

L'Eau Vive



Deb Pinniger

The book you are holding is a visual history of my kayaking adventures over the last five years. It is a collection of my favourite images reflecting the wildness of the places we travel to, the characters we share our experiences with and the beauty of the water we ride.

Introduction

From the first day I sat in a boat at eight years old, the sport of kayaking has been full of surprises and has given me true freedom in my life. I have been fortunate enough to travel through deep Iranian canyons, surf exposed ocean waves in the Irish Sea, run out of money in foreign countries and drive drunken taxi drivers to various river put-ins and take-outs.

Kayaking has taught me so many things: Respect for the environment and a deeper understanding of other cultures and people. It has fired my passion for the natural world. I have been humbled when I least expected it (and probably needed it most) and it has shown me that with persistence, we will eventually get where we want to be; with patience, those perfect conditions will come.

One of the most important ways kayaking has impacted my life is by keeping me focused on the aspects that really

matter to me. I am grateful to the world and its people for presenting me with such colourful experiences.

This book is not an end point to my kayaking life, it is just a pause to look back while my journey continues. As I look through the book and read the text again, I realise how much this journal has become a part of me and how this project has renewed my enthusiasm for life and paddling.

I could have waited another five years to make this book, hoping for more adventures and new images to add to it, but for some reason it feels like the right time. Now that it's complete, I can't wait to get out in my boat, go hard again, take fresh pictures, meet new people and explore new places. For all the images presented on paper here, there are thousands more out there in the world just waiting to be discovered. Enjoy.

DEB PINNIGER 2003

When kayaking in Europe, I am constantly amazed at the never-ending opportunities for great paddling, carefree travelling and rich cultural experiences so close to home.

With access to such a wide variety of different cultures, cuisine, geography and geology, it easy to understand why Europeans are so attached to their homeland. With so much to explore in the backyard, the need to travel further afield is less crucial.

The rivers of Europe share the same individuality as the countries through which they run and each has its own unique character: The tight, narrow bedrock granite canyons of the Swiss Ticino, the Italian Piemonte famous for its clean drops and clear water, the vast limestone gorges of the Verdon in France, the hair-raising late afternoon runs on the uninviting, grey glacial meltwater of the Oetz in Austria and the transparent tranquillity of the Soča in Slovenia. There is something for everyone.

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Maybe it's because of the risks we all face on the water, the need to communicate, understand and look out for one another, or just a shared joy of life but kayaking seems to forge a particularly strong bond of friendship. Wherever you go you'll find people you barely know willing to go the extra mile for you just because you're a fellow paddler. No matter where I travel, the enthusiasm and camaraderie of the boaters I meet never ceases to amaze me. It keeps my faith in the human spirit burning bright. There's always the offer of a floor to sleep on, a ride to the put-in, a few cold beers at the take-out and big, big fun on the river. It seems to me that all the boaters in the world are really just friends we have not yet met.

JASON 'SMUDGER' SMITH 2002

CHEEZ & ANDY SAN GIOVANNI RIVER | ITALY



*I do not know much about
gods; but I think that the
river is a strong brown god.*

T S ELIOT THE DRY SALVAGES 1941





