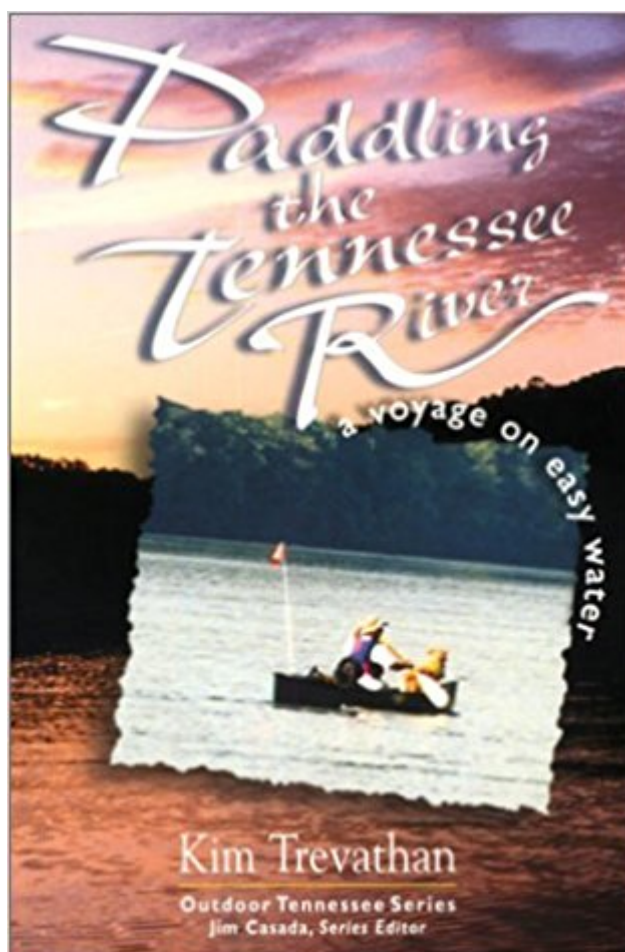


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# Paddling The Tennessee River: A Voyage On Easy Water (Outdoor Tennessee)



## Synopsis

In late August 1998, Kim Trevathan and his dog, Jasper, set out by canoe on a long, slow trip down the 652 miles of the Tennessee River, the largest tributary of the Ohio. Trevathan wanted to experience the river in its entirety, from Knoxville's narrow, winding channel, which flows past rocky bluffs, to the wide-open waters of Kentucky Lake at its lower end. Over the course of the five-week voyage, Trevathan rediscovered the people and places that made history on the Tennessee's banks. He crossed the path of the explorer Meriwether Lewis along the Natchez Trace, noted the sites of Ulysses S. Grant's Civil War battles, and passed Hiwassee Island, the spot where a teenaged runaway named Sam Houston lived with Cherokee Chief Jolly. Trevathan also came to know the modern river's dwellers, including a towboat pilot, two couples who traded in their landlocked homes for life on the river, a campground owner, and a meteorologist for NASA. He placed his life in the hands of U.S. Army Corps of Engineers lock operators as he and Jasper navigated the river's nine dams. Paddling the Tennessee River is a powerful travel narrative that captures the river's wild, turbulent, and defiant past and confronts what it has become—an overused and overdeveloped series of lakes. But first and foremost, the book is the story of a man and his dog, riding low enough to smell the water and to discover the promise of a slow river running through the southern heartland.

The Author: Kim Trevathan, who earned his M.F.A. in creative writing at the University of Alabama, works as a new media writer and producer and writes a column for the Maryville Daily Times. His essays and short stories have been published in *The Distillery*, *New Millennium Writings*, *The Texas Review*, *New Delta Review*, and *Under the Sun*. He lives in Rockford, Tennessee.

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## Customer Reviews

In late August 1998, Kim Trevathan and his dog, Jasper, set out by canoe on a long, slow trip down the 652 miles of the Tennessee River, the largest tributary of the Ohio. Trevathan wanted to experience the river in its entirety, from Knoxville's narrow, winding channel, which flows past rocky bluffs, to the wide-open waters of Kentucky Lake at its lower end. Over the course of the five-week voyage, Trevathan rediscovered the people and places that made history on the Tennessee's banks. He crossed the path of the explorer Meriwether Lewis along the Natchez Trace, noted the sites of Ulysses S. Grant's Civil War battles, and passed Hiwassee Island, the spot where a teenaged runaway named Sam Houston lived with Cherokee Chief Jolly. Trevathan also came to know the modern river's dwellers, including a towboat pilot, two couples who traded in their landlocked homes for life on the river, a campground owner, and a meteorologist for NASA. He placed his life in the hands of U.S. Army Corps of Engineers lock operators as he and Jasper navigated the river's nine dams. Paddling the Tennessee River is a powerful travel narrative that captures the river's wild, turbulent, and defiant past and confronts what it has become - an overused and overdeveloped series of lakes. But first and foremost, the book is the story of a man and his dog, riding low enough to smell the water and to discover the promise of a slow river running through the southern heartland. The Author: Kim Trevathan, who earned his M.F.A. in creative writing at the University of Alabama, works as a new media writer and producer and writes a column for the Maryville Daily Times. His essays and short stories have been published in The Distillery, New Millennium Writings, The Texas Review, New Delta Review, and Under the Sun. He lives in Rockford, Tennessee.

Most experienced canoeists shake their heads in puzzlement when I tell them I canoed the length of the Tennessee. With nine dams, little or no current, and heavy barge, jet ski, and cabin cruiser traffic, it is not the ideal river for canoeists. I conceived of the trip, from the outset, as a writing project about the Tennessee, and the canoe enabled me to write about the river from a perspective different from most other people. I was low to the water, close enough to touch it and smell it, and I was under my own power, which made it imperative that I constantly consult the navigational charts in detail to find shortcuts and mile markers. The biggest dangers to me on the Tennessee were not from the dams, the barges, snakes, or from "Deliverance" style villains out to get me. My dog Jasper

and I were most often threatened by those unaware of our existence or of their effect upon us: cabin cruiser captains whose boats created four to five-foot high wakes. --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

I first read *Coldhearted River: A Canoe Odyssey Down the Cumberland*, (by the same author), then read this particular book. After reading the book about the Cumberland River first, I was a bit concerned that I might find the writer's earlier book about the Tennessee River to be less enjoyable/less interesting, but actually found it to be even more entertaining and informative. I learned enough to rule out any ideas of doing a long paddle trip on the Cumberland, and found, instead, that paddling a long section of the Tennessee between Pickwick Dam and Kentucky Lake may be just the trip I want to paddle. Anyone interested in extended paddling trips will find either or both of these books interesting, informative, and well written, regardless of whether you're reading for entertainment or researching an extended paddling trips you may be contemplating.

I'll preface my review by saying that I often skip writing reviews, but rely heavily on them for purchases. I had to make sure I stopped and wrote my praises of this book though. I really like adventure journals type books such as this, but he does a great job of limiting the book's lecturing on the river, paddling, or even history.. He does all these things, but adds in just the right amount of opinion from himself and the people he met along the way. I paddle the Tennessee river and its tributaries often, and this book made me more thankful for the amazing waterway I live by.

Kim Trevathan takes you as his companion while he and his dog Jasper canoe the length of the Tennessee River. The river journey takes you from Knoxville, Tennessee to Paducah, Kentucky as the river winds its way through a series of man-made lakes in four states. He describes the history of the river and introduces you to the wonderful characters he meets in his six week journey.

My wife and I do quite a bit of paddling. I was interested in learning about the Tennessee River when I first moved to Tennessee. I got much more than I bargained for with this book. Not only does the author narrate the journey, it was also the most painless introduction to a local region and its history that I have ever read. The author can come off as a bit of a tree hugger at times, but take it with a grain of salt. He did an outstanding job with this book and his writing style made it a very enjoyable read. I would recommend this to anyone.

I got a signed copy. It was for school and cost near to nothing. enjoyed it very much and still cannot imagine canoeing that long and far with my dog!.. amazing!

Trevathan's account of his canoe trip with his dog Jasper on the Tennessee River is an easy paddling sort of read. Like the trip itself, it's musing, meandering, a little slow in some places, but rapid and tense in others. The book is at its best with sidebars about the river's place in history - more specifically TVA history, descriptions of the Trail of Tears motorcycle ride in Florence, Alabama and conversations with real life characters who manage to make the Tennessee River their livelihood. Trevathan wrestles with the divergent interests that often conflict with each other. On one hand the TVA dams prevent widespread flooding and destruction of homes, but it also strips the river of its natural beauty. He rails against the large cabin cruisers that create wakes that toss his tiny boat, but then makes friends with a married couple who offer him cold beer and a tour of their luxury houseboat. The book is a reflection of the river --- a flotsam of history, travel, and an indictment of the insanity called "progress." Trevathan has successfully completed two voyages: one was canoeing the Tennessee, the other was writing about it.

Kim Trevathan's *Paddling the Tennessee River: A Voyage on Easy Water* is that rare bit of travel writing that manages to be informative, entertaining, and well written. As Trevathan makes his way down the essentially tamed Tennessee River looking for clues to its former wildness and beauty, he goes beyond a mere recording of visual observations and ends up with a story that reads more like a good novel than anything else. In the course of this book, which covers his five week journey down river, he touches on the history of the river and the region, modern eco-politics, the anti-septic world of corporate America (from which Trevathan is on brief hiatus), the prevailing southern stereotypes (will he or will he not be required to squeal like a pig at some juncture of his journey) and the still-surviving beauty of the great Outdoors. In short, this is an ambitious book, a commendation in itself. That Trevathan manages to chew what he has bitten off with humor, insight, and intelligence is a testament to his many talents. Oh, and you'll love the dog.

This book is fun to read. The historical aspects of the book hold the book together. As for the narrative it is too self centered. He worries too much about too many things. I can relate to the conflict between powerboaters and others. Some of the areas that he paddles my wife and I have paddled. He offered few details he doesn't side trip at Wheeler into the wildlife refuge, he just rushes through. He set an impossible schedule that made it hard to enjoy the trip. He talks way too much

about his dog. We have a dog. Maybe he should have noticed the eagles and the turtles. When we paddle we enjoy the time well spent.

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