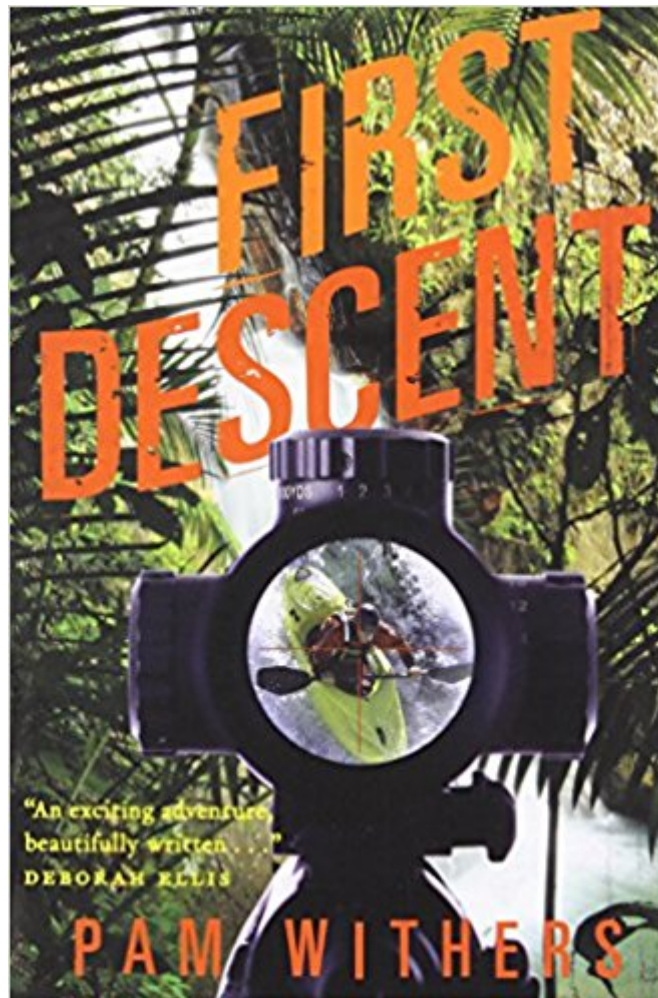




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# First Descent



## Synopsis

Montana-born Rex dreams of following in his grandfather's footsteps and making a first descent down one of the world's last unconquered wild rivers. When he finally gets enough sponsors, Rex heads to South America to tackle the well-named El Furioso. And while he anticipates the river's challenges, he finds himself in a situation where the real danger is human. In Colombia, he hires a guide: seventeen year-old Myriam Calambás, an indigenous girl who has lived along El Furioso all her life. Though she loves its rushing waters, Myriam longs to go to university, become a reporter, and tell the world what is happening to her people. Her dreams, and her very survival, are in the balance when she and Rex become caught up in the clash between the paramilitaries, who work for the rich landowners, and the guerillas, who are supposed to protect the poor. Pam Withers' skill at writing about extreme sports is reflected in this compelling novel about an endangered world and a people struggling for their very right to exist.

## Book Information

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Age Range: 12 and up

Grade Level: 7 and up

## Customer Reviews

“Pam Withers' new book *First Descent* is a book that just can't be put down. From the first page to the last, Withers keeps her readers on the edge of their seats. Moving from a tale of frustration and arrogance to one of survival, heroism, and humility, the story of Rex's adventure to Colombia to navigate the aptly named El Furioso river will keep audiences flipping pages until the last sentence. Withers is a talented author with a knack for exciting and gripping action as well as

for sympathetic and moving characters. The plot is well-paced, and her prose elicits beautiful images of the Colombian landscape. Highly recommended. • "CM Magazine"...From the first page, when Rex hears a crack of river ice, sees an eight-year-old in peril, and enacts a dramatic rescue in which he must out-paddle an advancing mountain of ice, Withers flings the reader from one perilous adventure to another...." Booklist "Kayaking action and encounters with the various military groups are vivid and thrilling." Kirkus Reviews "...a fast-paced novel.... Mature teens will find this a compelling story of clashing cultures and social challenge." The Midwest Book Review

PAM WITHERS is the critically acclaimed author of fifteen best-selling outdoor-adventure books for teens. Born in Wisconsin and fascinated by the world of extreme sports, she is a former slalom kayak racer, kayak instructor, whitewater raft guide, journalist, editor, and associate publisher. A popular public speaker across North America, Pam Withers is also co-founder of [www.keenreaders.org](http://www.keenreaders.org). Pam Withers lives in Vancouver, British Columbia, with her husband. The author lives in Vancouver, British Columbia.

A great book full of international adventure for anyone and particularly fun for teenagers.

Reason for Reading: The plot sounded exciting and I am a fan of this publisher, trusting their book selection when I haven't heard of the author before. Excellent. A superb adventure story that should especially touch reluctant male teen readers. This is an exciting rush of adrenaline from start to finish. 17-year-old Rex is an expert whitewater kayaker taking after his grandfather who raised him along with his mother. His grandfather was well-known in his day for making many first descents down rivers in South America but ended his career when local Natives chased him out of an area of Colombia leaving El Furioso unconquered to this day. Rex promises to finish his grandfather's legacy by making this his first "first descent" and heads off to Colombia without anyone in his family really understanding the political situation in that area. Hiring a local indigenous girl, 17-year-old Myriam, to be his guide he finds himself not only facing man vs. nature as he shoots extreme rapids but man vs man when he learns the plight of the indigena out in the wilderness caught between the paramilitary and guerrilla soldiers. An eye-opening story of culture clashes and world social problems that do not make headline news but should be known and addressed globally. Interesting characters that are real and relatable to teens. I found both Rex and Myriam to be likable teens, flawed and each developed throughout the story. I'm not usually into this type of "political situation"

novel but am very fond of outdoor adventure/survival stories and found the political situation only enhanced the exhilaration of the plot. A great library pick!

A riveting and action packed book for all ages! Let me begin by saying I am a novice when it comes to kayaking, but that didn't stop me from thoroughly enjoying this book. The author does a fine job with drawing the reader in and you feel as though you are riding the white waters along with Rex. Another excellent detail of the book is drawing a vivid image of what life is like in a country where you never feel safe, something many of us take for granted. Rex is tired of living in his grandfather's shadow and feeling like he always has to prove himself to his elder. His grandfather is a world renown kayaker but he has one section of a river in Columbia which he gave up and did not achieve his first descent. This is the river that Rex intends to tame and claim the first descent for himself. After traveling to Columbia, Rex finds an indigena girl to be his guide along the most difficult part of the river. Rex and his fellow kayakers are accepted into Miriam's village and learn what life is like for them, but Rex refuses to acknowledge the dangers looming all around him. But he can't ignore them when he himself becomes the target and must find a way to escape from something much more dangerous than the river he came to run. I recommend this book for readers of all ages and genre types. I would have read this book in one sitting if I could have found a way. The book grabs your attention early and hangs on with a death grasp! Excellent book! I look forward to reading more by this author! (

Received this book from Librarything.com Early Reviewers. Well-written book. The story starts slow and steady then builds up to an exciting end. There is a lot of info regarding the location in Columbia and the way of life of the people there. And the author has so much detail regarding kayaking, it makes me want to try it myself! Teens should like this book.

not my cup of tea!

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