

Title: *The Emerald Mile*

Subtitle: *The Epic Story of the Faster Ride in History Through the Heart of the Grand Canyon*

Author: Kevin Fedarko

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Review: John Gumbley

This is a great read and was chosen as the best adventure book of 2013 by several outdoors magazines.

In the winter of 1983 a large El Nino event resulted in massive snowmelt runoff racing down the Colorado river toward the massive Glen Canyon dam which is located at the head of the iconic Grand Canyon. As engineers struggled to avoid one of the most dramatic dam failures in history, they began releasing massive amounts of water that caused a maelstrom so powerful that the river became a disaster zone for the many craft that privately and commercially raft the river - from traditional dories and kayaks to large commercial inflatable rafts.

The book describes this iconic landscape and briefly describes the landforms, geology and natural history. Indian and European history is also described, in particular the huge debate about whether dams should be built on this huge unique river system. The history and characters associated with rafting is particularly fascinating from the early explorers - Major John Wesley Powell first surveyed the river in 1869, to modern-day adventurers.

In the midst of the crises rapidly evolving with massive winter 1983 flow, a trio of river guides secretly launched a hand-built wooden dory named *Emerald Mile* into the Colorado at night. The conditions on this 277 river mile adventure negotiating nearly 200 rapids was considered suicidal. The trip leader, Kenton Grua, planned, if all went well, to hurl himself and his two companions through the rapids in the heart of the Grand Canyon in the fastest time.

I started reading this book before going down the river in May this year and could not put the book down on my return. Regardless of having the privilege of experiencing this mighty place, this book is a fascinating and thrilling read. Its flowing prose during the *Emerald Mile's* epic run is spot on. Thirty six hours, 38 minutes, and 29 seconds - what a race.

My only gripe, check this out:

It may not be much of an overstatement to say that, along with splitting the atom and sending the Voyager spacecraft beyond the solar system, Hoover (dam) is the most remarkable thing this country has ever pulled off. p 64. Mind you seeing those images of Pluto from *New Horizons*, the United States can be forgiven just this once.

