

GETTING YOUR FACE WET



It's one thing to make a photograph with a tripod, a light meter and all the time in the world. To make a photograph in the middle of a Class 10 rapid, with gravity, Mother Nature and the clock working against you, is a rite of passage, especially for adventure photographers who are tired of sitting around.

A Portfolio by David Zickl

Brad Dimock, who's been a Grand Canyon boatman for more than four decades, rows his dory through the Colorado River's Grapevine Rapids. Behind him is David Baum, who chartered the trip. "I know Brad casually through my friends in Flagstaff," photographer David Zickl says. "He was the first person I photographed on the trip. It took me five or six days to figure out what I was going to do. Finally, I asked Brad, 'Can I kneel up here in the bow and just look back at you?' He said, 'Yeah, if you don't fall out.' It was the perfect distance for the lens I was using. I had the guy next to me tell me when we were about to hit the rapids, so I could be prepared. But my camera got soaked anyway."

ABOUT THIS PORTFOLIO: David Zickl made these four photographs on an Arizona Raft Adventures trip through the Grand Canyon in 2015. Zickl was serving as a cook on the expedition, and it was his fourth journey down the Colorado River, but his first on a rowing trip. “I wasn’t prepared for the water,” says Zickl, who specializes in portrait photography. “I just had my camera. At one point, a huge wave came down over the top of the boat. Everything got soaked, and my camera stopped working. When we stopped for lunch, I took the memory card and batteries out and dried the camera out, and it started working again.” That happened a few more times on the trip, and eventually, the Canon EOS 5D Mark II died for good — thankfully, not before Zickl made these images. “Now, I’ve got a housing for my camera,” says Zickl, who headed back to the river in July to do some more shooting. “All four of these guides have a great deal of respect for both the river and the Canyon,” he adds. “They’re in tune with the flow of the river.”



ABOVE: David “Stinny” Stinson smiles after rowing an 18-foot raft through Upset Rapids. “Stinny is a consummate professional,” Zickl says. “He’s what’s called the head cook. When you’re the head cook, you’re not actually cooking anything, but you’re responsible for all the food. He’s very organized and meticulous.”

LEFT: Jay Healy navigates Lava Falls Rapids in an 18-foot raft. “Jay is just a big, lovable teddy bear,” Zickl says. “He keeps people entertained. He’s a great storyteller — not so much about the Canyon, just about life in general. He’s a big, strong guy, so going through Lava, he just powered through it. I think the photo kind of illustrates that. When we hit the big waves at the end of Lava, the whole raft went underwater, then popped up. This picture was right before that.”



Margeaux Bestard steers a paddle raft through the churning water of Fossil Creek Rapids. "For the past five years, Margeaux has slowly been making herself into a river guide," Zickl says. "She's done whatever she can to get on a boat. Eventually, she got hired by Arizona Raft Adventures. Most of the time, she runs the paddle raft, and she's great at it. That raft has six guests who paddle, and Margeaux steers from the back. She's really good at instructing people. This photo sums up her personality — very upbeat and effervescent." [AH](#)