



## Floating the Snake River



### General Information

Flowing west from its source in the Teton Wilderness, the Snake River 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 the park.

The Snake is a complex river to float. The beauty and lack of whitewater lulls floaters into inattentiveness. A tangle of channels and constant shifting of 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 visitor centers, and at the Rockefeller Parkway and Buffalo Fork Ranger Stations. Reports are

updated weekly or whenever significant change in river conditions occur. Even boaters frequently floating the Snake should check conditions before every trip, as the river can change overnight. River flow varies greatly throughout the summer. Water depths average 2 to 3 feet, but exceed 10 feet in some locations. Boulders and bottom irregularities cause standing waves up to 3 feet high. Typically, spring flows will be 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 stays deceptively strong. Logjams and tight turns remain. Always set up maneuvers well in advance and make decisions early. Take into consideration traditionally strong upstream winds, especially when canoeing.

### Safety and Etiquette

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 the 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. Patrol boats carry first aid gear and two-way radios. If you have any questions or need assistance, contact the River Patrol Rangers. Information and assistance are available year-round at the Moose Visitor Center and in summer (May through September) at the Buffalo Fork Ranger Station in Moran, the Flagg Ranch Ranger Station, and the 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 the water unless you boil or treat it first. Swimming in the river is not recommended.

For information on Snake River flows, call 1-800-658-5771. For information on floating the Snake outside the park contact: Jackson Hole Chamber of Commerce, Box E, Jackson, WY 83001, 307-733-3316; or Bridger-Teton National Forest, Box 1888, Jackson, WY 83001, 307-739-5500 or 307-739-5417.

### Regulations

Detailed boating regulations are available at visitor centers and ranger stations.

- All vessels must carry a U.S. Coast Guard-approved personal flotation device (PFD) properly fitted for each person on board.
- A park permit is required for each boat. Purchase permits at Colter Bay, Buffalo Fork, Rockefeller Parkway, and Moose Ranger Stations. For non-motorized craft the cost is \$5.00 for a 7-day permit and \$10.00 for an annual permit. Display the permit prominently.
- Boating under the influence of intoxicants or narcotic drugs is prohibited.
- Inner tubes, air mattresses, float tubes, and similar flotation devices are prohibited.
- Motors and pets are prohibited on the river. Motors may be used on Jackson Lake, but a motorized boat permit is required.

- Camping and fires are prohibited along 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. Floating is not allowed on the Snake River in Yellowstone National Park.
- A concession permit is required for all commercial activity in the park.
- Report any boating accident involving a collision or casualty to a ranger within 24 hours.
- Pack out all trash.

## Suggested Float Trips

### *Beginner Level*

Jackson Lake Dam to Pacific Creek

These areas provide 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 has proven to be of little help on the Snake River.

Flagg Ranch to Lizard Creek Campground

The braided channels make route-finding a challenge. The river winds through the Parkway for 6 miles to Jackson Lake. During the 4 miles on the lake, southwest winds can be moderate to strong. Strenuous rowing or paddling is 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 other sections 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

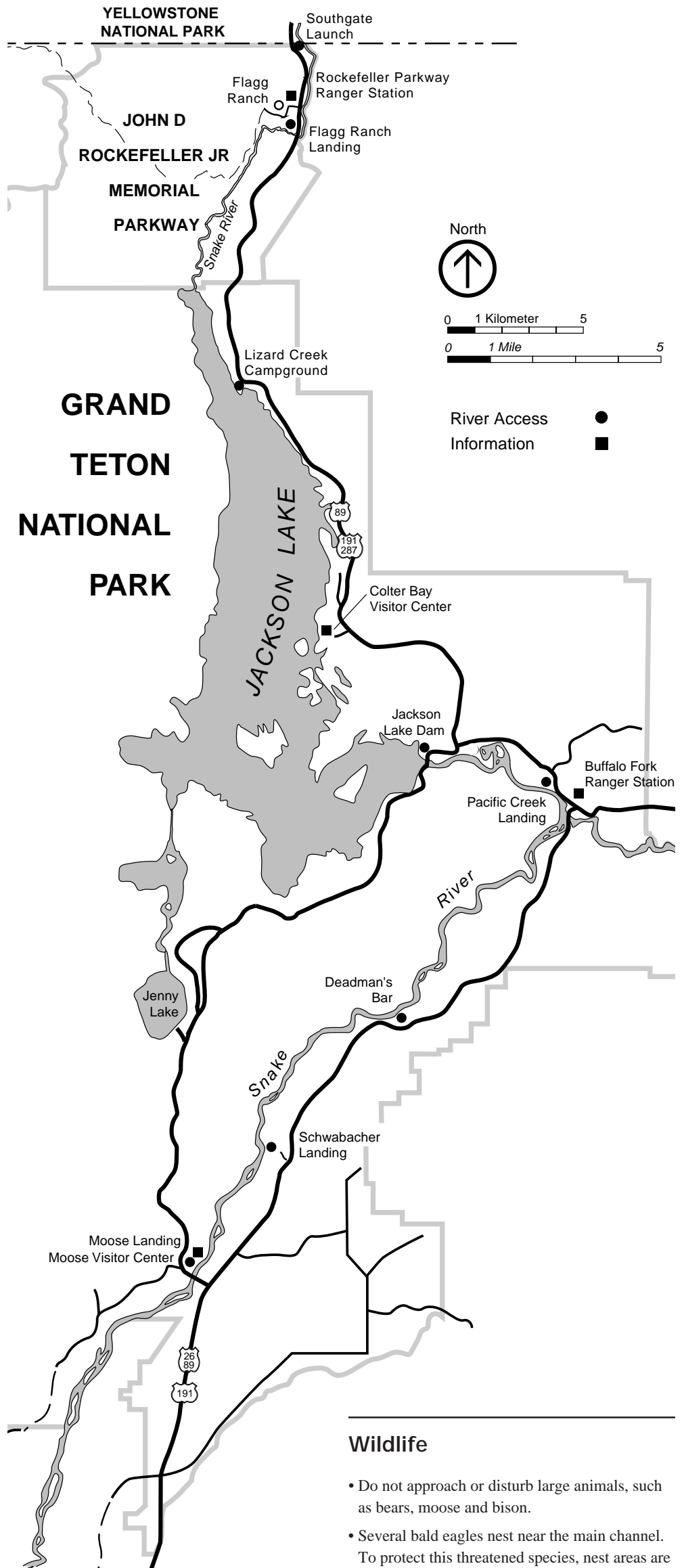
This section of the river is as difficult as the preceding section. Advanced boating skills are required due to fast current, braided channels, and logjams. The park boundary extends 5 miles downriver of Moose on the west bank and 2 miles downriver on the east bank; there is no take out or access to the river at the park boundary. The next take-out is at Wilson, 12 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	10.5
Deadman's Bar to Moose Landing	10
Moose to Wilson	12



## Wildlife

- Do not approach or disturb large animals, such as bears, moose and bison.
- Several bald eagles nest near the main channel. To protect this threatened species, nest areas are signed and closed to river bank use.
- Ospreys and great blue herons nest near the Snake River. Do not stop near nests as these birds are also susceptible to disturbance while nesting.