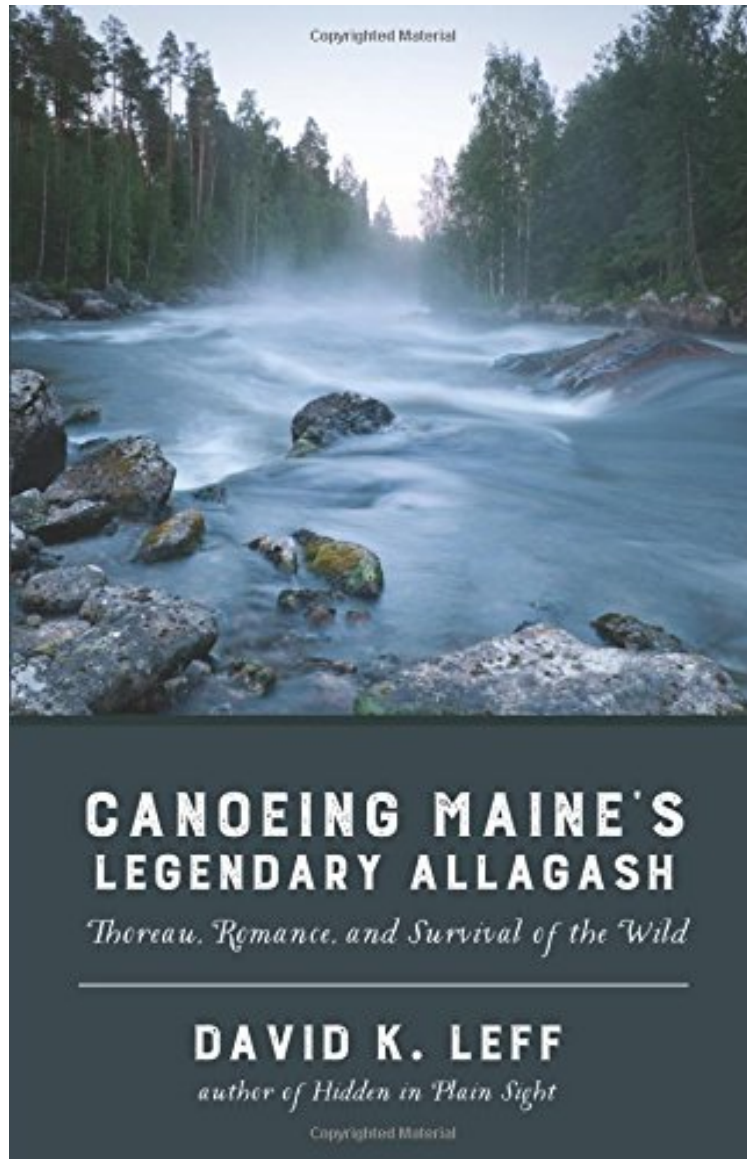


[Download pdf] Canoeing Maine's Legendary Allagash: Thoreau, Romance, and Survival of the Wild

Canoeing Maine's Legendary Allagash: Thoreau, Romance, and Survival of the Wild

David K. Leff

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David K. Leff : Canoeing Maine's Legendary Allagash: Thoreau, Romance, and Survival of the Wild before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Canoeing Maine's Legendary Allagash: Thoreau, Romance, and Survival of the Wild:

0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. Following in Thoreaus wake yet againBy Corinne H. SmithDavid K.

Leff specializes in exploring out-of-the way or unfamiliar-to-us places: from the back roads of his native Connecticut, to select trees and waterways of New England. This time around, he lets us join him on a ten-day paddle of the Allagash River in northernmost Maine. But naturally, there's much more to the story than the mere presence of canoe, water, and woods. In *Deep Travel: In Thoreau's Wake on the Concord and Merrimack*, David introduced us to his favored approach to place. "Deep travel is not so much a matter of seeing sights as it is sight-seeking. ... Deep travel is an ecological way of looking where everything we see has a function and all the parts are related, no matter how seemingly disparate or contradictory." Accordingly, he now guides us not only through the geography of the Allagash region but also into its history, including the tales of travelers who have passed through here before. This new telling is matter-of-factly historical, too. It's the account of a trip made in September 1983, when David was in his 20s and still had his adult life and his career well ahead of him. Fortunately, he took careful notes and wrote a full manuscript soon afterward. Only now is he bringing it to light. David's companion on this journey was his then-girlfriend Alice. It's a risky business indeed, setting out into the wilderness with a relatively new friend. (And perhaps even riskier and more courageous to publish the narrative many years later.) David and Alice had been dating for little more than a year, he tells us, by the time they launched into the river. We get the feeling this trip could mark the make-or-break point for their relationship. Yet the couple was not blazing new physical trails. They were not going where no one had gone before, and they would meet other people along the way. But this is still the kind of endeavor where you have to rely on both the depth of your supplies and the stamina of your partner to achieve your goals. A fair amount of potential stress and built-in drama are already here. So while the rest of us were back in civilization, mindlessly singing along as the radio played *Every Breath You Take* by The Police; and following the fascinating television exploits of Thomas Magnum, the A-Team, Remington Steele, and the oil-soaked Ewing family down in Dallas, David and Alice were quietly following the path of a smallish river in Maine. Or maybe not so quietly, whenever the going got a bit tough. Find the Allagash Wilderness Waterway on a map, from its source in Churchill Lake to its outlet and merge into the St. John River, and you'll see the challenge immediately. It's difficult enough to follow the squiggly blue line on paper. What must it be like in real life? The Native Americans knew. American author Henry David Thoreau found out for himself when he came through here on his third and final excursion into the wilds of Maine in 1857. Author, traveler and artist Thomas Sedgwick Steele came up from Connecticut in 1879 and 1882. Both published their experiences in books. And more travelers, settlers and businessmen, too arrived throughout the twentieth century. Even author-journalist John McPhee, whom David also followed on the Concord and Merrimack Rivers in *Deep Travel*, showed up here in the 1970s to investigate the construction of the bark canoe. You can almost feel their ghosts blending in with the storyline. In fact, David and Alice often came upon evidence of past endeavors, left to rust and to eventually return to nature. Though their days were filled with wilderness moments, they did encounter people from time to time. Amazingly enough, they would have found even more folks here, just a few decades earlier. David's poetic prose is as lilting as befits a voyage by a practiced paddler, leading us along the course of Allagash. We follow the duo through some bucolic and serene scenes; but also into heavy winds, cataracts and falls, tough portages, calloused and bleeding hands, and slightly bruised egos. If you've ever shared a watercraft with someone else, you may be reminded of your own past experiences on these pages, for better or for worse. David is polite in his retelling. He may not have wanted to rock the boat, literally or figuratively. And yet: you can feel that there's more to this story, sliding and gliding just beneath the surface. To give away more details here would be to diminish the experience for future readers. *Canoeing Maine's Legendary Allagash* is a multi-layered story that transcends time, if not place. Even though we follow the route of two specific individuals, a trip like this one could lead us anywhere, with anyone. And as David told us in *Deep Travel*, "No deep traveler returns unchanged. So it is, here. We know a bit about how he and Alice survived the Allagash adventure. We readers can be impacted by these vicarious trips as much as the participants once were and still are. From now on, anytime we hear references to the Maine wilderness, we can picture these two young people and their challenging time on the Allagash. We'll always have this, even if we never dip paddles into water ourselves. [I was given a pre-pub manuscript of this book to read, with the invitation to contribute a blurb for the back cover. A smaller adaptation of this review now appears on the published book.] ~ Corinne H. Smith, author of *Westward I Go Free: Tracing Thoreau's Last Journey* and *Henry David Thoreau for Kids: His Life and Ideas, with 21 Activities* (For Kids series)

0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. Sign on for this armchair paddle--it's a good ride. By Katherine L Hauswirth This book is a treat. Before arriving for his Allagash trip as a young man, with then girlfriend "Alice," Leff was already informed about many things, including the adventures of others who had paddled before them and many details of the natural world. At the same time he wasn't fully prepared for the intermittent strain of the adventure and the crucible of the canoe, which had the power to heighten both strengths and vulnerabilities in the couple's relatively new relationship. I am glad he "resurrected" this manuscript that lay dormant for some time, because now he was able to enhance it with the wisdom and perspective gained in the ensuing years. The end result is a narrative that manages a balance between interesting facts and thoughts about the river and its landscape, anecdotes about many former river travelers and riverside dwellers, and worthy thoughts on ecology as well as relationships. I love a good canoeing book, and I am glad this one has joined my collection.

Meet Henry David Thoreau, U.S. Supreme Court Justice William O. Douglas, and other intrepid explorers as you travel northern Maine's rugged woods and waters. In a wild country of ledge and trees that stubbornly resists encroaching civilization, find a young couple padding through the trials, triumphs, and sheer mental and physical exhaustion of wilderness travel severely testing their ability to get along and even complete the trip. Fill your ears with roaring rapids and yodeling loons. Smell pungent spruce and dank swamps. Encounter moose and majestic sunrises cloaked in morning mist. A few pages, and you will find yourself deep in the evergreen forest.

"If you have been on a canoe trip, you know the adventure is the center of a complex venn diagram of relationship, history, and a testing of character and adaptability. David captures this and more in an artful way that will make you dream of hitting the water to commune with nature and your very soul."--Walter Opuszynski, Northern Forest Canoe Trail, Trail Director "Canoeing Maine's Legendary Allagash is a multi-layered story that transcends time, if not place. As we follow two individuals challenged by heavy winds, rapids, tough portages, and slightly bruised egos, we also encounter the stories of travelers and settlers from over the past 150 years. Through David's poetic prose, we experience both natural beauty and the risky business of hard travel in a new relationship."--Corinne H. Smith, author of Henry David Thoreau for Kids and Westward I Go Free: Tracing Thoreau's Last Journey "Readers will hang onto the back of David Leff's roiling canoe in this story. He steers through the early fractures of a relationship amid the beauties and terror of a wilder Allagash, and skillfully adds in details of the explorers and exploiters who floated before him. Refreshingly honest. A very strong narrative voice!"--Christine Woodside, Editor-in-Chief, Appalachia

From the Back Cover If you have been on a canoe trip, you know the adventure is the center of a complex venn diagram of relationship, history, and a testing of character and adaptability. David captures this and more in an artful way that will make you dream of hitting the water to commune with nature and your very soul. Walter Opuszynski, Northern Forest Canoe Trail, Trail Director Canoeing Maine's Legendary Allagash is a multi-layered story that transcends time, if not place. As we follow two individuals challenged by heavy winds, rapids, tough portages, and slightly bruised egos, we also encounter the stories of travelers and settlers from over the past 150 years. Through David's poetic prose, we experience both natural beauty and the risky business of hard travel in a new relationship. Corinne H. Smith, author of Henry David Thoreau for Kids and Westward I Go Free: Tracing Thoreau's Last Journey Readers will hang onto the back of David Leff's roiling canoe in this story. He steers through the early fractures of a relationship amid the beauties and terror of a wilder Allagash, and skillfully adds in details of the explorers and exploiters who floated before him. Refreshingly honest. A very strong narrative voice! Christine Woodside, Editor-in-Chief, Appalachia

About the Author David K. Leff is an essayist, Pushcart Prize nominated poet and former deputy commissioner of the Connecticut Department of Environmental Protection. His work focuses on the surprisingly intimate relationship of people to their built and natural environments. He is the author of five nonfiction books, three collections of poetry, and a novel inverse. David's writing has appeared in the Hartford Courant, The Wayfarer, Appalachia, Yankee, Connecticut Woodlands, Connecticut Coastal, Canoe Kayak, The Encyclopedia of New England and elsewhere. See his work at davidkleff.com David has been a contest judge for the Connecticut Poetry Society and given poetry readings at venues throughout Connecticut and beyond. He has taught nature poetry writing at the famed Sunken Garden Poetry Festival, the Mark Twain House in Hartford and elsewhere. David has lectured on environmental and historical topics, the craft of writing, and other subjects on college campuses, at conferences, for annual meetings and at other events. David is a trustee of Great Mountain Forest in Norfolk, Connecticut and on the Collections Steering Committee of the Connecticut Historical Society. He has served on the boards of the Riverwood Poetry Series, Connecticut Forest and Park Association, the Connecticut Maple Syrup Producers Association and Audubon Connecticut. David is the town meeting moderator and town historian in his hometown of Canton, Connecticut where he also served 26 years as a volunteer firefighter and in other civic activities. For more about David go to davidkleff.com