

## RIO CHAMA FACTS

**Length:** 31 miles El Vado Ranch to Big Eddy takeout  
22 ½ miles El Vado Ranch to Chavez Canyon (wilderness run)  
8 ½ miles Chavez Canyon to Big Eddy

**Gradient:** 15 feet per mile

**Rating:** Class II-III (on scale of I-VI) requires intermediate river skills; not recommended for beginner canoeists.

**Minimum Flow Needs:** For kayaks (inflatable or hard shell), canoes, and rafts less than 12', at least 300 cfs is recommended. For rafts over 12' in length, a minimum of 500 cfs is recommended.

**Access:** Put-in is at El Vado Ranch, off NM 112, west of NM 84, between El Vado Lake and Abiquiu Reservoir. Take-outs at Chavez Canyon and Big Eddy are accessed by Forest Road 151 which begins 2 miles north of Ghost Ranch Living Museum on NM 84. Forest Road 151 may be hazardous when wet.

**Group Size** 16 person maximum

**Shuttle:** 50 miles one-way. Shuttle service is provided by *Up the Creek Shuttle Service* at 575.588.7704.

**USGS Maps:** Abiquiu, Canones, Echo Amphitheater, Ghost Ranch, Laguna Peak, Navajo Peak (all 7.5").

### If you need more information please contact:

Taos BLM recreation staff for questions on boating or resource management in the upper stretches of the Rio Chama (575-758-8851 or write to Taos Field Office, 226 Cruz Alta Road, Taos NM 87571.

US Forest Service, Coyote Ranger District for questions on recreation in the lower stretches (Chavez Canyon and downstream), or resource management of the lower stretch (575-638-5526);

El Vado Ranch for questions about fees and services at the privately owned launch site, or about fishing (575-588-7354).

[www.blm.gov/nm/riochama](http://www.blm.gov/nm/riochama)



## BOATING THE RIO CHAMA

### Rio Chama Wild and Scenic River

The Rio Chama Wild and Scenic River, jointly managed by the Bureau of Land Management (BLM), the US Forest Service and the Army Corps of Engineers, was designated by Congress in 1988. This brochure explains what you need to do to reserve a launch for the period May 6 - September 3, 2016. Outside of that period, no reservation is needed, but you will still need to fill out a registration form and pay the per person launch fees at El Vado Ranch.

### Lottery Information

Because of the high demand for trips in late spring and summer, the BLM uses a Recreation.gov lottery system to reserve weekend launch dates from April 15 through September 15. All launches on the 22 mile wilderness segment of the Rio Chama between these dates must have an advance permit. Lottery entries are due on Recreation.gov before January 31. The Rio Chama launch calendar is split into two 'seasons': Early Season and Release Season. Early Season is from April 15 to July 15 and Release Season from July 16 to September 15. Individuals may apply for each of these seasons. Although the lottery only awards Friday launches, lottery winners may launch on either Friday or Saturday.

BLM staff at El Vado will check permits and required equipment— as outlined on Recreation.gov

Please note:

Weekday (Sunday-Thursday) and unclaimed weekend launches will become available for reservation on Recreation.gov starting April 1.

No advance reservation or fees are required for private day trips launching from Chavez Canyon, just below the Monastery of Christ in the Desert.

For questions, call BLM Taos Field Office at 575-758-8851.

### Float Trips from El Vado Ranch to Chavez Canyon or Big Eddy

There is an additional fee charged by El Vado Ranch to launch or park vehicles. You can also arrange for a shuttle for your vehicle(s) before launching.

### **Float Trips from Chavez Canyon to Big Eddy (Below the Monastery)**

No advance reservations or fees are required for trips launching from Chavez Canyon just below the Monastery. All that is needed for this day run is a filled-out Boater Registration Form available at the Chavez Canyon launch site.

#### **Planning Your Trip**

Before leaving home, boaters should find out flow information, because flows are not guaranteed and may change with little notice. Although the wilderness run above the Monastery is limited to groups of 16, there are no groups size limits from Chavez Canyon to Big Eddy.

#### **Rules, Permit Stipulations and Other Requirements**

» Solid human waste must be carried out in a washable/reusable container. Plastic bags are not allowed. Liquid waste should be strained into the river. The human waste vault at Big Eddy remains closed. Please flush your toilet at an RV dump station, available in Espanola, Santa Fe, Taos and Durango.

» Dogs must be leashed and under your control at all times to avoid harassment of wildlife or other river users. Dog feces must also be carried out.

» No more than 16 people in a group between El Vado Ranch and Chavez Canyon.

#### **» Mandatory Equipment**

□ An approved US Coast Guard life preserver, Types I, III, or V, must be worn by every person in the party while on the river.

□ For non-self-bailing rafts, an appropriate bailing device must be on board each craft.

□ A length of rope at least equal to the length of the boat.

□ A throw line at least 50' in length must be on board each primary boat.

□ All fires must be in a fire pan. You must carry out all ashes and coals.

□ Patching and repair equipment, including an air pump.

» Washable/reusable toilets that meet our requirements are available at river or outdoor equipment outlets. Contact your local boating supplier, or search the internet.

#### **Leaving No Trace on the Rio Chama**

##### ***Plan Ahead and Prepare/Camp and Travel on Durable Surfaces***

- choose an established, legal site that will not be damaged by your stay
- restrict activities to areas where vegetation is compacted or absent
- keep pollutants out of water sources
- stay on existing trails, or choose the most durable surfaces available:  
Rock, gravel, dry grasses or snow

##### ***Pact it In, Pack it Out/Leave What You Find***

##### ***Minimize Use and Impact of Fires***

- use only fire pans if you must have a fire; lightweight stoves are a much less impacting way to cook in the backcountry
- collect only dead and down wood for your fire, or bring a supply from home
- remove all ashes and coals from the fire pan and pack them out.

#### **Flow Information**

Flows are highly variable, based on water availability, irrigation demand, and rainfall in spring and summer. Often spring time flows are released to coincide with inflow to reservoirs above El Vado Dam. Summer flows are often increased for weekends (Friday-Sunday) for boater needs.

If you are in a canoe or kayak, you can have a good run from El Vado to Chavez Canyon at flows as low as 150 cfs, or to Big Eddy, at flows of 200cfs. For small rafts, minimum recommended flows are 350 to 400 cfs. For large rafts (14' or bigger) minimum flows of 500 cfs are recommended.

**For flow information, visit the USGS website at:**

**<http://nm.water.usgs.gov> (Rio Chama below El Vado) or call 888-882-6188** to hear a recording of flow status or other current information about the Chama.

**[www.blm.gov/nm/riochama](http://www.blm.gov/nm/riochama)**