

# Summit Daily News

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## Boating season heats up in the High Country

Local outfitters highlight nearby boating opportunities, State Parks addresses boating safety

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Tight channels, steep drops and 'boulder-choked rapids' can be found on many stretches of nearby rivers. Also, scenic settings with wildlife such as ospreys, eagles, beaver, mink and fox can be seen along the shores.

*Special to the Daily*

With world-class rafting adventures within an hour or two's drive from Summit County, skiing is slipping from many folks' minds, only to be replaced by dreams of the river.

Arkansas River Adventures' Duke Bradford and High Side Adventure Tours/Good Times Rafting's John Cantamessa suggest several nearby trips — similar to samplings of fine wine at a wine bar, said Colorado River Outfitter Association spokesman Drew Kramer.

They start their list with tips for whitewater junkies, the highlight being The Numbers on the Arkansas River. It's a stretch of long and continuous "boulder-choked rapids" with tight channels, steep drops — in other words, excitement.

"It serves up an awesome high alpine setting on Colorado's watery backbone," Kramer said.

They also suggest the advanced section of Clear Creek, much of which runs alongside Interstate 70. The advanced section drops rafters more than 1,300 vertical feet through about 30 major rapids.

Or, head west for Dowd Chutes on the Eagle River — a lengthy, complex Class IV/V rollercoaster rapid that, with its intimidating roar at higher water, can deter some boaters.

The Lower Eagle River, Brown's Canyon on the Arkansas River and the Colorado River's Shoshone section are ideal for intermediates, Bradford and Cantamessa say.

All three offer scenic settings with up to Class III whitewater. Look for ospreys, eagles, beaver, mink and fox along the shores of the Eagle River and gaze up at the sheer walls of Glenwood Canyon on the short Shoshone stretch. Don't look too long, though, because rapids with ominous names like "Man Eater," "The Wall" and "Tombstone" await.

### Brown's & the Blue

Brown's Canyon is the most popular whitewater section of river in the United States, but its accessibility to Summit residents means it can easily be run in the late afternoon and during the week to avoid crowds.

Even beginners can enjoy stretches of river in the alpine environment, as close as the Blue River — right here in Summit County. From Silverthorne to Columbine Landing, the Blue offers 8 miles of Class I and II water before turning to Class II and III below the Landing for more experienced boaters.

Little Gore Canyon on the Colorado River offers Class I and II rapids, natural hot springs on the riverside and a short hike to prehistoric dinosaur tracks.

Clear Creek offers beginners something too, from Chicago Creek to Kermit's Restaurant, separate from the non-stop expert action downstream. Its proximity to Denver and Summit allows time for other activities in the day, and can cater to participants as young as 6 years old.

### Safety

As more people show up to the put-in for private trips, Colorado State Parks is promoting national safe boating week, the lessons of which they hope will carry through the boating season.

Nationally, about 500 people not wearing lifejackets drown each year in recreational boating accidents. That includes about 10 in Colorado.

Through a week of events, mostly on the Front Range, officials are emphasizing the "big three of boating safety," which include wearing lifejackets at all times, being alert and aware — don't booze and boat — and be educated about boating safety through a Colorado State Parks class.

For more information on boating safely in Colorado, visit [www.parks.state.co.us/boating](http://www.parks.state.co.us/boating).