

SPORTS

Scenic Wildlife Habitat Enhances Salt River Kayaking

By AnnElise Makin

Life doesn't get any better when rising early on a summer morning and going out in a kayak on the Salt River.

Paddle along the morning-lit Superstitions Goldfield Cliffs, in all their magnificence, and breathe in the serenity of a still and quiet river.

That is what Stephen Durand would recommend. He should know. He owns the Saguaro Lake Guest Ranch by the Stewart Mountain Dam.

"Here at Saguaro Lake Guest Ranch, we have one of the most scenic ranches in Arizona," Stephen said. Amidst a Southwestern picture book setting, the Guest Ranch offers bed and breakfast accommodations, conference packages, as well as horseback riding opportunities during the winter months, and a very unique kayaking opportunity in the summer.

"I always tell people to start early, to experience the wildlife along the banks and the peace and quiet of nature," the owner stated. As a group of kayakers were checking in, Stephen led me to the launching site.

In the shade of lush mesquite trees, manager John Bevell was orientating a group about the river's navigation. Enchanted by the spectacular view, the kayakers were eager to enter water—but not without a safety orientation and paddling lesson first.

John demonstrated the paddle strokes, and pulled out a laminated map of the river course. The backside showed

a photograph of the trip's exit point.

Then he led the group to the river, and had them practice paddling upstream. He joked, "Isn't this some good aerobic exercise!" John wanted to see how confident these kayakers were. With approval, he released them downriver into the postcard scenery.



ABOUT SAGUARO LAKE GUEST RANCH

Saguaro Lake Guest Ranch has been a scenic landmark since the 1930s. It served initially as a workmen's lodging camp during dam construction. The Durand family was the second owner, acquiring the property in 1948.

Saguaro Lake Kayaking started in 1998, when Stephen Durand's then high school-age sons, Justin and Kevin, started the river activity. John and Sean A'Lee Bevell, managers of Saguaro Lake Guest Ranch, are now in charge of kayaking as part of the Ranch's recreational programs.

The National Forest Service federally regulates all Guest Ranch operations through a special use permit. Its rich history, bucolic hospitality and breathtaking scenery make this guest lodge a special landmark. Add to that the horseback riding and kayaking opportunities, and it is a unique resort for heart and soul.



BEFORE YOU GO OUT ON A KAYAKING TRIP

- Reserve a time slot at Saguaro Lake Kayaking. Trips are by reservation only. Call (480) 984-2194.
- Wear good water/river shoes that stay on your feet.
- Pack up plenty of bottled water.
- Bring high-octane sunscreen, a shady hat and sun-protective clothing.
- Leave valuables and expensive cameras at home.

WHEN YOU ARE THERE

Before each trip, kayakers also get a briefing on the wildlife along the banks. The State Audubon Society has declared this part of the Salt River as an Important Bird Area.

- Listen to the pre-orientation carefully, and practice paddle strokes.
- Open your eyes to nature, and breathe in deeply.
- Watch out for the Great Blue Heron, Osprey, Southern Bald Eagle and other birds.
- Keep your eyes open for wild horses, turtles, otter, deer and other wildlife.
- Go with the flow, anticipate waves and shallow water, and enjoy!

"We use ocean style kayaks that you sit on top of," Stephen explained to me. "Ocean style kayaks are user-friendly. You can easily jump off, and don't have to know maneuvers to roll out of." His fleet comprises about a hundred such polyethylene vessels.

"A lot of people, who come here, know how to use a kayak already, but beginners are always welcome," Sean A'lee Bevell, co-manager with her husband, John, stated.

The minimum age for kayaking is 12 years. The maximum passenger weight is 250 pounds. The trip package includes kayak rental, paddle and a life vest.

Saguaro Lake Kayaking offers two unguided Salt River trips. These are a 5-mile trip (2 hours, at a fee of \$41) and a 12-mile trip (about 4.5 hours, at a fee of \$70), which ends at Granite Reef parking lot.

Before each excursion, John and Sean A'lee caution all kayakers about valuables, cameras and cell phones. On the long trip, however, a cell phone is required to call for pick up or emergencies.

"Most people take the short trip," Stephen said, "but they like it so well they come back to do the entire river." Groups of kayakers—all trips by appointment only—are launched on the full hour, starting at 7 a.m., with the last launch at noon.

"This summer, we also want to offer guided kayak trips," Stephen announced. With these interpretive tours,

Saguaro Lake Kayaking reaches out to a new clientele, especially senior citizens.

"There is a certain fear of a river," Stephen observed. But under the wings of an experienced guide, even unlikely kayakers may come to benefit from the rejuvenating rush of this outdoors water activity amidst a close-by-home scenic paradise. ■

Saguaro Lake Kayaking is located at the Guest Ranch by the Stewart Mountain Dam. Follow Bush Highway north past the Blue Point (tuber spot) picnic area, and take the last right turn before the ascent to Lake Saguaro. Stop down in the valley at the Guest Ranch for registration.

For more information go to www.saguarolakerranch.com, or call Saguaro Lake Kayaking at (480) 984-2194.



ORGANIZING

Summer Projects Can Help with Organizing

By Nancy Nemitz

Summer is the perfect time to organize those parts of your household difficult to get to when the children are in school, and you are running around like crazy getting them to all their after school activities.

SCHOOL PAPERS

Toss all school papers except for a few special art pieces or writing projects. They will never look back or reference math, spelling, grammar or tests. It's easy to organize years of schoolwork you want to keep if you get a binder and fill it with page protectors. Have one binder per child.

CLOTHES

What fits now, and what will fit six months from now? The rest can be put in a container labeled with the clothes sizes, and stored for hand-me-downs if appropriate. Otherwise, donate clothes that no longer fit or they won't wear.

ACTIVITIES

Summer is a great time for board games, cards and art projects. Put these on easily accessible shelves so they can put the games away easily. Put art projects into containers so all the little pieces don't go missing. I recommend they finish one project before going on to the next. Too often, I see half-done projects sitting around clients' homes.

PHOTOS

This is the perfect time of year to edit digital and print photos. Gather them all together, and get that project done. This is another area of the home with which people have difficulty because they won't throw anything out or delete a picture. Only keep the best memories.

SUMMER TRIPS

Avoid buying little trinkets that won't mean anything when you get home, and will end up in the garbage a few years later. You've got the pictures, remember. Buy only what you truly love, not just to buy something. ■

If you need help this summer getting your home organized and your children ready for the school year, I'd be happy to help. Call Nancy Nemitz at (480) 223-8939, Create the Space Professional Organizing. View her Web site at www.createthespace.com.

