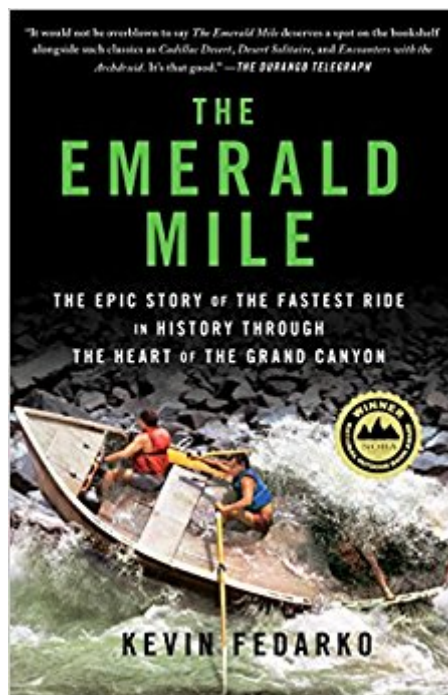




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The Emerald Mile: The Epic Story Of The Fastest Ride In History Through The Heart Of The Grand Canyon



Synopsis

From one of Outside magazine's "Literary All-Stars" comes the thrilling true tale of the fastest boat ride ever, down the entire length of the Colorado River and through the Grand Canyon, during the legendary flood of 1983. In the spring of 1983, massive flooding along the length of the Colorado River confronted a team of engineers at the Glen Canyon Dam with an unprecedented emergency that may have resulted in the most catastrophic dam failure in history. In the midst of this crisis, the decision to launch a small wooden dory named "The Emerald Mile" at the head of the Grand Canyon, just fifteen miles downstream from the Glen Canyon Dam, seemed not just odd, but downright suicidal. The Emerald Mile, at one time slated to be destroyed, was rescued and brought back to life by Kenton Gruba, the man at the oars, who intended to use this flood as a kind of hydraulic sling-shot. The goal was to nail the all-time record for the fastest boat ever propelled—by oar, by motor, or by the grace of God himself—down the entire length of the Colorado River from Lees Ferry to Lake Mead. Did he survive? Just barely. Now, this remarkable, epic feat unfolds here, in *The Emerald Mile*.

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Customer Reviews

"Kevin Fedarko's new brilliant work... is the story about wilderness and the American mind, albeit an American mind juiced on Class V adrenaline... Perhaps because we sympathize so strongly with the characters of *The Emerald Mile*--thanks in no small part to Fedarko's flowing prose--you'll feel yourself lurching along with them on wooden boats, in ocher-hued canyons, beneath cobalt skies, into the frenzied thrashings of the Colorado river as the very landscape of the West attempts to choke

it." (Mountain magazine)"The book is at its heart an engrossing meditation on the eternal struggle between man and nature." (Pittsburg Post-Gazette)"Kevin Fedarko's remarkable *The Emerald Mile* re-creates an incredible voyage through the flood-swollen Grand Canyon in such heart-pounding detail that you need to pause every few pages to catch your breath... He writes so vividly that your favorite reading chair becomes a spray-soaked perch on a bucking boat hit hard by a river running high and fast." (Dallas Morning News)"Crafting a tale as graceful and powerful as the natural wonder of which he writes... the book goes beyond your typical river porn, offering a wide appeal to everyone from history buffs and the *Popular Mechanics* set to environmentalists and outdoor enthusiasts. In fact, it would not be overblown to say *The Emerald Mile* deserved a spot on the bookshelf alongside such enduring classics as *Cadillac Desert*, *Desert Solitaire* and *Encounters with the Archdruid*. It's that good...Fedarko will have you poised on the edge of your seat like a high-sider at Lava Falls." (Durango Telegraph)"His poetic and descriptive writing should only brighten his accolades and helps his non-fiction book read like a fast-paced fiction adventure...It isn't necessary to be a history buff or whitewater expert to enjoy this story... With meticulous research, notes and epilogue, Fedarko tells a satisfying story that is quite an entertaining ride." (Deseret News)"The *Emerald Mile* is the rarest of creations – a magical convergence of words and paper, wood and water, rock and sky, human character and cosmic caprice. Can an adventure story be as beautiful as it is heart-stopping and exciting? This one is, and Fedarko's book is as inspiring as a dory itself, flying down a wild river. I have no doubt it will become an instant classic, a timeless chronicle of what can still be legitimately called the American spirit." (Bob Shacochis author of *Swimming in the Volcano* and *Easy in the Islands*)"Fedarko's effortlessly engaging narrative... is a labor of passion from an adventurous journalist who still calls the Grand Canyon home." (Boulder Weekly)"Powerful and poetic passages put readers inside the adventurers' boats, even if they have only ever imagined the Grand Canyon or seen it in pictures... an epic-sized true-life adventure tale that appeals to both the heart and the head." (Kirkus)"Kevin Fedarko's magnificent book covers a lot of ground -- and water... So it is a great boon of Fedarko's book that he tells the story of the dam, and of the engineers and technicians who built it... with as much respect and homage as he gives to the dorymen." (Cleveland Plain-Dealer)"Grua's wild ride on the Colorado, how it mirrored his mercurial personality, is just on part of Fedarko's story; however, the river, which runs through seven states, and the canyon, rich in both geological and political history, prove to be the real protagonists." (Publisher's Weekly)"From the bottom of our planet's most awesome landscape, Kevin Fedarko has found and rescued a great American tall tale that just happens to be true. As a boatman, Fedarko knows this

world intimately. As a writer, he'll make you understand it, savor it, and ultimately love it as you never have before. Here is an instant classic of adventure literature – a story shot through with bravura but also touched by the rarest kind of grandeur." (Hampton Sides editor-at-large at Outside magazine and author of Blood and Thunder and Ghost Soldiers)

Kevin Fedarko lives in northern New Mexico and works as a part-time river guide in Grand Canyon National Park. In addition to his travel narratives in Outside, where he worked as a senior editor, Fedarko's work has appeared in Esquire, National Geographic Adventure, and other publications, and has been anthologized in The Best American Travel Writing in 2004 and 2006. Fedarko was a staff writer at Time magazine from 1991 to 1997, where his work helped garner an Overseas Press Club Award for a story on the assassination of Yitzhak Rabin. Fedarko earned a Masters of Philosophy in Russian history at Oxford in 1990.

I have read "a few" books on the Grand Canyon over the decades, and this one is at the very top of the list. It's hard to tell you how much I enjoyed every word. Don't know if I am biased because I love rowing wooden boats through The Canyon, but I would hope my appreciation for amazing writing talent trumps that. The enjoyment I have experienced from this extremely well crafted work of art is off the charts! Wow! We as a family often read books aloud to each other. When we were doing this with "Emerald Mile", we found that we had to pause often and just absorb and relish in the incredible magic of the words that had just transpired. Descriptions of "floating mandolins" in tune with "the harmonics of the river" and on and on....just pure delight to visualize! I love the description of the feeling of the connection of a wooden boat with water....things that an author could only know from years of being with and dreaming about the boats. You don't have to be a river person to enjoy this work, as the words flow just as beautifully as a river itself. Kevin Fedarko's dedication to and love for the subject is clear and truly amazing! Mike Martin
Grand Canyon private dory
boatman
admirer of outstanding writing

I'm in charge of river ops for a dam system in the Bureau of Reclamation. When a friend's father handed me this book, I expected to hate it but I also wanted to understand some of what went into the operations I could review from 1983. This turned out to be a beautiful, balanced, thoughtful book. There's no right or wrong answer. There aren't any faceless demons. Fedarko treats both sides of the engineering/environment divide with compassion and draws such strong character portraits that you find yourself rooting for both.

I knew Kenton and Rudi. I've worked for the Dories in the Canyon (Ok... so I have a dog in this fight) for the past 9 years, and Kevin rowed the La Pooperia baggage boat for me a few years back. This guy's done his homework, on both sides, both with river people and dam people. His writing is eloquent and takes you right there every stroke of the way. I learned a lot of new and interesting facts about the history, the dams, and the people of the river; the "talented misfits" as I call us. And that's pretty darn hard to do since I'm a real aficionado of the Canyon. The Emerald Mile has become part of my river library, and I read tidbits from it to my clients on every trip. They all love it as well! Just watch their eyes: they scan the cliffs, and are swept away by the magic brought by Kevin's words. Sure, if you row rubber you may find a tiny part of the book a little too much (the part about the dory boatmen), and yes, I was one of those who didn't particularly care for Kenton's antics. Having said that, the book couldn't have been written without those parts, as they formed a basic and relentless core of the boatmen, and the man himself, and thus are part and parcel to understanding the historic events that happened back in '83. I was on the river myself, and watched them silently row by in Conquistador Isle, wondering WTF. Well, now I know, and if there was only one book you could have to read on your next Colorado river trip in the Big Ditch, this is the one that will make you stay in your tent reading while you miss the scotch around the evening fire, or the coffee call in the wee hours. Get it!

This is a good story, but I really enjoyed the background material on the failure of the Glen Canyon Dam overflow tunnels. The big rains of 1983 in the West resulted in massive flooding in the Colorado River. The Glen Canyon Dam overflow tunnels had not been tested and failed, with the result of massive releases of water down the Colorado. The culprit was "cavitation" by the water flow the bypass tunnels which broke up the concrete lining causing failure. This is nicely covered in the book chapters, along with an appendix which explains the multimillion dollar fix after the floods. The fix was to install metal structures in the overflow tunnels to keep the water flow smooth and generate bubbles. A similar failure occurred in 2017 at Oroville Dam in Northern California on the main spillway which was heavily damaged by the flood waters. The dam operators knew about the Glen Canyon fix, but chose in 2001 not to spend the \$100 M for the upgrades. Now we (the taxpayers) are faced with \$500 M to repair the spillway, and install the water-flow-smoothing devices. Kevin Fedarko should write another book about the 2017 failure of the 710-ft high Oroville Dam spillway, the the evacuation of 200,000 people downstream. Every so often, Mother Nature show her teeth.

The book does go on some tangents (nothing compared to James A. Michener) but you may find not wanting to hear about Powell's travels, Martin Litton's views and outfitting business, and some other historical insights. But I encourage you to STICK WITH IT--at the very least move to the next chapter (but I think you might find yourself returning to want to read more at the end of the book). The writer provides a turn-key journey into how the river was created, initially explored, enjoyed by folks in the "Golden Age", dammed at Glen Canyon, and the river rats who traveled it. Near the last half of the book we read about the characters who took this epic trip (which I will admit is where I became submersed and captured. Then in page-turning detail we read how the the three experienced river rats raced down the flooded Colorado against many Class 5+ rapids in a wooden dory. After I finished the book, I popped back to read about the history of Powell (yes, I'll admit I did struggle back into the earlier part of the book because I wanted to hear the epic tale). I was left wanting to read more by Kevin Fedarko and about the Colorado River and the river rats.

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