



Floating the Snake River



The Snake River flows west from its source in the Teton Wilderness, enters Yellowstone National Park, then flows south through the John D. Rockefeller, Jr. Memorial Parkway and into Jackson Lake in Grand Teton National Park. Regaining its free-flowing character downstream of Jackson Lake Dam, the river winds through Grand Teton.

Floating the Snake River is complex. The beauty and lack of whitewater lulls floaters into inattentiveness. A tangle of channels and constantly shifting logjams present difficulties found on few whitewater rivers. Accidents are common. Use caution whenever you float. Information on flow rates and additional caution areas are posted at river landings and permit offices. Reports are updated weekly or whenever a significant change in river conditions occurs.

Even boaters who frequently float the Snake River should check conditions before each trip, the river can change overnight. River flow varies greatly through the summer. Water depth averages 2 to 3 feet, but exceeds 10 feet in some locations. Boulders and bottom irregularities generate standing waves up to 3 feet high.

Spring flows are commonly muddy, extremely cold, and very high, increasing the difficulty of all river sections. As snowmelt diminishes, volume decreases and waters clear. In spite of reduced flow, the current remains deceptively strong. Logjams and tight turns require boaters to set up maneuvers well in advance and make decisions early. Choosing the correct river channel is critical. In the afternoon typically strong upstream winds may effect your trip, especially when canoeing.

Safety and Etiquette



Aerial view of Snake River showing braided channels

Help preserve the tranquility of the river and reduce congestion at landings by preparing craft away from launch slips. Launch when other boats are out of sight, and maintain this interval throughout your trip. Excessive noise disrupts the solitude others seek. Silence is especially important when passing wildlife. When encountering other boaters and anglers, steer clear of their boats and lines.

Rangers regularly patrol the river during the summer with first aid gear and two-way radios. Contact the River Patrol Rangers for assistance on the water. On land information and assistance are available year-round at the Craig Thomas Discovery and Visitor Center and in summer (May through early October) at Colter Bay Visitor Center.

Equipment should include an extra paddle

or oar, a waterproof container with extra clothes, a first aid kit and a waste receptacle. Attach all gear securely. Inflatable boats should have an air pump, bucket for bailing, and patch kit.

Do not drink river water unless you boiled or purified. Swimming in the river is not recommended.

Aquatic nuisance species are an increasing concern. Clean and dry boats, boots, and waders before entering a new body of water - and *never empty containers of bait, fish, plants, or animals into park waters*. Help protect park waterways and native fish; learn how you can prevent the spread of exotics.

For information on Snake River flows, call 1-800-658-5771 or check the internet at:

<http://waterdata.usgs.gov/wy/nwis/current?type=flow>

Regulations

- All vessels must carry a U.S. Coast Guard-approved personal flotation device (PFD) properly fitted for each person on board. Passengers under 13 years old must wear a PFD.
- A non-motorized park boat permit is required for each watercraft. Purchase permits at Moose and Colter Bay Visitor Centers. Fees are **\$10.00 for a 7-day permit** and **\$20.00 for an annual permit**. Display the permit on the port (left) side stern (back).
- Boating under the influence of alcohol or drugs is prohibited.
- Inner tubes, air mattresses, float tubes, and similar flotation devices are prohibited.
- Motors and pets are prohibited on the Snake River. Motors may be used on Jackson Lake. A motorized boat permit is required.
- No camping or fires on the river.
- Floating is prohibited on all rivers in the park and parkway except the Snake River. The Snake River bottom is closed to floating and public entry each year from December 15 to April 1.
- Floating is prohibited within 1,000 feet of Jackson Lake Dam.
- A concession permit is required for all commercial activity in the park.
- Report any accident with a collision or injury to a ranger within 24 hours.

Suggested Float Trips

Beginner Level

Jackson Lake Dam to Pacific Creek

This stretch provides scenic views, calmer water and few obstructions. There is fast water at Pacific Creek landing, boaters should scout this landing prior to launching.

Intermediate Level

Pacific Creek to Deadman's Bar

This stretch drops significantly creating swift water and braided channels that make route-finding difficult. Boating experience on lakes does not translate well to the Snake River.

Flagg Ranch to Lizard Creek Campground

The braided channels make route-finding a challenge. The river winds for 6 miles before reaching Jackson Lake. While crossing 4 miles on the lake, southwest winds may be moderate to strong. Strenuous rowing or paddling may be required. Afternoon thunderstorms and winds produce waves that can swamp rafts and canoes. Motors may be carried for use on Jackson Lake.

Advanced Level

Deadman's Bar to Moose Landing

This is the most challenging stretch of river in the park and most accidents occur here. The river drops more steeply, with faster water than in the stretch south of Pacific Creek. Complex braiding obscures the main channel and strong currents can sweep boaters into side channels blocked by logjams.

Moose to South Park Boundary

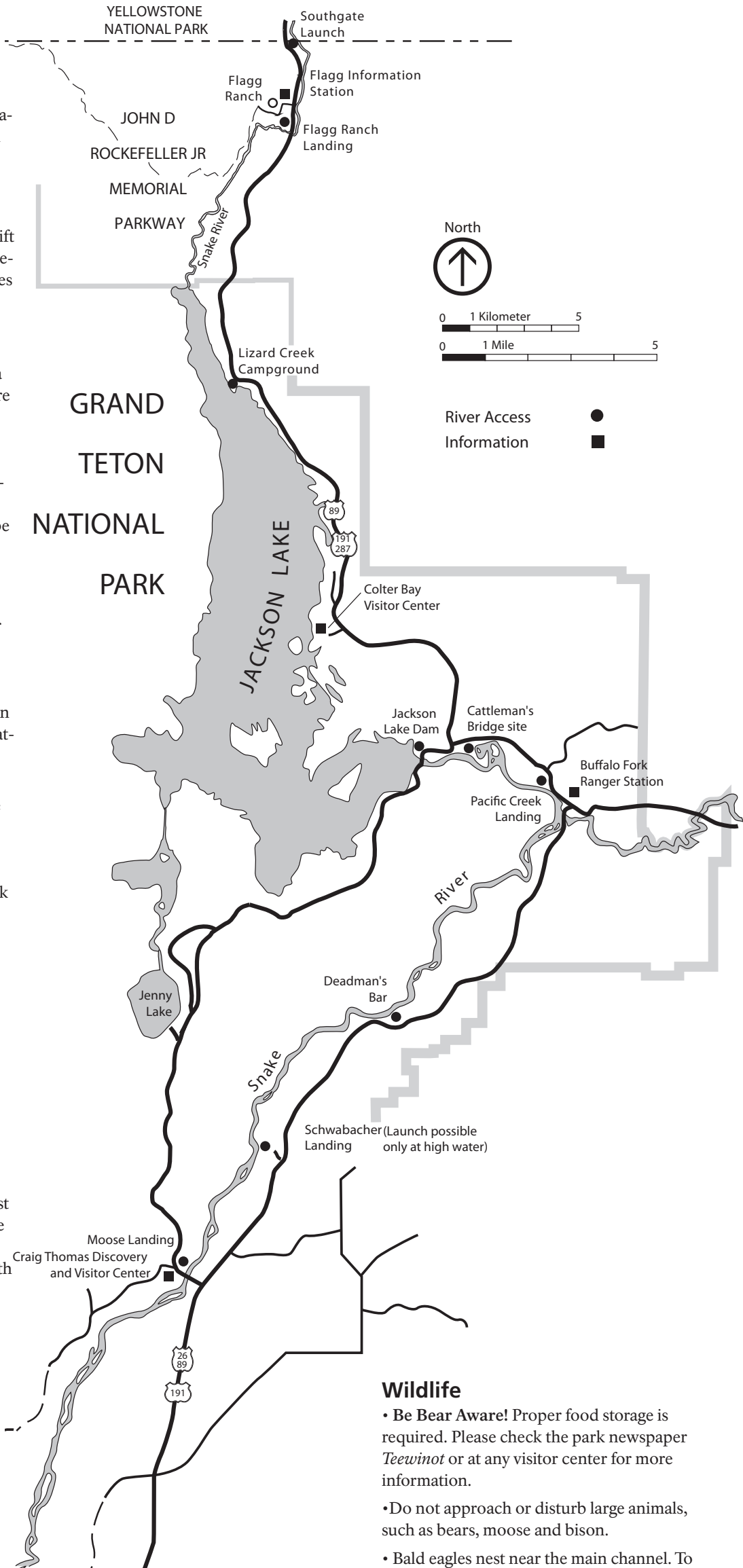
This section of the river is as difficult as the preceding section. Advanced boating skills are required due to fast current, braided channels and logjams. The park extends 5 miles downriver of Moose on the west bank and 2 miles downriver on the east bank; there is no take out or access to the river at the park boundary. The next take-out is at the Snake River Bridge east of Wilson, 14 miles downstream from Moose.

Southgate to Flagg Ranch

Southgate Launch is 1/2-mile south of the South Entrance of Yellowstone National Park. The steep and narrow river provides challenging whitewater for rafters and kayakers. In spring, increased water flow creates standing waves, haystacks, laterals, and large holes capable of flipping rafts. Scout by walking the rim trail along the west bank of the river. At more than 4000 cfs the rapids are Class III (not recommended for canoes). Below 4000 cfs, only canoeists with advanced whitewater skills should attempt this section.

Mileages

Southgate Launch to Flagg Ranch	3
Flagg Ranch to Lizard Creek	10
Jackson Lake Dam to Pacific Creek	5
Pacific Creek to Deadman's Bar	10
Deadman's Bar to Moose Landing	10
Moose to Wilson	14



Wildlife

- **Be Bear Aware!** Proper food storage is required. Please check the park newspaper *Teewinot* or at any visitor center for more information.
- Do not approach or disturb large animals, such as bears, moose and bison.
- Bald eagles nest near the main channel. To protect this threatened species, nest areas are signed and closed to stopping and river bank use.