

Blue Skies and Whitewater - @Jump and Raft -



When the Carroll sisters travel together something exciting is bound to happen. Our most recent adventure brought us north to Millinocket, Maine and Three Rivers Whitewater. Partnering this with Skydive New England, you get “Jump and Raft”. Three Rivers calls itself “The Home of Serious Fun” and when Tony Rinaldi, one of the owners, greeted us with an enthusiastic “Welcome Home” we knew it was time to party.

With that greeting, Babs, Jo and I went to settle into our accommodations, a rustic bunkhouse in the woods that could sleep 10 comfortably and had its own bathroom with a hot shower and electricity. Other housing options included yurts that seemed to glow in the dark, cabin tents and more primitive tent sites for heartier souls than the sisters.

As luck would have it, the night that we arrived at Three Rivers was the night that the rafting guides from all around gathered, like the loons on Maine’s lakes in late summer, to witness “Carnage 2010”. “Carnage” is a festival of short-films, put together by local rafting companies, of the most dramatic river trips of the summer that were either thrilling or terrifying, depending on your perspective. After half-dozen videos and refreshments at the Boatman’s Bar and Grill at Three Rivers, we headed back to our cabin and fell asleep to the sounds of raft guides celebrating the looniness of what they do and love.

The morning woke us early with bright sunshine and a hearty breakfast at the Boatman’s before our trip to the airfield where the sisters would learn to fly while strapped to one of two charming Australian “jumpmasters”, Owen Ross and Matt Cleave.

I had imagined that I would become increasingly terrified as I ticked off the days on my calendar before I was to jump out of an airplane. However, as the days and then the minutes closed, I found that I was far more excited than nervous. Naturally, neither of my sisters believed me. Whatever butterflies I did have were quickly brushed away after our short skydiving tutorial with Cleave, who is as professional, knowledgeable and encouraging as he is charming.

Owen and Cleave taught the sisters how to put our heads back, fold our arms and “be the banana”. They fitted us into our jump suits, tightened up our harnesses, loaded us into an airplane, showed us how to safely exit the plane and reminded us, more than twice, to breathe.

As Mike, our pilot, brought us to 11,000 feet our jumpmasters made their final safety checks, attached us to their chests with the heavy metal clips on our harnesses and opened the door.

The crisp blue-sky air of late August filled the small cabin. We turned slightly left and carefully, one at a time, our 4 legs left the cabin and I took a look at the 11,000 feet of clear air between me and the rugged peaks of Katahdin, the highest mountain in Maine, and the winding rivers and patchwork of landscape at its base. Then, a deep breath, head back, arms crossed, and a gentle push from Cleave I flew, with eyes wide open and an amazing sense of peace, into clear sky.

The minute-long, 120+ miles-per-hour freefall was nothing like I had anticipated. Communicating with taps and hand signals, we somersaulted back and forward and spun while the landscape and blue sky rushed by. I didn't shut my eyes, or my mouth, even once. The only things louder than the rush of wind were my adrenaline-laced whoops and hollers. When Cleave released our parachute at 5,000 feet and it filled with air, gently tugging us upward for a moment, I felt a bit sad. A few seconds later I found that I was enjoying the quiet and the spectacular view of Katahdin as Cleave pointed out other landmarks, taught me how to work the ropes that controlled the speed and direction of the chute, and I attempted to move my lips that had become plastered to my gums. Cleave taught me how to land safely and with a gentle bump and skid I found myself on terra firma and in the arms of my euphoric sisters who had jumped before me.



The sisters spent the rest of the day exploring parts of nearby Baxter State Park, bodysurfing at The Ledges, reliving the details of our flights with Skydive New England, and reveling in our surge of self-confidence.

Later that evening found the sisters enjoying a game of pool and refreshments at the Boatman's, and then around the campfire back at the bunk house where we shared stories, laughs, snacks and beverages with the "Yurt People" next door, who had also enjoyed a fabulous morning of skydiving, and who would be joining us the following day for some whitewater thrills.

My sisters were already snoring gently by the time I climbed into my bunk, exhausted but full of life and excitement for whatever tomorrow on the river would bring. In what seemed like the blink of an eye, we found ourselves eating a quick breakfast, getting outfitted with life vests, helmets and paddles, listening to safety instructions and climbing onto the bus with other eager adventurers for the scenic drive to the McKay Station, a hydropower dam just above the Ripogenous Gorge.

Upon arrival, we divided up into groups of 6 or 7 and introduced ourselves to the others who would share this experience with us and to our Guide, Seth "Diggi" Morin. After a quick lesson on the commands that we would use to synchronize our group's movements on the river in order to ensure both heart-pounding thrills and our

safety, we climbed into our raft and surrendered ourselves to both the Penobscot River and to Diggi's amazing skills.

We wasted no time getting out of the frying pan and into the fire as Diggi steered us straight away into some of the best Class V rapids the sisters and their new friends had ever seen. According to Diggi, The Exterminator would "make us or break us as a team and would set the tone for the rest of the day", and that it did! Our group worked together like we had been doing it for years and we navigated our way down the river exploring other Class Vs with names like Turkey Chute, Bone Crusher, and Crib Works along the way. It didn't take us long to get thoroughly soaked, and even less time for the laughs and hoots to begin as we got to know each other and the river. There was enough time in between rapids for Diggi to tell stories and to fill us in on what would be coming up next, and for our group to talk and share our own stories.

After several hours on the river, we stumbled from our rafts and made our way to where we were served up a hot lunch at a bend in the river by the guides who turned out to be as capable on the wood-fire grill as they were with a paddle. We ate our steak, haddock, spicy "river rice" and homemade chocolate chip cookies at picnic tables or standing by the small fire where we dried out, warmed up, rested and refueled our bodies for the second half of our trip down the river.

The afternoon was just as exciting as the morning, with more thrilling rapids to ride. We found nirvana as we navigated the 13-foot drop at Nesowdnehunk Falls, and then went back in from below, multiple times, to "surf" the waterfall.

Several hours later found us floating in slow moving water where we amused ourselves quite well with more stories, laughs and other antics that resulted in most of us ending up in the river one or more times, not always by choice but always with a smile on our faces.



-afternoon after steak, haddock and after hitting the rapids and "The Exterminator"-

Finally, with rafts loaded onto trailers and wet, tired bodies on the bus, we made our way back to Three Rivers, our home base and the Boatman's Bar and Grill, for a change into dry clothes, more refreshments and a look at the video that was filmed as we bucked and laughed our way down the Penobscot River.

All too soon, the sisters said good-bye to their new friends at Three Rivers and loaded up the Honda for the sleepy trip back to reality, but filled with memories of laughing at gravity, waterfalls and each other, and living to tell the tale.

More than once somebody said: "Now I can cross that off the bucket list". As for the sisters, however, the "bucket list" has been revised and we're already making plans to visit our family at Three Rivers again.

-Deborah Conway, is a freelance writer and ultimate adventurer. You can contact her [here](#).

If you would like more information about Three Rivers, check out their websites: [SkydiveNewEngland.com](#), [JumpAndRaft.com](#) and [ThreeRiversWhitewater.com](#).

MaineThingsToDo.com is giving away a Skydive Package!!!! [Click here for details!](#)

Be the Ultimate Adventurer!

The only combined Skydiving and Whitewater Rafting Resort in the USA!!! Skydive New England and Three Rivers have teamed up at The Penobscot Outpost to provide you with the experience of a lifetime!

Skydive from 11,000ft with Skydive New England and raft the Class V Penobscot with Three Rivers, “The Home of Serious Fun”. Jump and Raft is now available 7 days a week. That’s right, even weekends!

Flying out of Millinocket airport you can jump right beside Mount Katahdin and over the most amazing scenery the Northeast has to offer. Add a day of Class V rafting on the Penobscot and you have the most intense adrenaline rush of your life! All you need for the greatest adventure experience ever is right here. Skydiving, Rafting, Food, Drinks, Nightlife, Camping, Lodging, Live Music and huge Bonfires! FUN, FUN, and more FUN! Our crew is here to make you feel alive!

Skydiving!

Tandem skydiving is today’s most innovative and popular way of making that first jump. Your adventure begins with a 30-minute ground school where you meet staff members, view instructional videotapes, and get a general overview of your jump. You will learn how to exit the aircraft, freefall techniques, and body position during landing. Tandem jumping uses the dual instruction approach similar to learning how to fly an airplane. Your tandem instructor will be there to back you up through all phases of your skydive. The plane ride lasts about 15-20 minutes and the view from our drop-zone is incredible. Our beautiful lakes and majestic mountains will surely enhance your experience. When the time comes to jump, you and your instructor will exit the plane miles above the earth (11,000 feet) and you will feel the exhilaration of freefall on your very first jump! The freefall lasts for nearly a minute and you will reach speeds of up to 120 mph!

Most people find it amazing that they feel totally in control when in free-fall. The wind actually feels like a cushion of air suspending you in space and feels more like floating than falling!

Once the parachute is opened, you and your instructor will glide gently back to earth. The canopy ride lasts for about 5-9 minutes depending on how fast you like to fly the parachute. The canopy is rectangular in shape, similar to the wing of an airplane, and completely controllable.

Reservations are recommended. We accept ‘walk-ins’ but they do not take priority over scheduled jumpers. We ask that you leave a \$75.00 non-refundable deposit to hold your spot in a tandem class. The deposit goes toward the balance of your skydive, which you pay on the day of your jump.

Penobscot River Whitewater Rafting!

A true Class 5 Experience by anyone’s standards! This tough class V river has chutes, drops, and large holes that challenge both guide and guest alike in exciting rapids like Exterminator, Cribworks, and the huge Nesowdnehunk Falls. Combine this with the spectacular Ripogenus Gorge, a scrumptious river lunch and great views of Mt. Katahdin, this trip will be one you will remember for a lifetime! Due to the difficulty of this river, guests must be 16 years of age. **13 Miles of Pure Adrenalin!**

These exciting river trips are run from our New Penobscot Outpost Resort just outside the town of Millinocket, Maine.

A 26-acre facility perfectly set up for the Ultimate Class V Experience. This Home of Serious Fun also has many great amenities to offer. Comfortable lodging in our unique Yurts, Cabin Tents, and of course good old fashioned camping. This fun spot also has it's Boatman's Bar and Grill that offers the best food and nightlife Millinocket. Now you can enjoy great live entertainment, nightly bonfires, the hot tub and an excited, friendly Three Rivers Crew that our guests have come to know and love. Rafting, Sky Diving, Mountain Climbing, or Dancing till it hurts is all possible at our [Penobscot Outpost](#)

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PO Box 456

Old Medway Rd

Millinocket, ME 04462

www.jumpandraft.com

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