

Smoky Mountain Outdoors

Guide Training Program

Smoky Mountain Outdoors (SMO) has a long-standing record of training great river guides. Over the past two decades, we have trained hundreds of guides, many of whom have continued on to other rivers both in the states and internationally.

Training is FREE of charge. As someone who is interested in becoming a whitewater raft guide you may have noticed that some companies offer training courses, but at a high cost. Our guide training program is designed to be affordable, with a full-time guide positioned offered to all that pass the course.

There is a cost that every new guide must expect, and that is the cost of your equipment. Again, we make this extremely affordable. In order to keep the cost as low as possible, we pass our wholesale rates directly to our employees. We recommend shopping around online to compare the cost of gear. We are confident you will not find a better deal! Here is the list of what every guide at SMO must have.

- Black Class V PFD (lifejacket)
- Black Whitewater Helmet
- 75' Throw Bag
- Two Locking Carabiners
- Two Unlocking Carabiners
- 10' Tubular Webbing
- Whistle
- Two 6' 4mm Prusik Cords
- First-Aid and CPR Certification American Red Cross
- River Knife (not included)

The cost of all this equipment is a reasonable \$300.

If you are interested in attending one of our guide schools, please fill out an application. <https://www.smokymountainrafting.com/raft-guide-application/>

After completing application, and reading all the information provided, please feel free to send your resume and cover letter to scott@smokymountainrafting.com. Most applicants also choose to include photos of themselves to show their personalities; this is a great way to put a face with a name. Eligible applicants will be contacted with an interview phone call.

FAQ's

Is housing provided?

Yes, housing is provided for all employees and trainees.

What can you expect from guide school?

Our guide schools are five day courses. Mornings start at 8 am. You will spend the morning on dry land going over the days lessons. After lunch, it will be time to hit the river. The rest of the day will be on the river, using a very hands on approach. The day will end with a debriefing and instructions for the following day.

The following week will be spent working towards getting “checked-out.” This is to ensure each trainee has a complete understanding of their skills and fundamentals taught during training, while working with senior guides and guests.

What will be covered in training?

- Reading water
- Paddle strokes
- Commanding a raft
- Steering a raft
- Maneuvering rapids
- Swimming rapids
- Equipment care and repair
- River rescue techniques
- Loading and unloading rafts
- River hazards
- American Red Cross First Aid and CPR Certifications
- Basic work skills, such as dealing with group dynamics, leadership, teamwork, river etiquette, customer service, public speaking, company procedures and, above all, safety.

What do you need to bring?

A detailed packing list will be sent to all applicants.

When is training?

March 12th -16th

May 7th -11th

May 14th -18th

May 21st -25th

June 4th -8th

June 11th -15th

*dates and availability are subject to change due to number of participants

Where is training held?

Training is held at our outpost on the Pigeon River in Hartford, Tennessee. Detailed directions to the outpost and housing will be sent to all applicants. We recommend you arrive a day or two early to settle in and meet the other trainees before training begins.

What can I expect if I am offered a position at SMO?

We hire on a seasonal basis. Our peak season runs Memorial Day weekend through Labor Day weekend. Between those dates, you are required to work each Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday, and Saturday.

The River

The Pigeon River has two commercially rafted sections, The Upper and The Lower. The Upper Pigeon River is a six and a half mile stretch of Class III-IV whitewater. The Lower Section is a five mile scenic Class I-II section. The Pigeon River is a dam-released river, flowing on a scheduled release from 12:00 pm to 6:00 pm, Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday and Saturday from Memorial Day through Labor Day.

Our Staff

We have a diverse, fun-loving staff of 80 raft guides and growing. Most guides are in their early twenties, others bring years of river experience to the staff. It's an experience like none other and will stay with you for years to come. We are a tight-knit group, often spending our time off together. Each week, the company hosts a staff dinner where everyone can take an evening to relax and enjoy a meal and have fun at the outpost.

SMO Standards

We consider our standards among the highest in the industry. We do not tolerate the use of illicit drugs. In the case of an accident, drug testing can be requested by management. We do not allow drinking under the age of 21. The use of tobacco products while at work are prohibited. We expect all employees to maintain specific standards and guidelines regarding appearance, language, customer relations, hygiene, and conduct.

We expect our guides to:

- Maintain a cooperative attitude while interacting with co-workers and guests.
- Be able to work under all weather conditions
- Possess a high degree of initiative. You must be a self-starter, prompt, and flexible.
- Be able to communicate honestly and openly with co-workers and accept criticism.
- Take pride in a job well done and be willing to take suggestions for improvement.
- Provide the highest standard of customer care and professionalism.
- Show up to work on time, in uniform with a positive attitude and a readiness to work.

Where will I be living?

The housing and outpost are located riverside in the quaint town of Hartford, Tennessee. If you feel like getting out and stretching your legs, the Smoky Mountain National Park is only minutes away. If you want a night out on the town, Knoxville and the University of Tennessee are an hour to our west and the eclectic mountain town of Asheville, North Carolina is an hour to our east.

Guide housing is available at only \$75 a month and is deducted from your paycheck monthly. Our accommodations vary, but roughing-it-easy best describes our rooms. You will be paired up with another guide to share the room with for the season. Guides are encouraged to decorated their living areas to making them more comfortable. The rooms are unfurnished and contain a bunkbed mattress platform (twin) and not much else. Bedding is not provided, so bring what is suitable for your comfort level (mattress, bed sheets, sleeping bag, pillows, etc). Rooms do have electricity and air-conditioning. WI-FI is available at the outpost, just a short walk from guide housing. Camping is free and amenities are included.

Separate shower and bathroom facilities are provided for men and women. A communal guide kitchen is provided for all guides, but pots, pans, plates etc. are not provided.

Pet Policy

We love dogs and cats, but for the safety of our customers, guides, and the pets themselves, pets are not allowed on SMO property.

If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact us. Send your application and information in as soon as possible to ensure a spot in one of our guide training programs. We look forward to reading your application and getting to know you.

Sincerely,

Scott Woodson
Operations Manager
Smoky Mountain Outdoors
scott@smokymountainrafting.com