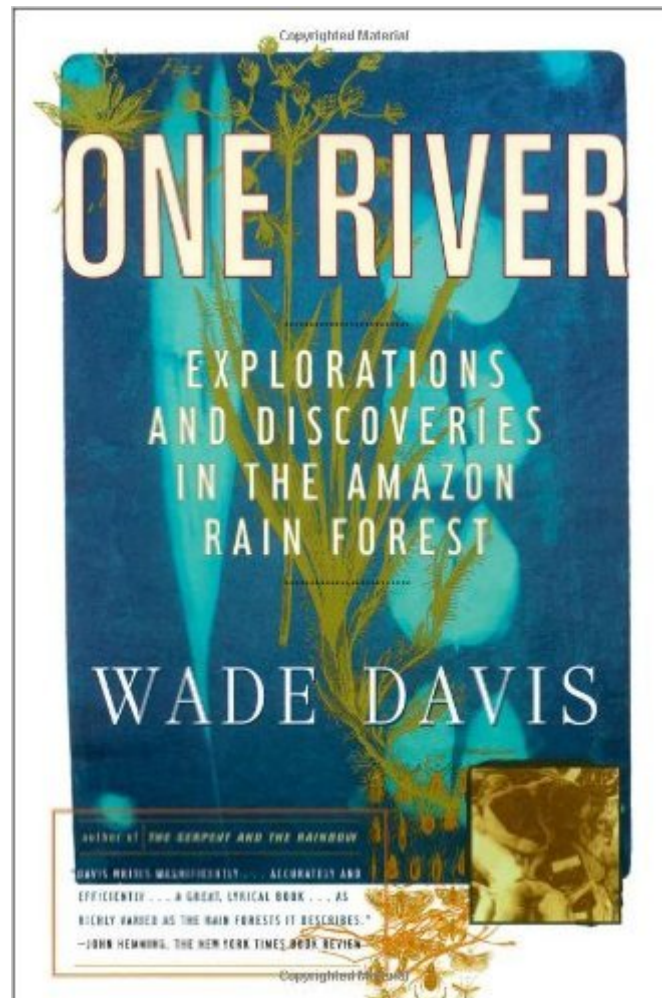


The book was found

One River



Synopsis

The story of two generations of scientific explorers in South America—Richard Evans Schultes and his protégé Wade Davis—an epic tale of adventure and a compelling work of natural history. In 1941, Professor Richard Evan Schultes took a leave from Harvard and disappeared into the Amazon, where he spent the next twelve years mapping uncharted rivers and living among dozens of Indian tribes. In the 1970s, he sent two prize students, Tim Plowman and Wade Davis, to follow in his footsteps and unveil the botanical secrets of coca, the notorious source of cocaine, a sacred plant known to the Inca as the Divine Leaf of Immortality. A stunning account of adventure and discovery, betrayal and destruction, this is a story of two generations of explorers drawn together by the transcendent knowledge of Indian peoples, the visionary realms of the shaman, and the extraordinary plants that sustain all life in a forest that once stood immense and inviolable.

Book Information

Paperback: 544 pages

Publisher: Simon & Schuster (1997)

Language: English

ISBN-10: 0684834960

ISBN-13: 978-0684834962

Product Dimensions: 6.1 x 1.3 x 9.2 inches

Shipping Weight: 1.2 pounds (View shipping rates and policies)

Average Customer Review: 4.8 out of 5 stars— See all reviews (92 customer reviews)

Best Sellers Rank: #53,036 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) #1 in Books > Science & Math >

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Customer Reviews

Anyone still doubting the superiority of truth over fiction need only take this book to a quiet corner and start reading. Wade Davis relates the stories of two Richards, Schultes and Spruce, plus his own in their respective excursions in the Amazon. Schultes, Davis' Harvard mentor, spent many years there seeking medicinal plants and new sources of rubber when access to Asian resins were lost during World War II. No work of fiction, including Hollywood's almost trifling account in the film *Medicine Man*, can match the scope of what Schultes accomplished during his extensive travels. Schultes had the good sense to approach the Native American shamans with respect, dealing with

them on their terms and not as a latter-day conquistador. They responded to his inquiries in kind, leading to countless new medicines for treating our "civilized" illnesses. He became a "depswa" - medicine man - sharing their rituals while gaining knowledge. Davis is able to use his close relationship with Schultes to provide an engrossing and detailed account of Schultes' career in the bush. The second Richard is Schultes' own model. Richard Spruce came to the Upper from mid-Victorian England. Prompted by an inestimable source, Charles Darwin's account of the Beagle voyage, Spruce entered the country in 1849. Few of the celebrated explorers in Africa in the same period can match the perils Spruce faced and dealt with. As did his follower Schultes, Spruce avoided the overbearing colonialist image - his desires were achieved by finding new medicinal plants. Spruce dealt with the dispensers of drugs and their tales of visions incurred as an equal. In their turn they imparted valuable information leading to useful medicines.

Take one vast, timeless rain forest. Season with sacred plants. Add thousands of Indians and one intrepid explorer. Cook at tropical temperature for 12 years. The astonishing and tasty result is Wade Davis' ONE RIVER. In the late 1930's, Harvard ethnobotanist Richard Evans Schultes was responsible for major scientific breakthroughs regarding plant hallucinogens in Mexico. His next field assignment, to identify botanical sources of the deadly arrow poison, curare, immersed Schultes in the savage beauty of the Colombian rain forest and its indigenous Indian cultures. Totally captivated, Schultes remained there for the next 12 years. This true story of Schultes' explorations is compelling, and he's a guide we gladly follow. Quietly heroic, Schultes thinks nothing of paddling thousands of miles down uncharted rivers, navigating white-water rapids that bend his boat in half, stepping on poisonous snakes, and contracting near-fatal tropical diseases. All the Indians he encounters accept him with alacrity, and within a few hours he is often half-naked, painted and feathered, ingesting sacred plants, singing and dancing with his new friends until the dawn. Not exactly what one expects from a politically ultra-conservative Harvard academician.

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