

Limestone canyon walls stretch more than 1,000 feet above the Rio Grande River.



★
RAFT GOURMET-STYLE

THE RIO GRANDE GOURMET RAFTING TRIP IS THE EPITOME OF SOPHISTICATION SANS CIVILIZATION.

Before the first raft shoves off from the put-in—a two-hour, dusty-road drive from Terlingua, Texas, and all signs of human life and commerce—Swiss-born chef Francois Maeder and the guides serve everyone gourmet sandwiches and a freshly tossed pasta-and-veggie salad for lunch. That’s the drill for every meal, the most unique example of alfresco dining in the South. Overstuffed omelets on the banks of the river just after sunrise. Goose liver pâté with truffles and herb-and-Dijon mustard-encrusted New Zealand rack of lamb as the sun sets.

The three-day float follows about 12 miles of the brook-calm Rio Grande, the river that edges the Big Bend National Park and forms part of the border between Mexico and Texas.

You won’t even have to worry about paddling, because your boat’s guide handles every stroke. Your only challenge is to dial down your tempo to sync with the peaceful river. Start by listening to its trickling water. Follow the lines of

the limestone canyon walls stretching up 1,800 feet, all the way to the clear West Texas sky. Because there are no man-made lights shining for miles in all directions, that same sky at night reveals spotlight-bright constellations like white splatters on a black canvas.

Swallows flutter across the canyon. Tiny lizards sun on the warm rocks. Aside from the group, you won’t see footprints on the silty shore or encounter another soul for three days. The legendary river, the epic-size canyon, the second glass of Pinot Grigio at dinner—they all belong solely to you. *

For more information visit ffoc.net, or call 800-839-7238.

WHAT YOU’LL PAY: \$914

Three-day/two-night rafting trip, includes camping tents and meals: **\$775 per person**
Tip for your guide (around 10% is a good rule of thumb): **\$75**

One-night’s stay at Big Bend Resort in Terlingua the night before the trip: **\$89**

Chef Francois Maeder prepares a riverside gourmet meal for the rafters.

