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## ***Bruneau/Jarbidge Rivers***

These rivers are some of the West's best-kept secrets with canyons unique to this continent. Some refer to them as the "Sistine Chapel" of all canyon lands. Rarely visited, and strictly regulated by the Bureau of Land Management, ROW is one of the very few outfitters licensed and permitted to run the Jarbidge and Bruneau. We added the Jarbidge & Bruneau rivers to our desert-river repertoire in 1998.

**Natural and Cultural History:** These rivers flow through dramatic, multi-colored canyons, reminiscent of places like Bryce and Zion National Parks in southern Utah. Vertical faces of rock, 300 to 1000 feet high, tower above the river. Within the canyon walls mountain juniper grows, as well as sagebrush, willow, hackberry and numerous grasses. Three species of endangered plants are located along the rivers, including the Owyhee River Stickseed, Anderson's buttercup and Inch-High Lupine. In May the desert is in full bloom and dozens of plants are flowering, making a rainbow of color.

There is a great variety of bird life in the canyon. Golden eagles, numerous hawks, falcons, Canada geese, teals, and songbirds are abundant. In all we've spotted over 60 bird species on our trips. We may also see beaver, otter, coyote, deer, muskrat, antelope and desert big horn sheep.

Native Americans have lived in this canyon for at least 9000 years. Numerous petroglyphs and other evidence are found along the river's banks. Recorded history of the region began in 1812 with the first explorations by white men.

The origin of the name Bruneau has two possibilities. One is that it's from the French "brun" for brown and "eau" for water. The other is that it was named after Jean-Baptiste Bruneau who visited the area in 1815 as an employee of the North West Fur Trading Company. The Jarbidge, a major tributary that joins the West Fork Bruneau to form the Bruneau proper, supposedly comes from a Shoshone word meaning "devil" or "monster." Our take on the Jarbidge would rather be something like "spectacular" or "magical."

Idaho's great gold rush began in the 1860's. In 1863 prospectors discovered gold along Jordan Creek, and the mining towns of DeLamar, Ruby City and Silver City were developed. By the 1880's cattle and sheep ranchers had become established on the plateaus and in the canyons of the Bruneau. Many of these were run by Basque people and there is still a sizeable Basque population in the area. Along the river, we still see the remains of old rock cabins and waterwheels left by the early pioneers who settled the area and then moved on to places offering an easier way of life.

**When to Go?** The Bruneau / Jarbidge comes from a slightly higher north-facing watershed, and we offer trips from late May to the third week of June. Since spring is a time when weather systems tend to be less stable than in the summer, temperature ranges can be extreme, with the possibility of snow flurries and a 95-degree sun in the same day. Our detailed packing list will tell you what you need to bring to be properly prepared.

**The Bruneau. 5 days. 40 miles.** This has plenty of whitewater action, with exciting class III-IV rapids, but, unlike the Middle Owyhee (below), are all runnable. The grand finale, "Five Mile Rapids" will impress you. This is one of the steepest and most enchanting canyon landscapes in America with red-colored sheer walls tower above the verdant vegetation of grasses and ancient juniper trees. There's a wealth of archaeological sites, including a hike to Cave Creek where we visit caves inhabited not long ago by Native Americans. The river requires we use small rafts and trips are limited to ten guests and five guides. Our BLM permit allows only 3 trips per season. Call soon!

**Jarbidge/Bruneau Combination. 7 days.** The Jarbidge adds 29 miles to the Bruneau trip for a total of 69 miles. These 29 miles are fast and narrow with overhanging junipers and tight, towering canyon walls. We may have to line our rafts through one rapid and have a full portage around Jarbidge Falls, which requires an hour or two of hard work. This trip is expeditionary in nature and best suited for those with prior rafting experience. Paddling your own inflatable kayak (duckie) is a possibility on this section.

**Because of the unpredictable weather and water levels, we ask that everyone who signs up for these trips be flexible and come prepared for all kinds of weather.** Both high and low water can happen. In low water we can usually run, but it might require running lighter rafts with fewer amenities. If the Bruneau was too high, we could probably transfer to the Owyhee – another of our desert rivers. Our goal is always to run the Bruneau or Jarbidge and you can bet we'll do everything in our power to run the trip as scheduled. If we do have to change, it won't change your logistics any, since we will still meet and end in Boise.

**Meeting Point:** All trips meet the evening before the launch date. Trips on the Bruneau or Jarbidge meet in Boise, Idaho.

**Before you decide on which trip is best for you, please call us to discuss the details of each section.** ROW, Inc. is proud to be an Equal Opportunity recreation service provider under special use permit from the Boise and Vale Districts of the Bureau of Land Management.

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