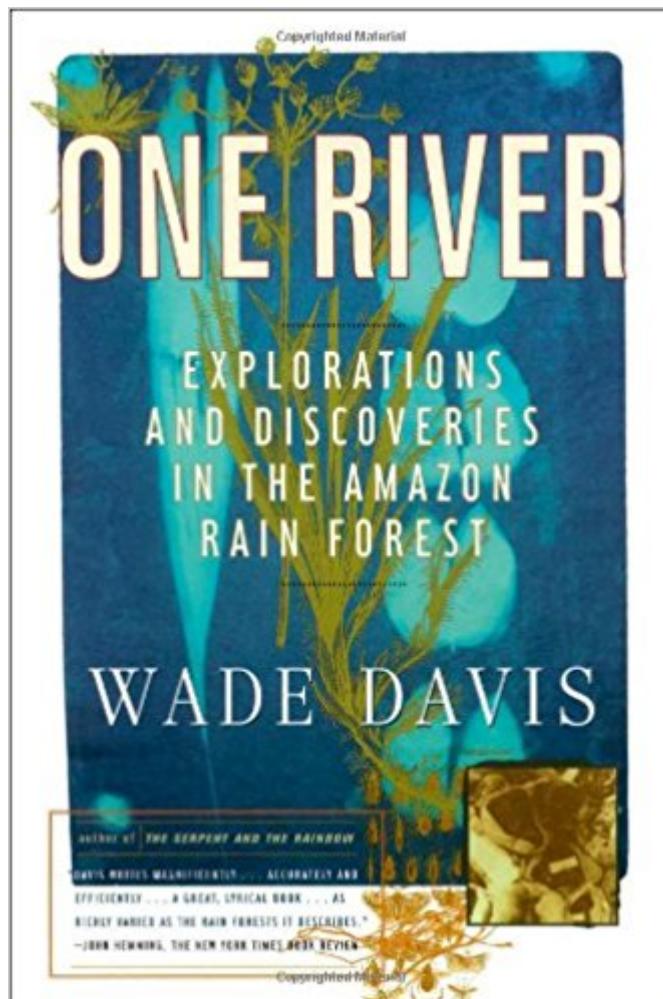


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# One River



## 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 Evans 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, *One River* 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

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## Customer Reviews

Best known for *The Serpent and the Rainbow*, Wade Davis is an ethnobotanist interested in the native uses of plants, especially psychotropics. He finds many such plants in the travels he recounts in *One River*, especially coca and curare. (The first, famously, is a curse in the First World but is a necessity in the Andes, where it promotes the digestion of many kinds of food plants.) Framing Davis's narrative is an account of the dangerous World War II-eraian expeditions undertaken by his mentor, Harvard biologist Richard Evans Schultes. Davis describes a few hair-raising encounters of

his own, making this a fine book of scientific adventure.

The prodigious biological and cultural riches of the vast rain forest are being lost at a horrendous rate, according to the author, often without yielding their secrets to the Western world. During his years in the South American jungle, ethnobotanist Davis (*The Serpent and the Rainbow*) has done much to preserve some of these treasures. He tells two entwined tales here?his own explorations in the '70s and those of his mentor, the great Harvard ethnobotanist Richard Evans Schultes, beginning in the '30s. Both men have been particularly interested in the psychoactive and medicinal properties of the plants of the basin and approach their subject with a reverence for the cultural context in which the plants are used. The contrasting experiences of two explorers, a mere generation apart, starkly demonstrates how much has already been destroyed in the rain forest. Although Schultes probably knew more about ian plants than any Western scientist, he was constantly learning of new ones and new uses for them from native experts. Davis graphically describes the brutal clash of cultures from Columbian times to the present, often so devastating for indigenous peoples, that has defined this region. At times humorous, at times depressing, this is a consistently enlightening and thought-provoking study. Photos not seen by PW. Copyright 1996 Reed Business Information, Inc. --This text refers to an alternate Paperback edition.

Strangely enough, one of the best books I've ever read. I am a Richard Evan Schultes fan boy in some sense, but my God, his life was as close to an "Indiana Jones of Drugs" as you can get. But he wasn't a hippie or new age goofball in any sense of the word, just loved plants, science, and plants that mess with humans.

Dr. Davis' One River carries the reader on an unforgettable journey through the twentieth-century ian rainforest. Providing an intimate glimpse into the travels of the legendary ethnobotanist Richard Shultes and his graduate students, Davis weaves a fascinating history of mentor and student, lured collectively to the ian wilderness to explore its plants and people. A remarkable storyteller, Davis illuminates the incredible reality of these indigenous peoples and their extensive ecological relationships with an understanding of science and appreciation for mysticism that few others are able to offer.

I gave it five stars but is was not as good as the "Serpent and the Rainbow". Also two other things bothered me, one the strong focus on drug plants and highs, two that the author's explorations

contributed to the exploitation and subsequent destruction of jungle and peoples. Otherwise the book was very entertaining, informative and about a place no-one can return to.

Very well written book about discovery of new species of plants and how people lived in /Andes region including role that hallucinogenic plants and shamans played in society.

If a celebrity is known for being known, a hero is known for what he or she has done. Richard Evans Schultes was a man out of time. Having solved the mystery of the Aztec sacred hallucinogens, and having sparked the psychedelic era with his discovery of the "magic mushrooms" in Mexico in 1938, he took a leave from Harvard and slipped away into the Northwest where he remained for 12 years, traveling down unknown rivers, living among unknown peoples, all the time enchanted by the wonders of the tropical flora and the indigenous people who knew it best. One River brings his story to life, and in a manner that should always us of just what it takes to become a true hero. Schultes is a figure bigger than life, a scientist and explorer revered by all he encountered and a man the likes of which we will rarely see again.

It took three months to read this book, NOT because it was difficult to read or boring. There was never doubt that I would finish the book. In fact, with 50% remaining, I was already grieving in anticipation that I'd one day read the final sentence. In addition to introducing us to the Americas (not just South America), the author manages to tell us the what and the why. For me, this book, more than any other historical work, provided me with many "ah ha" moments. I'm grateful to the author for writing this tome, and to the men and women who experienced the triumphs and tragedies throughout.

I actually teared up at the end of this book, not something I expected from a book about ethnobotany. At the end of the reading I had learned about the lives of researchers in such exquisit detail that I lived along side of them. This book is nearly perfect, much better than even the rave recommendation from some very respected friends. It's possible that there will never be anyone who will have the knowledge from experience that Richard Shultes had acquired in South America and that alone makes this book very rich, yet added to his story are the experiences of Davis and Dr. Plowman two researchers that also immerse themselves deeply into the Andes, the Llanos, and the to learn about the forests, the people and the use of medicinal and psychoactive plants. This is a long book, nearly 500 pages and is a serious commitment but well worth it as you will not

experience anything quite like it unless Davis's other book is better (I have not read it yet). I only have a few complaints about the book and those are regarding omissions in some available photographs that Davis mentions in the end and a lack of maps for much of the area covered in the book. There is one small map on page 125 that shows the route of travels but it is too small and difficult to use. I resorted to a copy of International Travel Maps - South America North West to see the detail that I needed as I followed the travels of Schutes, Davis and Plowman. Davis is an excellent writer and he has a way of conveying a sensitivity to the lives of all that he encounters. That along with his insight into the cultures that he experiences and the knowledge and history that he brings into this makes it a unique, rich read.

An eloquently written, marvelously depicted dual-vantage excursion into the heart of the , its mysterious cultures, and the powerful medicines they have wielded for millennia and which we Westerners now seek for spiritual and psychopharmacological purposes. Schultes was a brave adventurer and scientifically experiential genius, and Davis his apt pupil.

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