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Money

THE REGISTER-HERALD

▼ **DOW**
-38.86 AT 10,177.68

▼ **RUSSELL 2000**
-1.75 at 587.34

▲ **NASDAQ**
+3.10 at 1,955.50

▲ **AMEX**
+10.34 at 1,286.68

▼ **S&P 500**
-.69 AT 1,134.48

▲ **NYSE**
+1.50 at 6,679.25

■ STOCKS ON PAGE 2B

Gauley...that's fun!



COURTESY PHOTO

Fred Pace, front left, Register-Herald business editor, takes advantage of the best whitewater rafting in North America this past weekend on a trip down the lower Gauley River. It's currently Gauley season – a time in the fall when water is released from Summersville Dam. The rapid

release creates a faster flow through the river's 800-foot drop in its 26-mile run through magnificent boulder country, heart stopping rapids and some of West Virginia's most secluded and beautiful scenery.

Fall season provides best whitewater rafting

most whitewater lovers know all about the Gauley season. It's the time of year when some 60,000-plus rafters from around the world flock to the Gauley River in Nicholas County to take advantage of the best whitewater rafting in North America.

Frank Lukacs, owner of North American River Runners in Hico, says Gauley season creates a mini economic boom for the whitewater rafting industry and related businesses in October.

"Besides July, the Gauley season is when we see the most rafters," Lukacs said. "It is an important time in our industry and the economic benefits of Gauley season help the hotels, motels, gas stations and many other businesses in the community as well."

The Gauley offers an adventurous ride during high Gauley season in early autumn, Lukacs explains.

"Gauley season is a time like no other with rafters coming from near and far to experience the unprecedented whitewater thrills that make this river famous," he said.

Gauley season refers to the water release dates from Summersville Dam – a rapid release that creates a faster flow through the river's 800-foot drop in its 26-mile run through magnificent boulder country, heart-stopping rapids and in some of West Virginia's most secluded and beautiful scenery.

The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers is charged with draining Summersville Lake 55 feet to winter pool each fall, Lukacs explained. Approximately 2,500 to 3,000 cfs (cubic feet per second) of water is released on Fridays, Saturdays, Sundays and Mondays for five weekends. Additional Saturday and Sunday releases are scheduled for the sixth weekend.

"As a result, dam releases scheduled for 22 heart-pounding, adrenaline-

pumping days and the Gauley River is alive with excitement," Lukacs said. "If you have ever wanted to go whitewater rafting, Gauley season is a great time to do it."



This past weekend, I got the chance to experience this thrilling ride down the Gauley first-hand. My family and I went down the lower Gauley. It's great for family and first-time rafters, like myself.

The lower Gauley River is made up of long, continuous rapids and powerful hydraulics. Rollercoaster waves rise and fall in great swells of excitement ... the kind you won't find in a theme park.

My guide, Casey, made the trip memorable for all of us. He taught us what to do and did it in a fun and humorous way.

"The right guide is important," Lukacs said. "Finding an expert guide and more information on the Gauley and its peak season is not a problem for NARR. All of our guides have several years of experience and are ready to make the trip fun."

The Gauley River is known as one of the top 10 commercial rafting trips in the world during all seasons, but during Gauley season the river should be at the top of the list.



Along with my wife, my son and myself, the raft included two couples from Ohio – Jamie and Cheryl Messenger of Columbus and Matt and Amy Ramey of Westerville. Cheryl was the only person who had whitewater-rafted before, but never during Gauley season, she said.

According to Lukacs, people from Ohio and Michigan whitewater in West Virginia more than from any other states.

"Wild, wet and wonderful," said Matt Ramey. "That is what I think of when I think of West Virginia."

Following a short training session, we all carried our raft down to the Gauley

MONEY MATTERS



Fred Pace

AT A GLANCE

Where it is: Just off U.S. 19 between Summersville and Fayetteville, the Gauley River National Recreation Area.

What to wear: The water coming out of Summersville Lake is cold – and if the air is cold, a good recipe for hypothermia, if you're not wearing the right clothes. Even if the air is warm, you will most likely want to wear wool socks and polypropylene top and pants as many trips happen in the early morning. Come late September and early October, it's usually wetsuit wearing time. All of the licensed West Virginia whitewater outfitters have wetsuit and paddling jacket rentals. Avoid cotton clothes and jeans. Wear old tennis shoes or sandals.

Read all about it: For incredible detail about running the Gauley and paddling all navigable rivers and streams in West Virginia, check out the 30th anniversary edition of "A Canoeing and Kayaking Guide to West Virginia" (\$16.95, Menasha Ridge Press).

On the Web: www.callwva.com, www.NARR.com, www.white-water.com, www.nps.gov/gari.

Bridge Day: Most rafting companies run a two-day special that includes rafting the Lower New River (which flows underneath the New River Gorge Bridge) near Fayette Station Rapids on Bridge Day, Oct. 16. The last day of Gauley season is Oct. 17. This year is the 25th Anniversary of Bridge Day, so don't wait to call and book reservations.



COURTESY PHOTO

Gauley season begins just after Labor Day celebrations and runs from Friday through Monday for five consecutive weekends, and Saturday and Sunday the sixth weekend. Remaining dam release dates for the

world-class whitewater rafting season: Fridays through Mondays, Oct. 8, 9, 10 and 11 and Oct. 16 and 17 – special release dates during Bridge Day weekend.

River to begin our whitewater adventure through the rugged, unspoiled canyon.

As we made our way down the river, we hit over 70 rapids and breathtaking scenery. The Class III and IV journey through steep, turbulent chutes and rocky routes kept our adrenaline pumping.

“This is awesome!” shouted my 15-year-old son as we managed to make it through rapid after rapid without incident.

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Our trip wasn’t without its share of excitement and adventure.

On the last rapid of the day we hit a drop in the river known as “Hell Hole.”

According to our guide, many rafts that hit this hole easily flip over and dump rafters into the rapids.

Since we had made it clear to Casey from the beginning that we wanted excitement, he steered our raft directly into the Class IV rapid.

When we hit the rapid it spun us around to the right and the swirling waters sucked the raft into the hole itself, creating a high side to the right of the boat.

The guide, my son and I all leaned to the high side to keep the raft from tipping over, but that was not enough to keep Matt and Amy from being ripped out of the boat. They were sitting on the right side, which was the low side when we hit the rapid. Both went out feet over head and we could see the scared looks in their eyes as they hit the water.

Our raft made it out and we all laughed about the whole adventure as we picked up our two comrades a few hundred feet down river.

The best part is that there are so many people there to help if you fall out of the boat. Nobody on the trip ever felt like we were in any danger.

“This is an extreme sport and it does come with risks,” Lukacs said. “But statistics show that you are safer in a whitewater raft than you are driving in your car from work or school.”

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Our adventure was a little mild, but very fun. For the experienced rafters – looking for the ultimate extreme whitewater adventure – look no further than the upper Gauley River.

“The upper Gauley offers a ride to

pump the adrenaline and challenge the body,” Lukacs said.

The upper Gauley River is the essence of big water excitement creating an intense whitewater experience not recommended for the faint of heart or first-time rafters.

“If an untamed adventure is what you’re looking for, you’ll discover more than 40 rapids in all, five of which are rated as solid Class V’s,” Lukacs said. “Bring a good dose of courage to keep you going and you can have the adventure of your life.”

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Gauley season begins just after Labor Day celebrations and runs from Friday through Monday for five consecutive weekends, and Saturday and Sunday the sixth weekend.

Remaining dam release dates for the Gauley River fall, world-class whitewater rafting season: Fridays through Mondays, Oct. 8, 9, 10 and 11 – special release dates during Bridge Day weekend.

For more information about Gauley River and whitewater rafting, go online at www.callwva.com.

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