

April 2010 Field & Stream Magazine Featuring NRS Otter 130 Fishing Package.



Inflatable rafts with solid frames (hard bottoms) are a safe bet for all-around river fishing. **Pros:** You can run rapids and bounce off rocks that might otherwise scrape (or wreck) a dory; rafts are also easy to deflate and transport. **Cons:** Rafts aren't as responsive or quick as dories, especially in flat water. **Ideal application:** Trout waters where you encounter the occasional class II or higher rapid. The NRS Otter 130 Fishing Package (\$4,950; nrsweb.com) comes rigged and ready to fish.

F&S | ESSENTIAL GUIDE | FLOAT-FISHING

BY KIRK DEETER

Row Like a Pro

HOW TO FLOAT A BIG RIVER, MAN THE OARS SMARTLY, AND CATCH FISH IN ALL THE BEST SPOTS

✘ A drift boat or a raft can put you into untold miles of fishing opportunity and adventure, but you have to be able to get the craft into very specific places. There's a huge difference between just floating a river and being a skilled oarsman who can put people on fish. You must be able to anticipate your location, read water, use current to your advantage, know where to be for the perfect cast—and know what places mean trouble. Turn the page for the essential skills you need to float a river—and get shot after shot at rising trout.

River Boat Guide

Most river rowing craft fall into three categories. Each has benefits and drawbacks:

THE DORY

Also called a drift boat, the dory (such as the McKenzie dory and the Rogue River dory) was designed specifically for big-river fishing. The details differ from type to type, but they are typically wide, high-sided, flat-hulled, extreme-rocker boats. **Pros:** The drift boat offers the most stable platform for casting, and it's easy to maneuver in currents. **Cons:** You must be a skilled oarsman because crashing into rocks can be a once-and-done mistake. **Ideal application:** Big trout waters with gentle glides and mild to moderate rapids. The Boulder Boat Works Convertible River Taxi (\$5,295; boulderboatworks.com), available with high or low sides, is a good choice for beginning river runners.

THE INFLATABLE RAFT

Inflatable rafts with solid frames (hard bottoms) are a safe bet for all-around river fishing. **Pros:** You can run rapids and bounce off rocks that might otherwise scrape (or wreck) a dory; rafts are also easy to deflate and transport. **Cons:** Rafts aren't as responsive or quick as dories, especially in flat water. **Ideal application:** Trout waters where you encounter the occasional class II or higher rapid. The NRS Otter 130 Fishing Package (\$4,950; nrsweb.com) comes rigged and ready to fish.

THE PONTOON BOAT

Single-person pontoon boats are easy to maneuver, once you get the hang of when to row and when to cast. Inflatable pontoons make them lightweight. **Pros:** Pontoons are stealthy and efficient on lakes and calm rivers—and are the most affordable option. **Cons:** A single-person boat is not designed for heavy water, and there's not much gear storage space. **Ideal application:** Lakes and rivers with mild currents. The Outcast Discovery 9-IR (\$899; outcastboats.com) has inflatable pontoons and weighs only 69 pounds.

PONTOON SKILLS

HOW TO GO SOLO

Single-person pontoon boats allow you the flexibility to fish on rivers and lakes by yourself, but they're not designed to tackle heavy rapids. Even on flat water, you should always wear a PFD and carry a whistle, in case you get separated from your boat. Because it's impossible to work the oars and cast effectively at the same time, consider models that allow you to both row and use kick fins. As a rule of thumb, you should "row to move, and kick to fish." Use your oars to navigate downstream, and keep your fins pointed toes-up so they don't catch obstructions. When it's time to cast, gently beat your legs up and down while pointed downstream. Always keep your weight centered in a pontoon boat, and never place one perpendicular to strong currents. —K.D.

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