
- ☐ Current Coggins test papers
- ☐ Highline and tree-savers
- ☐ Maps (Trails Illustrated) & Compass

## Horse Use Rules & Regulations:

### Campground

- Drive-in horse camping is only permitted in campgrounds designated for horse camping.
  - The following campgrounds are designated for horse camping:
    - Steel Creek
    - Erbie
    - Woolum
    - Hathaway
- Camping at the above listed drive-in horse camps is limited to a total of 7 consecutive days.
- All drive-in horse campsites are first come/first serve basis.
- Drive-in horse camping is limited to 6 people and 4 head of stock at each campsite.
- Do not tie horses and pack animals to trees. Use hitching rails, high lines, or pickets to secure animals.
- Riders are responsible for removing or scattering horse manure from camp areas, trailheads, and loading areas.
- Riders are responsible for keeping horses and pack animals within horse camps when not riding.

### Trail Riding

- Horses and pack animals are only permitted on Horse Trails.
  - The following trails are designated Horse Trails:
    - Bench Trail
    - Cecil Cove
    - Old River Trail *(ORT)*

        - Centerpoint
        - Chimney Rock
        - Sneeds Creek
        - BRT/OHT *(Woolum to Gilbert ONLY!)*
        - Cow Creek-Cook Hollow Loop Trail *(Hathaway Trailhead)*
- Dogs are prohibited on all Horse Trails.
- Horses must be attended when grazing or watering. Horses are not permitted to graze in leased hay fields
- Riders are prohibited from off-trail or cross-country riding.
- Equestrian trails are marked with a yellow blaze; riders are prohibited from riding on trails with a white blaze for hiking only.
- If riding the Old River Trail through the Camp Orr Boy Scout Camp please show courtesy to the scouts, their families, and the camp staff. They have been kind enough to allow horseback riding through the camp area and deserve courteous behavior.
- Traditionally, canoes and other watercraft have the right-of-way at river crossings, and horseback riders have the right-of-way when meeting hikers.

## Backcountry Camping

- A backcountry permit is not required within the Buffalo National River.
- Camping is not permitted in or near historic sites and buildings, in hayfields or pastures, or in abandoned buildings or on private land. ***(Note: All fields in the Boxley Valley are private land and camping is not permitted in this area.)***
- No person or party is allowed to camp at Buffalo National River for more than 30 consecutive days in a calendar year.
- Camping is prohibited in all caves and rock shelters within Buffalo National River, as well as, the entire length of the Lost Valley Trail.
- No camping is allowed within ½ mile (805 meters) of any National Park Service developed area unless it is in a designated campsite.
- The possession or use of glass containers in caves, on trails or waterways, or within 100 ft (30.48 meters) of any river or stream in the park is prohibited.
- Select campsites that are on a durable surface.
    - When camping along the river, gravel bars are ideal campsites just be sure you have your stock tied in a vegetated area that is not likely to flood in the night, and have an escape route to higher ground. The plants and organic soils in vegetated areas will convert most of the nutrients from animal waste back into vegetation within one season.
    - When not camping on a gravel bar, select a site that is at least 50 feet off the trail and 100 feet away from a waterway.
    - Scatter manure before leaving camp to aid in its assimilation into vegetation.
- Bathing and Toilet
    - Bathing with soap or shampoos is not allowed in the river or streams. Collect a bucket or pan of water and wash up at least 100 feet from a waterway to prevent polluting the streams.
    - When disposing of human feces dig a hole in organic soil at least 100 feet from a waterway and cover the feces and toilet paper with organic soil. This will prevent water pollution and improves sanitation in camp.
- Campfires
    - Use only dead and down wood. Practice Leave No Trace principles by using wood no larger in diameter than your wrist. The use of hand saws, axes or other types of non-motorized devices is allowed. The use of chain saws or power saws to aid in gathering is prohibited.
    - If a fire ring is present in your camp, use it. Do not build new fire rings.

    - Fires can be built directly on the ground, in a fire pan, or on a sand mound. When the fire is extinguished, nearly all evidence of the fire can easily be obliterated or scattered.
    - Completely extinguish the fire before leaving camp.
    - Do not attempt to burn your trash and garbage in the fire. Food scraps generally do not burn completely. Plastic rarely burns completely and gives off highly toxic compounds when burned. Aluminum, glass, and steel do not burn. Bury the food scraps in organic soil away from camp and haul out the trash.
    - During certain periods of high fire danger, campfires in the wilderness and backcountry may be prohibited unless they are contained in a barbecue grill.
- Do not cut or carve live vegetation. Do not drive nails into trees to hang lanterns.
- When leaving your campsite, police the area to pick up any stray bits of trash. Try to make it look like you were never there.
- Do not leave flagging or other markings hanging in trees to mark your route. This is a form of litter too.

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## General Information:

Always check weather and water levels before and during your trip. Heavy or prolonged rains, which may occur upstream and out of sight, can raise river levels rapidly. Rises of over a foot an hour can occur at any time of the year, and the river can rise more than 25 feet in a single day. If an emergency situation occurs, visitors should not depend on cell phones as cell service is very limited along the river.

In case of Emergency, contact the **Midwest Region Ozark Communication Center (MROCC) 1-888-692-1162.**