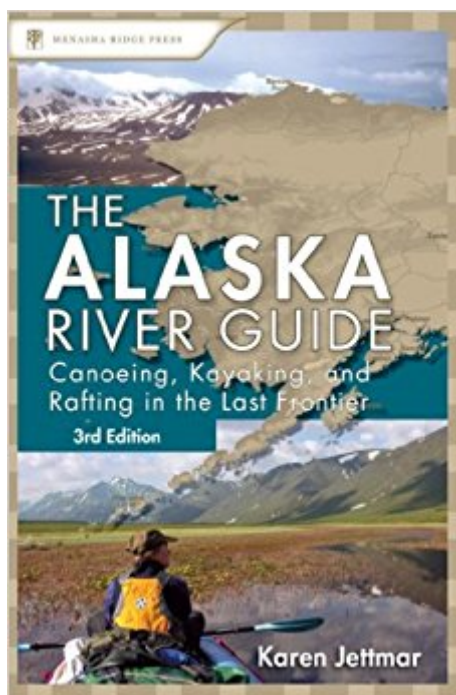




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Alaska River Guide: Canoeing, Kayaking, And Rafting In The Last Frontier (Canoeing & Kayaking Guides - Menasha)



Synopsis

The rich tapestry of Alaska is threaded together by 365,000 miles of waterways, from cascading mountain streams to meandering valley rivers, from the meltwaters of glaciers to broad rivers that empty into the sea. This guide profiles a wide variety of rivers from all over Alaska, concentrating on trips for intermediate boaters, and including a few major expeditions for the experienced river-runner. A section on gear outlines what to take into the backcountry.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

“This is dream material. Imagine canoeing the North Fork of the Koyukuk. You can put in near Mount Doonerak and drift through the Gates of the Arctic National Park. The Alaska River Guide will make you want to do it.” • Fairbanks Daily News-Miner “This book, by Karen Jettmar, will help to preserve Alaska’s precious natural heritage.” • President Jimmy Carter

Karen Jettmar is a river guide, freelance writer, and photographer whose work has been published in magazines that include National Geographic, Sports Illustrated, and Time.

This was a great way for me to understand the basics of what the various rivers in Alaska had to offer in preparation for taking a trip last summer. You’ll want to get more detailed info on any given river you go to, but this is great for the initial preparation and helping to choose from between the various rivers.

Good for beginners, its easy to understand and great guide

Great info, not many pics, only got to explore a few listed but it was helpful to read about them beforehand.

Not nearly as detailed for the Copper River as Fast and Cold but more up to date.

lots of great rivers

It was great help to my Alaska trip planning. I really learned a lot helping me choose where to go

If you had a big pocketbook and unlimited time, you might be able to paddle a small fraction of Alaska's rivers. Instead, most of us dream and cherry-pick the adventures we will take. How lucky to have a decent river guide to provide a pathway into the world of Alaska's rivers. Even Andy Embick, whose book I have read, says this of Karen Jettmar's map to the treasure of Alaska's waterways: "Karen Jettmar's 1993 book, 'The Alaska River Guide,' is a real gem, the first true guidebook to rivers of the state. With wide geographic coverage and a wealth of information for the wilderness traveller, it is superb for the long touring rivers, leaving out most of the true whitewater runs. Thus her book and this one are (in my opinion) complementary in coverage and scope." I don't think I can say it any better than that. Karen has been out there in the field exploring rivers for decades. Big state, many rivers, and this book provides a great planning tool for trips. Small investment for firsthand knowledge, in my opinion. I have the second edition, by the way, and it is fabulous.

The hallmark of a good guidebook is how accurate it is. Unfortunately, this book contains more than its share of errors - some are merely nuisances, but others are more serious. I bought this book because I wanted to expand my knowledge of Alaska's river systems. I live in Alaska, and enjoy exploring new waters; I try to get in at least one major trip each year. This book offers a brief survey of over 100 rivers, with an effort to cover systems in each of the major regions of Alaska. Most of the river descriptions are 2 to 3 pages; the information usually contains a map showing the most common put-in and take-out spots, then a brief description of the overall character of the stream with some of its standout features. A few paragraphs of historical notes are often added. Following the description of the river is a section of useful data: appropriate USGS topo maps; the best

seasons for floating; specific safety issues; prominent fish and wildlife likely to be seen; and a list of the government land management agencies who oversee the river and adjacent territory. The book also contains some nice sections at the beginning on trip planning, with sections on appropriate gear for a river trip, trip safety, and ethical camping practices. The structure of the book means it probably shouldn't be looked at as a detailed trip planner for any specific river system in Alaska; instead, the book represents more of an encyclopedic listing of float trips, with some background advice common to all river trips. It's a nice book to have when you're facing a question like: "I want to do a trip, but which river should I choose?" It's also a nice book to keep by your favorite chair, to browse through and to dream about the dozens of quality excursions in Alaska. The river maps are a definite plus and are helpful. Consisting of black and white sketches, they usually cover one column in the two-column page layout of the book, so the maps are oriented longitudinally. For orientation, a north-arrow pointer is placed on the map. This means that rivers which run in a mostly-east or west direction are shown with the easterly direction oriented toward the bottom of the map. That's fine I guess, but it would have been nicer if the maps were printed in a more standard fashion: for rivers running predominately east or west, the maps could have been printed so they spanned the width of the page across both columns; for north or south-flowing rivers, the maps could be oriented in the standard longitudinal fashion. In either case, the maps would then be oriented with north at the top, east to the right, etc. This leads to one aspect of the book's maps that is a mystery to me: some of the maps for rivers that run in a north or south direction are oriented with north at the bottom (down) of the page. What purpose does this achieve? Why can't the map be flipped around, to be printed the standard way, with the northerly direction at the top? I don't get it... But apart from the map issues, it's the number of errors in the text of the book that presents the most serious deficiency. I have no way of knowing how many mistakes the book contains because my first-hand knowledge - and consequent ability to catch mistakes - is limited only to a fraction of all the waters covered. Nevertheless, when I concentrate on the places well known to me, too many blunders begin to jump out. Some of the faults are very minor, like the description of the Situk River fish where distinct runs of both "steelhead" and "rainbow trout" are mentioned (there are no runs of rainbow trout in the Situk, and the population is very small. All the trout that ascend, or "run" in the river are steelhead). And then are other errors - again relatively minor - that are merely annoying, like places where the text is mistakenly repeated (e.g. page 275) or where a river is misnamed in the middle of the description (page 163), or places where the text is worded in a way that you wonder if some of the author's stream-of-consciousness notes somehow made it into print (page 277). But the most serious mistakes I found involve specific descriptions of some of the rivers. The location of rapids is

sometimes misplaced, roads are occasionally misnamed, geographic features are goofed up, and sections of text appear under the wrong heading. Again, I found these mistakes in the small number of rivers that I am familiar with. I am left to assume that the rate of inaccuracy is equally high among the other rivers where I don't have first-hand experience. This begs the question: what good is a reference book when the data is fraught with errors? I checked with the publishers and their web site now offers substitute pages that help correct some of the mistakes. People who already own this book will want to download the pages. Be advised, however, that the substitute pages only cover a portion of the book's faults. To sum up, I think this book might have value to those of us who want to use it as a "dream book" - a sort of a listing of "what's where" and the possibilities for wilderness trips in Alaska. But I urge caution to anyone who needs to rely on the book for cold facts. I would hope that subsequent editions of this book (if it someday gets printed again) will be more carefully researched and edited.

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