

TRAVELing

WORDS BY MIKE KORD



Dawn Chorus:
Launching on
NFCT's Fulton
Chain of Lakes

DREAM IT, PADDLE IT

Your guide to summertime exploration

NORTHEAST CANOEING NORTHERN FOREST CANOE TRAIL, NY, VT, NH, ME

The 740-mile Northern Forest Canoe Trail, www.northernforestcanoetrail.org, was officially completed in 2006 and links together a wonderful succession of marked waterways from Old Forge, New York to Fort Kent, Maine. But, like eating a pizza, it's better to slice off a section than consuming the whole thing. One standout section is the 121 miles from Rangeley Lake to Moosehead Lake. Mind you, this

isn't the club route—expect a remote, wilderness expedition that will challenge your route finding and map reading. Weather is usually nice in summer, but take rain gear, if for no other reason but to discourage the rain gods.

WHEN TO GO: July-August

TIME: 13-16 days (Rangeley-Moosehead Lake)

LOCAL PERSUASION: "We'd like to encourage everyone to spend some time in the local communities," says NFCT executive director Kate Williams. "Ask a local where the best place is to see moose or get a milkshake."

ADIRONDACK PARK, NEW YORK

At 6 million acres, Adirondack Park is larger than the combined landscape of Everglades, Glacier, Grand Canyon, and Yellowstone National Parks. It only seems light years removed from the Big Apple. However, a Manhattan office worker can put in half a day, grab a Reuben for the road, and morph himself into a canoeist paddling the waters of Blue Mountain Lake before sunset. The park features nearly 3,000 lakes and ponds and more than 1,200 miles of rivers. The paddling ranges in difficulty from calm and flat to Class V Buttermilk Falls on the Raquette River. To beat peak-season crowds, go mid-week.

WHEN TO GO: May-September

TIME: 1-10 days

LOCAL PERSUASION: Lake Luzerne canoeist Jim Mandle recommends checking out Weller

Cavorting Cetacean:
80,000 tons of fun in
Kenai Fjords





PHOTOGRAPHY BY MICHAEL DEYOUNG

Pond, which is part of Tupper Lake, and paddling by the elaborate, well-crafted homes in the Blue Mountain Lake area, and almost any portion of the St. Regis area—the farther in, the better. “You won’t find scenery like this anywhere else except maybe in far northern Canada,” Mandle says.

ALLAGASH RIVER, MAINE

The Allagash Wilderness Waterway is a 92-mile passageway that flows north from its headwaters in Baxter State Park. It’s mostly a Class I trip with Chase Rapids representing the only white-water. The Allagash has two portages—Lock Dam and Allagash Falls—and 80 designated campsites. Most of the year, the Allagash is so remote you’ll hardly see another canoe. But misanthropes beware: Each summer, about 50,000 people visit, looking for a backcountry diversion. The warm weather and wildlife (moose, eagles, black bears) sightings still make the journey worth it. The crowds (and black flies) die down in the fall, as the foliage colors—and weather conditions—change.

WHEN TO GO: July-September

TIME: 6 days

LOCAL PERSUASION: “Deet is the best way to deal with the black flies,” says Pam Farquhar, who co-owns Katahdin Outfitters (www.katahdinoutfitters.com) with her husband, Paul. “And you have to use organic soap on the river, and make sure you bring a water filter.”

CONTOOCCOOK RIVER, NEW HAMPSHIRE

Even before the cool autumn wind brightens the foliage of the New England landscape, the north-flowing Contoocook River is still one of New Hampshire’s most popular summer canoe spots. For a mellow day trip, launch at Contoocook Village in the town of Hopkinton and paddle a relaxing nine miles through forests en route to Concord. Stop at Lehtinen Park in Concord for swimming. Water temperatures can rise to 70 degrees or more, so take your flip-flops and counter the stifling summertime heat.

WHEN TO GO: May-October

TIME: 1 day

LOCAL PERSUASION: Take your fishing rod with you. “Don’t be surprised if you find four- to five-pound bass or 22- to 24-inch

pickerel on your line,” says Pat Malfait, owner of Contoocook River Canoe Company (www.contoocookcanoe.com).

ALASKA SEA KAYAKING

GLACIER BAY

Don’t blink, or you’ll miss the brief window known as the Alaskan paddling season. And when that window opens, it’s worth it to make sure you’re one of the people who can say, “I’ve been there.” Without any exaggeration, Glacier Bay is one of those places that truly has it all—abundant wildlife, huge glaciers, and scenery to envy. Caveat: It does lack the frequent presence of the sun, but instead presents steady doses of rainfall. Kayakers can go on their own, but it’s 55 miles from the put-in at Bartlett Cove to the nearest glaciers at Muir Inlet, and 70 miles to the glaciers of the east arm. It’s a rare and enviable experience; there aren’t many tidewater glaciers where you can find black bears foraging and humpback whales feeding.

WHEN TO GO: June-August

TIME: ½ day to 2 weeks

LOCAL PERSUASION: Rubberized raingear is to the Alaskan sea kayaker as Abercrombie & Fitch is to frat-boy fashion. This is in the world’s northernmost rainforest. “If you get sun, be grateful,” says Kara Berg of Glacier Bay Sea Kayaks (www.glacierbayseakayaks.com).

PRINCE WILLIAM SOUND

With giant cliffs cloaked in thick, blue-white glaciers hovering above Blackstone Bay, it strikes you immediately why Prince William Sound is one of Alaska’s most-coveted sea-kayaking locales. The sound is a 12,000-square-mile bay about an hour and a half southeast of Anchorage. Kayakers will see seabirds and marine wildlife inhabiting the shorelines, but nothing captivates a paddler like watching a giant iceberg calve off Blackstone Glacier, crash into Blackstone Bay, and create small-scale waves that gently roll under your hull.

“I don’t know where else in North America you would go for glacial paddling and wildlife,” says Pete Denmark, president of Alaska Sea Kayakers (www.alaskaseakayakers.com) guide service.

WHEN TO GO: May to mid-September

TIME: 4-5 days

LOCAL PERSUASION: The sound has relatively protected paddling," says Denmark, "but the weather is volatile and changes at every point you paddle around. People need to be aware of their own limitations and stay within them."

KENAI FJORDS

Now that you've spent the better part of spring working your two-bladed muscles, you're ready to challenge yourself in one of Alaska's premiere touring locales. Guided one-day trips are led from the town of Seward, but if you travel all the way from the Lower 48, it makes sense to go on an extended journey. Paddling and camping at Aialik Bay, where the massive Aialik Glacier spills into the water, borders on the spiritual—as long as it's sunny. Even in the summertime, rain clouds can hammer on kayakers for days. And frequent visits from

the Alaskan state bird (our good friend, the mosquito) can make you feel like an involuntary blood donor. Still, the quintessential Alaskan sea-kayak adventure—humpbacks, orcas, and black bears, and paddling to a tidewater glacier—make the trip memorable.

WHEN TO GO: Late May-late August

TIME: 3 to 7 days

LOCAL PERSUASION: "My advice when you visit Alaska," says John Page, who owns Sunny Cove Sea Kayaking Company (www.sunnycove.com) in Seward, "is to pick one region and concentrate your time there. I think it's one of the most beautiful spots in Alaska."

KATMAI NATIONAL PARK

Think the brown bears in your local wilderness are big? The behemoths roaming Katmai's rivers and streams in search of salmon can weigh

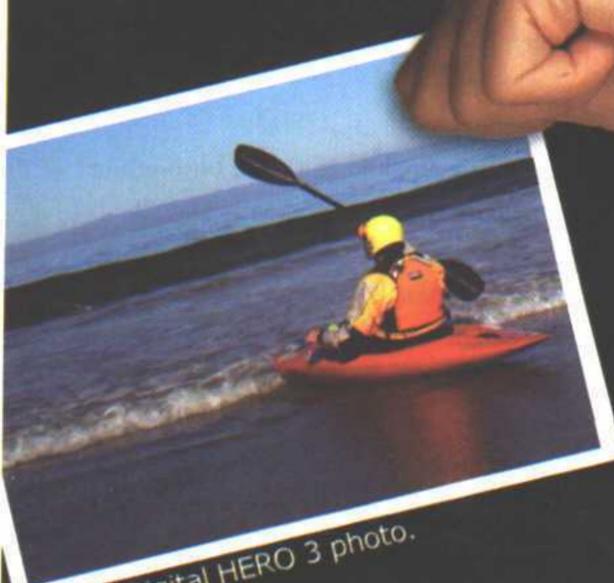
more than 1,000 pounds. They're a sight to see—from a reasonable distance. And they're known to frequent the 86-mile Savonoski Loop, a series of interconnected backcountry waterways that takes you into the genuine Alaskan wild. The loop begins at Brooks Camp and travels west into Naknek Lake, where you'll have the pleasure of a one-mile portage to Lake Grosvenor. From there you'll paddle down the Class I-II Savonoski River, where bears make great subjects for photography but terrible tent-mates, so don't camp there. Instead, move on to Iliuk Arm and back to Brooks Camp. "The most grizzlies I've seen on the Savonoski is 40, and you paddle right through them," says Dan McDonough of Lifetime Adventures (www.lifetimeadventures.net).

WHEN TO GO: Late May-September

TIME: 5-10 days

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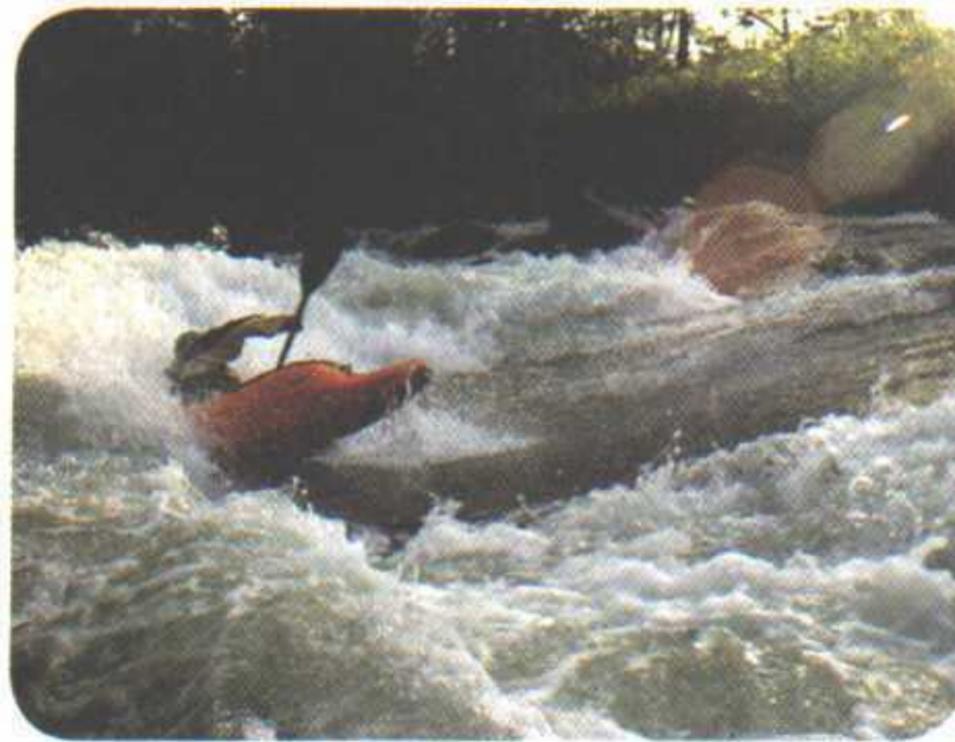
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Park 'n Play:
Ryan Scott surfs
the White Salmon's
Rattlesnake Wave

LOCAL PERSUASION: "It usually takes eight hours to paddle the Savonoski River," McDonough says, "but with wind and low water, it can take longer."

NORTHWEST WHITEWATER ROGUE RIVER, OREGON

Of all the designated Wild-and-Scenic rivers, perhaps Oregon's Class II-III Rogue best lives up to the billing. The Rogue flows west about 60 miles north of the California state line and spoils boaters with comfy lodge-to-lodge paddling that could soften, if only temporarily, even the edgiest of kayakers. Six rustic cabins are available for overnighting along the 34-mile stretch from Grace Creek to Foster Bar. A bit posh for the hardcore, but no one's complaining when a weather system rolls in off



the Pacific. July and August are prime months to experience the Rogue. The air temperature is pushing 100 degrees, and the water is in the 60s. Reservations are mandatory for each of the lodges, and permits are required to run the Rogue May 15 to October 15. Apply

for permits by January 31. Log on to (www.or.blm.gov/rogueriver.com) for information.

WHEN TO GO: May-October

TIME: 4-5 days

LOCAL PERSUASION: "The Rogue is a fantastic intro to multi-day river trips," says Phil DeRiemer, who co-owns DeRiemer Adventure Kayaking (www.adventurekayaking.com) with his wife, Mary. "The rapids are predominantly constrictive. They're playful, and inviting."

WHITE SALMON, WASHINGTON

If only every river had a 12,000-foot volcano from which to collect its snowmelt. It's a distinct advantage for boaters in the area of Hood River, Oregon, which makes the year-round flow of the White Salmon a popular river for both locals and travelers. While the nearby Little White Salmon serves as the Class V

adrenaline-quencher for elite boaters, most paddlers put on the White Salmon at BZ Corner and take out at Northwestern Lake after seven miles of Class III+ drops like Shark's Tooth and Staircase. The 10-foot Husum Falls is a good first waterfall for intermediates.

WHEN TO GO: Year-round

TIME: 1 day

LOCAL PERSUASION: "This is a good river for intermediates to work on balance, stability, and edge control," says *Paddler* associate editor Christian Knight. "Plus it gives you kind of a big-water creek feel."

SKYKOMISH RIVER, WASHINGTON

The Sky is a classic local run that often has kayakers getting down river through the dry summer. Set in the Skykomish Valley—with dramatic Mount Index towering

overhead—the Sky pours westward from the Cascade Mountains and runs under and adjacent to U.S. Highway 2. Boulder Drop, a complex and challenging Class IV+ rapid is the crux and is best for intermediate boaters at 2,000 cfs or less, or simply portaged on river left (You can scramble down from Highway 2 at milepost 34 for an up-close look). For an easier run, put in below Boulder Drop and run about 4.5 miles of Class III and II to Big Eddy at mile mark 30.4.

WHEN TO GO: Year-round

TIME: 1 day

LOCAL PERSUASION: "The Sky offers the challenge of big water, and yet it still has that technical aspect," says local Rob McKibbin, who has more than 500 descents of the river. "It doesn't have any park-and-play features, but it has a lot of catch-on-the-fly stuff that's great."

PAYETTE RIVER, IDAHO

When it comes to summertime whitewater, there might not be a better river system than the Payette. The North Fork, South Fork, and Main Payettes rivers host numerous runs that will satisfy the tastes of nearly every skill level. Large blue-green pools complement the Main's jaunty Class II-III rapids, and the park-and-play crowd takes advantage of the Rubber Wave and Gutter at Horse Shoe Bend a short drive downriver. Dam releases fill up the North Fork for Class V experts looking to slay Idaho's most revered classic river.

WHEN TO GO: June-August

TIME: A series of 1-day runs

LOCAL PERSUASION: Even if you're not a Class V boater, it's worth the drive to the North Fork to watch for boaters in the roadside rapids. It'll make your usual rapids seem less menacing.