

# The rivers are calling and I must go

**April makes summer seem like it'll never come, but these raft companies are planning for it like it will**

Business [FOLLOW BUSINESS](#) | April 16, 2022

Meg Soyars  
msoyars@skyhinews.com



**Downstream Adventures is the newest raft company to offer trips on the Colorado River out of Kremmling.**

*Jonathan Snodgrass/Courtesy Photo*

The headwaters of the Colorado River start in Rocky Mountain National Park, gathering depth and speed on their way to Kremmling. This makes the town a hub for some of the best rafting in the country. Nine miles from Kremmling, along the beautiful scenic byway Trough Road, rafters will arrive at Pumphouse Recreation Site.

From Pumphouse's boat launch, rafters can set out on easy floats allowing them to soak in nature's beauty, or they can get their hearts racing on intense rapids. Classes of rapids are rated from the calming Class I, to the rip-roaring Class V. Classes II-III are a perfect medium for those who want a little thrill in the day, but also the chance to look around and enjoy views of the granite canyons and green forests surrounding them.

It might seem, at the moment, like summer will never come (especially since it's been dumping) but the unofficial start of the commercial raft season is mid-May! Here's a primer on what three Kremmling-based raft companies are doing to gear up, in the hopes of juicing rafter's whitewater yearnings and, maybe, giving a little wink-wink to summer.



**AVA fishing guides making an angler's dream accessible.**

*Katie Schneider/Courtesy Photo*



## AVA Rafting

AVA Rafting offers half-day, full-day and multiday trips, starting from the put-in at Pumphouse Recreation Site. Guests then raft to Radium for the half-day, and all the way to Rancho Del Rio in Bond for the full day. The full day includes a riverside lunch halfway through, giving guests time to relax and enjoy scenery from the bank.

“This stretch (of river) is more mellow,” said Katie Schneider, Sales Manager of AVA. The age minimum for this trip is 2 years old, perfect for families with little ones.

“We can also customize trips for people who want to do longer stretches of river,” Schneider said. Their longer trips can go all the way to Dotsero.

AVA also provides wetsuits and splash jackets at no cost. Depending on the class of rapids, guests are guaranteed to get splashed a little, or maybe even completely soaked if they want to hit bigger rapids. Even falling into the river can be a fun escapade, since a guide is there to lend a helping hand back into the raft.

“For someone wanting more excitement, we have inflatable kayaks and stand-up paddle boards as well,” Schneider said. If someone decides to branch out with a kayak or paddle board, they’re still able to go downstream with the guided tour, but have more independence since the guide isn’t in the vessel with them. “It definitely amps up the rapids. It’s super fun, and a great way to explore the river a bit more,” Schneider said.

Another adventure offered is overnight rafting trips. Guests can choose a 24-hour or three-day trip. These trips are designed to be a fun and stress-free experience.

“We provide pretty much everything a guest needs, between the camping gear and toiletries. We have a full kitchen we bring out there to cook all the meals,” Schneider said. The guides also set up and tear down camp.

“It creates a really great experience and adventure, without all the planning and logistics behind an overnight camping trip,” Schneider said. This makes the trips perfect for people who aren’t familiar with the area, are new to camping or have traveled to Colorado without proper camping gear.

AVA offers fly-fishing excursions in Kremmling as well, with fishing gear provided. Guests can choose between boat fishing or walk-in wading. All fishing is catch and release, but fishers can experience the thrill of reeling in a rainbow or brown trout. Fishers can explore the river from Pumphouse down to Rancho Del Rio.

AVA opens for rafting and fly fishing starting in mid-May, with the season ending at the end of October. The inflatable kayaks and paddle boards are more weather dependent, normally only offered during the summer months.

“As a whole, we offer a lot of family-friendly adventures from our Kremmling location,” Schneider said. “Whether you’re bringing grandpa and grandma, or younger kids, we have something for everyone at that outpost.”



Schneider added that thrill seekers looking for Class V rapids can visit AVA’s other outposts not far from Kremmling.



**The Colorado River passes through some of the most beautiful country in the state.**

*Jonathan Snodgrass/Courtesy Photo*

## **Downstream Adventures**

The company Downstream Adventures is new to Grand County, having had other rafting outposts in Colorado.

“This will be our first year. ... We just acquired this Kremmling outpost to take under our wing,” said co-owner and co-founder, Jonathan Snodgrass.

Their most popular Kremmling trip is the half-day, which runs from Pumphouse to Radium. They also offer full day and overnight camping trips.

There are designated campsites all along the river for rafters to choose from. These campsites are more remote since they’re not accessible by car.

“It’s nice to get away from the parking lot and lots of people, so (guests can) have a more wilderness experience,” Snodgrass said. He added that there will be guides to help set up and tear down the camp and cook meals.

“They do all the work so the guests can enjoy themselves,” Snodgrass said. When camping, guests can immerse themselves in nature, both on the water and off.

Downstream Adventures offers inflatable kayaks as well. Kayakers can go out on a guided tour or be added to a raft trip.

“If you jump in a kayak, you can make an easy section more challenging and fun,” Snodgrass said. Kayaking allows rafters to really test their ability navigating rapids on their own.

Snodgrass explained that the Colorado River has much to offer skilled and beginner rafters. The Upper Colorado’s Class V stretch is one of the most difficult in the country, with mellow Class II and III sections below it.

“II and III are scenic, great for families,” Snodgrass said. “You can take a wide variety of ages down those stretches, and that helps them get introduced (to rapids).”

For more experienced rafters who are interested in bigger rapids, Downstream Adventures offers Class V trips in Clear Creek County. This August, the company plans to offer a trip through the majestic Gore Canyon, which also has Class V rapids.

“We have really skilled guide staff to handle these bigger rapids on the Upper Colorado,” Snodgrass said. He added the guides are serious about safety, but equally “serious” about the guests having fun.





**You can't run a paddle boat without working together, as any family who does a river trip in one will understand.**

*Ryan Barwick/Courtesy Photo*

## Mad Adventures

Mad Adventures is a Winter Park-based company; their sister company Grand Adventures offers snowmobile tours. Through their two companies, they can offer activities year-round. Their summer activities include rafting and side by side ATV tours.

"We offer rafting through the Colorado River in Grand County, and just over the boundary to Clear Creek County," said owner Ryan Barwick. The company has rafting outposts in both Kremmling and in Clear Creek County.

Their half-day tours run from Pumphouse to Radium, and the full day tours make it down to Rancho Del Rio.

"We are permitted all the way down to Catamount Bridge, so we can go to some of those lower stretches too," Barwick said.

He added that the half-day and full day trips "are our bread and butter," but Mad Adventures does offer camping by special request. For those wishing to make it down to Catamount, they should be prepared to camp, but the rapids are easygoing, so even young children can make the trip.

The side by side tours, which are offered out of Winter Park, follow the same trail system that their snowmobiles take during wintertime excursions.

"We have a Continental Divide off-road tour," Barwick said. "In the summer, we get a little further up the trail than we can take guests in winter."

The side by sides are an excellent way to explore all the way to the top of Rollins Pass. At the top of the pass, guests can stop to take photos, enjoying expansive views of the Continental Divide, Rocky Mountains, Fraser Valley and the winding Colorado River. Guests can drive the ATVs themselves, lending an air of excitement to the trips.

Mad Adventures runs their rafting adventures from May 26 to Labor Day weekend. Their ATV tours begin sometime in mid-June, depending on the ground conditions of Corona Pass. After Labor Day, the owners of Mad Adventures take a short break before preparing for their snowmobile season as Grand Adventures!

Whether people are searching for a lazy float down the river with their families, or want to test their bravery on more extreme rapids, there are a plethora of companies offering excursions right from Kremmling. Guests can also enjoy fly fishing with AVA, or side by side tours with Mad Adventures. Aside from AVA, Downstream Adventures, and Mad Adventures, there are two other Kremmling rafting companies: Liquid Descent Rafting and KODI Rafting. Grand County truly is the "headwaters" for many amazing rafting adventures!

**Support Local Journalism**

**DONATE**

