

GUYdelines

A few thoughts for outdoor lovers and leaders from

WILD GUYde Adventures, LLC

Vol. 14, No. 4 (Fall, 2020)

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Leading and Serving

Good Samaritans

We are paddling – Day 2 of 3 on the Greenbrier River in West Virginia, after 4 days of backpacking in Otter Creek Wilderness. We are in open canoes and gear-loaded, and I know something the students don't. By mid-afternoon, we will encounter Tumblerock – a solid Class III rapid with standing large troughs and haystacks, and now in early spring, a lot of volume. By this point in the trip, we have had a good look at paddle partner combinations, and we have refined teamwork and river skills; it will be intimidating, but they are ready. They begin to hear the roar when we are about a quarter mile upstream, and the river speed is picking up. By the time we are all beached up on river-right to scout, there are nervous glances all around, and no one is saying much.

The rapid is in a mountain slot, steep and narrow (hence the speed of the water), and we can scramble up on the right side to get a good view. I point out the features, and the two options for running it: right through “the meat” in the middle (big waves, a turning move halfway through to avoid colliding with a “tombstone”, and then out into the finishing pool), or hug the left side (faster, less maneuvering, but big swells, and don't get spun by the slow-fast currents side by side). *“Whichever route you take, everyone is going to get bounced and probably take in some water, but if you work like crazy to keep your boat parallel to the immediate flow, it is doable. DO NOT get sideways in that current!”* There is no real “cheat-route” in this one, and portaging is not an option. As partners are conferring, I notice another boat up close to the rapid and sheltering behind a car-sized boulder; it looks like 4 people – 2 adults and 2 small ones – and I think I know what is going on.

I scramble down to chat, and sure enough, the dad has brought his family out for the day, and now they are trapped. He doesn't feel good about taking the kids through, but there is no other way. The children are 7 and 9, and they look petrified.

“Do you think you can take your wife through in your boat, if we take the kids?” The parents are willing to try that, so we set up the plan. I will send my assistant instructor and her partner through the whitewater first with one of the throw ropes, to set up a rescue below the rapid. Three more of our boats will put more people down below to assist and retrieve anything if someone flips, followed by Dad and Mom. Finally, my partner and I will share off one of our gear bags to raise our boat a bit and increase maneuverability, and finish by bringing the children through.

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By now, everyone is taking this very seriously ... and so executes flawlessly! When it is finally our turn, my partner and I settle the kids down deep in the boat, backs braced up against gear, and PFD's cranked on as tight as possible. *"Kids, we are going to get a bit wet, and it's going to feel pretty wild, but we will make it – okay?!"* We paddle upstream from the big boulder hugging the bank, and then turn sharply out into the fat flow. I am aiming for the far bank, but the rapid is sucking us down toward the middle, and this water is moving very fast. I am also aware that if we go into the rapid in this cross-current boat position, everyone will be swimming, and the children will probably never want to go canoeing ever again! The mind gets tremendously focused at times like this, and with some yelling and serious muscle-effort, we fight it long enough to diagonal across and then straighten out for the big bouncy ride down the left side. In the capture pool below, we paddle over to the grassy bank and have an extended family reunion – paddle-high-fives and celebratory GORP* all around!

The more time one spends in the outdoors, the more likely it is that one will encounter someone who needs help. I have come upon folks who are lost in caves or on trails for lack of a map (or know-how for using it), scraped knees and twisted ankles, and an elderly gentleman who broke his hip while loading his Jon-boat. I have resupplied people's toilet paper, water, and matches, given advice about hiking routes, offered guidance on anchor-building, assisted with numerous vehicular letdowns, and done a bunch of mild medical care. In situations like these, it is profitable to remember that first rule of wilderness first aid: *"Never create a second victim."* Rushing into an incident or disaster scene without first checking for scene-safety or donning your own protective equipment (gloves, helmet, PFD) may mean that shortly, someone will be trying to figure out how to rescue you.

How we Serve

For the guide, this takes on additional implications. When I meet someone who is dehydrated, I don't give them my water bottle. If I have a subject who is hypothermic, I don't offer them my fleece. Now this sounds like selfishness, but it is actually the opposite – it is the heart of servant leadership. When it all goes south, this group of 10 people is counting on me to keep them safe out there, and if I am compromised by cold or dehydration, I may have just created 11 victims instead of one. So, I have violated the first rule of wilderness first aid, and I haven't done anything to help the one individual who might really need care.

This is a difficult lesson for young outdoor leaders to learn. It feels self-centered and selfish – *"thinking about myself first."* I contend that it is the opposite – it is maintaining my fitness to serve. This is much like the safety briefing on a commercial air flight, in which they instruct you if needed to *"put your own air mask on first before assisting others."* Maintain your fitness to serve. We are protectors first.

There is an additional dynamic – a core ethic of climbing guides is that your clients are your chief responsibility. When we happen upon strangers in need of assistance, it can be very tempting to the ego to be the one who has the answers or can create the rescue. But if it requires me to relax my vigilant concern for my clients, I have abdicated my primary responsibility. They are the ones that have engaged me for their day, and my responsibility toward them is the legal standard against which I will be judged if one of them gets hurt. So, to mix metaphors a little, being a Good Samaritan to strangers is appealing, but being a good parent to immediate family is priority. Further down on the moral hierarchy but still a consideration in the back of my mind is also, if I engage in this assistance, it might stand to detract significantly from the time and attention that I give my group and the quality of their experience (that they paid for) today. How do I reconcile all of that?

This now necessitates wisdom of response instead of impulsivity. This is true most times when we face a "greater good" question. Our complex decisions are often not between good and bad but between good and better. Instead of running in to do the obvious (and maybe heroic-looking) thing, we must pause and ask, *"How do I serve this situation while not compromising either my safety or the safety of my group?"* It might be helpful to pause at this point and ask yourself, *"When in my day or leadership milieu do I face this challenge – to have to decide between doing something immediately gratifying, deferring in favor of a higher value, or fashioning a creative response that satisfies both?"*

There is not an answer that applies in every situation, so providing some of the questions to consider might be the best I can do. I would like to offer three thoughts that might provide guardrails for our decisions at times like these. I would like to think that these can apply, not just in outdoor experiences, but around home or the office, whenever you become aware that someone in your orbit has a need.

1. Am I capable of being helpful here? This is an objective assessment of resources, and has nothing to do with your desire to be helpful. If a needed intervention is beyond your current skill level or capacity to contribute, then hurrying in might unwittingly “*create the second victim.*” Yes, I am here to serve, but what are the boundaries around my contribution? Stated another way, what is the best contribution that I am presently capable of making here? The person who runs for help is as much a hero as the one who applies the bandage or splint. In remote environments, we always ask the questions, “*What can I do here that will not further degrade the situation or place my group members at risk?*” This is as relevant when offering a friend advice or personal counsel as it is in a technical outdoor rescue intervention. The first part of the Hippocratic Oath is to “*do no harm.*”
2. Can I contribute while maintaining, and maybe even enhancing my primary commitments (care for myself, care for my group, teaching and learning for my team, etc.)? In my case, can getting involved be educative for my students and clients? Rappelling off Seneca Rocks with 3 students, we heard the sirens, and then saw the Medivac chopper arriving at the heliport in the meadow below. As we hiked down, we walked right into the rescue – a gentleman soloing had taken a 20’ ground fall at the Southern Pillars, and they had just gotten him into the Stokes litter at the base. Carry-outs always need more muscle-power, so we added the four of us into the team, belaying the litter down the rocky slope and then carrying it to the waiting helicopter. Listening to my students in the van as we drove home later, they were justifiably proud at being able to offer help, and I was gratified that their education about recreating in the outdoors, and being ready to offer aid had been so experientially enhanced.
3. Have I subjected my ego to cross-examination? It can be tempting to want to be Superman, but ego-driven reasons are rarely good ones. Having a trusted assistant or co-leader to help here can be precious – someone who will test out your impulses with hard questions, and fill in gaps in the rationale or plan.

In short, we lead to be of service, to our organizational missions, to our team members, and maybe also to the wider world we encounter. Kurt Hahn, founder of Outward Bound, knew that often, service can bring these various strands together. This visionary and altruistic German educator founded the Salem Boys School, and his students created and staffed the community’s fire brigade. Later at the Gordonstoun School, Hahn’s students established the local seaside rescue service. He would say late in life: “*The experience of helping a fellow man in danger or even of training in a realistic manner to be ready to give this help, tends to change the balance of power in a youth’s inner life, with the result that compassion can become the master motive.*” Our students’ and team members’ experiences are enriched and their learning enhanced when meaningful service is woven in. How we serve in various situations will take on different looks, shapes and sizes, but ultimately, should be a product of careful and deliberate reflecting, and then action.

*GORP is trail mix – various combinations of dried fruit and nuts – not some adult libation that you might be thinking of! The name derives from Good Old Raisins and Peanuts. My favorite version always contains copious quantities of Fruit Loops and M and M’s.

Are you coming to Virginia for a family vacation, church group trip, troop event, or escape weekend? Why not experience Virginia adventure with **WILD GUYDE Adventures!** WGA offers guided beginner level outdoor adventures and competent instruction in activity fundamentals. We can take you ***hiking, rock climbing and rappelling, caving, or canoeing.*** We use various activity areas in the George Washington and Monongahela National Forests, along Virginia’s Blue Ridge, and in the Potomac Highlands of West Virginia. Check out the 2020 trip options below, or call to talk about your own creative adventure idea! (540-433-1637, lester@wildguyde.com , or ou may visit www.wildguyde.com)

CHOOSE YOUR ADVENTURE: 2020 Daytrips with WILD GUYde Adventures,
Harrisonburg, VA

Top-Roping at Hidden Rocks, Virginia: This is the rock climbing trip for the adventurous beginner – you don't have much experience, but you want a great outdoor day with your family or special friends. Thirty minutes west of Harrisonburg, we'll park just inside George Washington National Forest, gear up, and hike a scenic 20 minutes through rhododendron and hemlocks and across some mountain streams to a secluded sandstone cliff. There will be pink and white mountain laurel in June, and wild huckleberries in August. You'll be introduced to harnesses, knots, helmets, and the *belay system*; then we'll try some easy warm-up climbs to remind you that the kid inside you still likes to clamber on things. We can go on to some harder climbing that invites you to try new skills and movements. And we'll finish the day with a rappel – backing over the edge, with nothing between you and the ground below but 60 feet of air and a great view! Closer to Luray or Northern Virginia? We'll visit **Waterfall Mountain** in the Massanutten Range, or **Little Stony Man** on the Blue Ridge for TALL climbing and spectacular Shenandoah Valley panoramas! Closer to Lexington or Roanoke? We'll visit **Goshen Pass** and climb above the gorgeous Maury River!

(Full day \$225 for 1-3 people; \$50 for each additional. ½-day \$150 for 1-3, and \$35 for each additional)



Beginner Climbing at Seneca Rocks, WV: After 90 minutes of curving mountain highway (okay, *country two-lane*), you'll gasp to see a spectacular blade of Tuscarora Sandstone, whose summit sits almost 1000 feet above its North Fork Valley floor. Seneca Rocks is a scenic place for the beginner or family to learn the rock climbing basics, top-roping and rappelling to an awesome West Virginia backdrop. Easy routes guarantee early success, but more challenging climbs also wait to test your skills. Seneca Rocks is an awesome place to climb, just beyond the sign: "*Here ends the realm of the hiker!*"

(Full day \$225 for 1-3 people; \$65 for each additional. ½ day \$200 for 1-3; \$50 each additional)

Multi-Pitch at Seneca Rocks: A little more experienced in climbing? Maybe you tried it at camp or the local rock gym? Ready for the next step? Join me for the multi-pitch experience, seconding the route as we lead-climb to the top of the fabled South Summit! This is the only technical summit in the U.S. east of the Mississippi. Seneca has routes at all ranges of difficulty, from starters like *Old Ladies Route* (5.2) to mid-range classics (*West Pole* 5.7) to old school hardman routes like *Crack of Dawn* and *Madmen Only* (5.10). Every one of them will give you a new appreciation for the expression "*high and vertical.*" Register your accomplishment and ruminations in the summit journal, wave to tourists way down in the valley, and then head down to *terra firma* via the three-pitch rappel. Finish the day with a splash in the North Fork River swimming hole at "Gravel Beach", then pick up a cold drink and a West Virginia memento at Harpers General Store before sleeping the ride back to Virginia and "the Burg."

(Full-day: \$225 1st person; \$150 each addl.)

Instructional Climbing: This is a tutorial for those who have a little exposure to climbing, and want to gain eventual autonomy. Lots of instruction in current best-practice and hands-on trying it for *girls* in rigging top anchors, belaying skills and equipment alternatives, movement coaching, and rappelling and protection. There will be individualized attention and repetitive practice, as well as some exploration of the historical evolution of climbing equipment and protocol. You will finish the day with a lot more confidence in your basic skills. Bring a partner so you'll have someone to climb with later.

(\$175 1st person; \$125 each for 2nd and 3rd)



WILD GUYde Adventures offers two other rock climbing options: a **Boy Scout Rock Climbing Merit Badge** tutorial for troops and leaders. We send a booklet to get troops started on their knots and First Aid requirements ahead of time, and then spend two days going through all the climbing, gear spec., and rappelling activity requirements (\$90 each). We also offer the **PCIA (Professional Climbing Instructor**

Association) Top Rope Climbing Instructor Certification course and exam. This 3-day course (\$450) and 1 day exam (\$150) is for recreational climbers who want to add an instructor certification on their resume. It's also very useful for individuals guiding with club, camp, or university outing programs.

Peaceful Paddling: Canoe a ½ day stretch of the **South Fork River**. This Class I and II water is ideal for families with elementary school children – just long enough to be engaging without getting boring. As we wind through pastures in the Shenandoah Valley, you'll learn basic canoe strokes and maneuvering. Dangle your feet or plunk your head to cool off. And keep watching for blue herons, turtles on logs, and cows in the water!

(\$140 1-3 people; \$35 each additional)



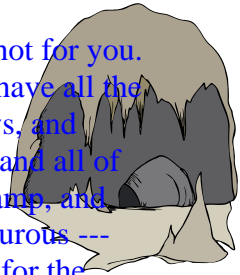
Pick-up-the-Pace Paddling: A fuller day of canoeing awaits further down the **South Fork**. This provides a little more excitement for teenagers, adventurous parents, & other paddle pilgrims! A casual start allows a review of canoe strokes and partner teamwork.

An amazing rope-swing breaks the quiet – you won't believe what comes out of your mouth when you let go ("**Geronimo!**") More paddling through runs and pools, always under the shadow of Massanutten Mountain. Lunch on the bank and then back into the boats. Finally, at Milepost 17, *Compton's Rapid* – a great shoot-through with some higher standing waves! Paddlers call it a "Fat II," but stay wide of Pillow Rock! Below, there's a jumping rock for another cool-off before paddling the final mile to the take-out. Load the boats and start the drive home – happy, tired, and maybe a little sun-tanned! West Virginia travelers may want to visit the gorgeous "Trough" on the **South Branch of the Potomac**. High and remote mountain walls on each side of the river, and keep your eyes open for bald eagles!

(\$175 1-3 people; \$45 each additional)

Half-Day Caving: The underground sidewalk and the tourist cave light show are not for you. You want to see it the way it was before the electrician got there! Primitive caves have all the features of the subterranean world – *speleothems* (stalactites, flowstone, soda straws, and columns), *lots of real mud*, and sometimes even *bats* (but most of them are asleep, and all of them are harmless). Pull on your coveralls, clip on your helmet, adjust your headlamp, and down we go. There are squeezes if you want them, and belly crawls for the adventurous --- but there are also corridor ceilings higher than your house, and large cavern rooms for the claustrophobic. Learn cave travel safety, underground navigation, and some "total body movement." Find out what the year-round underground temperature is, and then finally emerge back into sunlight with a new appreciation for what happens underneath Virginia when limestone and groundwater meet. The gleam of your smile might be the only thing shining through the mud on your face! Caving trips can be **Beginner Caving** (mostly horizontal movement – walking, stooping, or crawling) or **Intermediate Caving** (for folks fit enough to handle strenuous vertical moves, and more sustained physical effort). Various locations are available in both Virginia (20 minutes from Harrisonburg), and West Virginia (between Franklin and Elkins). *Caving trips are not advised for individuals who might be unfit, excessively overweight, or who live an extremely sedentary lifestyle, or for very young children.*

(\$125 for 1-3 people; \$25 for each additional)



Design Your Own Adventure: Numerous other options exist, including hiking and climbing guiding along **Virginia's Blue Ridge** or at the **NROCKS** (WV), group orienteering challenges in the National Forest, a climbing self-rescue clinic, outdoor fitness training, and flatwater paddling instruction for beginners and children. We can customize to meet the interests of your family, scout troop, or youth group. Call to talk about your needs.

Things you oughta know:

- **Lester R. Zook** is the **WILD GUYde**. He is a *Wilderness First Responder*, and is a certified member of the *American Mountain Guides Association (Single Pitch Instructor)*. He has been leading wilderness adventures and training camping leaders



for 30 years, and loves to take people outdoors! **Ethan Zook** has been a camp counselor and adventure leader at numerous camps. He is a *Red Cross Lifeguard* and a *Virginia Paramedic*. **Aaron Zook** is a climber, caver, and paddler, a *Red Cross Lifeguard*, and has been through *Wilderness First Aid*. **Mary Tapolyai** is a *WFR*, and a *Leave No Trace Master Educator*. Together, we are a small family business that strives to provide exceptional service, and create value in the lives of our guests.

- More detail on activity possibilities is available by visiting www.wildguyde.com. Call or e-mail to ask questions and to arrange dates, rates, and meeting points:

(540) 433-1637 or lester@wildguyde.com

- **WGA's** guiding season is 7 days a week. Rock climbing is March through October, paddling is best in the spring and summer, and wild caving is year-round. Call early to reserve; weekends in particular can fill quickly.
- **WILD GUYde** will provide all technical equipment (ropes, harnesses, helmets, etc.). A personal *things-to-bring list* (clothing, water, lunch, etc.) will be provided.
- We can also help with **lodging ideas**. We can recommend from *primitive* to *posh* – National Forest campgrounds, drive-up motels, and some delightful Bed and Breakfast inns!
- For groups of 10 or larger, we disregard the starter fee and simply bill the per-person rate.
- Payment is by cash or check, payable to WGA; unfortunately, credit cards cannot be accepted at this time. Gratuities are never expected, and always appreciated!
- Some activities have inherent risks – that's the meaning of the word *adventure*. Participants will be asked to fill out a *Medical Form*, and sign a *Participant Agreement* acknowledging certain dangers. Some activities are physically strenuous, emotionally demanding, or require sustained cognitive attention to task and detail. We make every effort to create a great day, but **WGA** guides do reserve the prerogative to deny access/participation if, in our judgment, the client is not likely to be successful, or might pose undue hazard. Clients also may not be “under the influence” or “feeling the effects” of alcohol or recreational drugs at the time of the event.
- **WILD GUYde Adventures** incorporated in Virginia in 2004, and is fully insured. **WGA** is a permittee with the George Washington and Monongahela National Forests, and along Virginia's Blue Ridge. **WGA** is an equal opportunity provider and employer. **WGA** practices environmental stewardship, and is a member of the *Access Fund*, the *National Speleological Society*, the *Virginia Tourism Corp.*, the *Christian Adventure Association*, the *Shenandoah Valley Travel Assoc.*, and the *Harrisonburg-Rockingham Chamber of Commerce*.

How was your trip with the *WILD GUYde*??!

Thanks again for guiding us – the trip was awesome! I'm a little sore and bruised today but it makes me happy because it reminds me of everything we did. The info was clear and the location appropriate. I also really enjoyed how you incorporated learning and team building elements into our trip. (Sarah, 2012)

We arrived back in Florida late Thursday night. We had a wonderful time on our adventure with you and we have all been raving to everyone about how great the trip was! Your professionalism and encouragement allowed us to continue on even when some of us were reluctant to try (me, of course)! The boys raved about the caving and the fact that it looked scary, but once you got through it, it wasn't as difficult or scary as you thought it would be. Todd and I were both thrilled with the learning experience for the kids and feel that we have all grown as a result of facing our fears. Everyone

talked about what a great guide you were for us! Overall, our adventure was a wonderful experience and the highlight of our trip to VA! (Christine, 2012)

We had a blast, everything was perfect, and you did an amazing job! The pictures are AWESOME! We would recommend you to any outdoor lover! We agreed that we learned so much from you. (Nina, 2012)

Thank you so very much for a wonderful adventure rock climbing last week. It was wonderful to share the time with my daughter. We both really appreciated your teaching style and the knowledge you imparted. I found a whole bucket-full of sermon illustrations. The location was excellent. We appreciated the fact that we were alone on the climb (except for the beautiful hawk). The photos you took came out well, and we showed them to my wife who appreciated our joy, but was thankful that she chose a more Hobbitish way to spend the day (reading). (Pastor Chris, 2012)

Your customer service was outstanding. Despite my late contact, you found a way to get us in on an adventure. The experience was excellent. The kids had a blast but you were appropriately serious in your approach. Safety was a clear priority as it must be. The experience was well structured and presented a number of great challenges. (Mark, 2012)