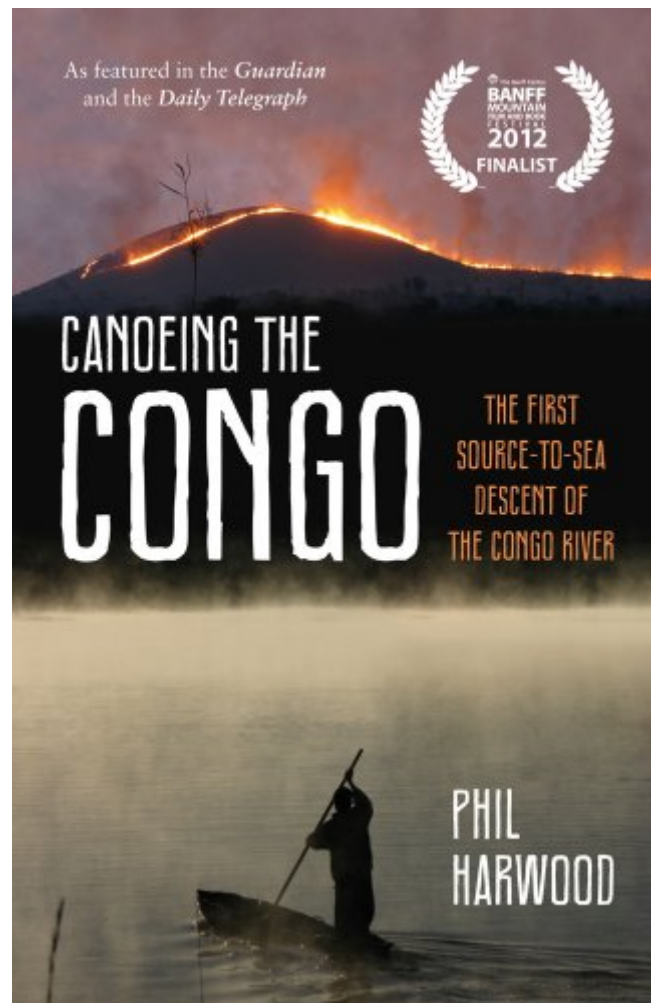




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# Canoeing The Congo: The First Source-to-Sea Descent Of The Congo River



## Synopsis

An exhilarating and terrifying account of the historic first source-to-sea descent of the Congo. At 2,922 miles, the Congo is the eighth longest river and the deepest in the world, with a flow rate second only to the Nile. Ex-Marine Phil Harwood embarked on an epic solo journey from the river's true source in the highlands of Zambia through war-torn Central Africa. With no outside help whatsoever he faced swamps, waterfalls, man-eating crocodiles, hippos, aggressive snakes, and spider webs the size of houses. He collapsed from malaria, and was arrested, intimidated, and chased. On one stretch, known as "The Abattoir" for its history of cannibalism and reputation for criminal activity, the four brothers he hired as bodyguards were asked by locals, "Why haven't you cut his throat yet?" But he also received tremendous hospitality from proud and brave people long forgotten by the Western world, especially friendly riverside fishermen who helped wherever they could.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

This guy is so full of himself it's hard to take him seriously sometimes. Ex-military, ex-Iraq veteran (as if that's something to be particularly proud of) Phil Harwood has set his mind to the ultimate macho challenge, paddling the Congo river in a small canoe from the hills of Zambia to the Atlantic

Ocean. It's one hell of an adventure and a challenge few people would be able to accomplish, so hats off for the brave traveller. Strictly speaking he didn't paddle the whole river, as he took the bus from Kinshasa to another point way downstream, so maybe he shouldn't use those particular words, but hey - it's still a pretty admirable feat. As travel literature it falls flat, as our man paddles a lot better than he can write. Most of it comes out as a rather boring blog - "then I did this and then I did that", but that's not the worst. Cause no matter what challenges and terrors Our Guy has to face, rest assured that he's invincible. Hippos, snakes and poisonous spiders? Takes them in his stride. Greedy officials with guns? No problem, just look them in the eyes, shake their hands and they all go away. Bandits, muggers, sinister savages and just about anything that might lie in wait around the next bend? Just paddle hard to get rid of them, and if that doesn't work: Stand up in your canoe, scream and shout and send a barrage of the worst words the English language has to offer their way, and they will scamper. Our Man isn't afraid of anything. And if he is, he doesn't really mind, as he's out there on the waters to TEST HIMSELF. It's HIM against the bad guys, the animals and the entire failed state of Congo. Then you get heaps of sentences like these: "I paused, staring at him, trying to keep my cool. He wore an obscenely loud Hawaiian shirt, and his look smacked of utter contempt. This alone made me want to punch him in the face": Or here: "They started with the good cop, bad cop routine, then they all sat around, cramped into a small office and listened to me talk about my journey with growing respect and nodding heads". Not (absolutely) all the Congolese are crooked, loud, drunk or very greedy, and there are some fine passages in-between, where Our Man bonds with locals, takes them along as guides or trades with them. Here and there the readers feels as if he's sharing an adventure. But way too often we're just placed in the back seat of Superman, who looks hard at everyone he meets, shakes hands, gives the poor buggers a bag of rice and refuses to budge when they come crawling out for money. Don't get me wrong. I believe the DR Congo is an almost impossible country to travel in. But this guy doesn't show anything like his innermost feelings and thoughts, instead we're just led to believe that he has the attitude, the guts and the cool to get out of any situation imaginable. And who knows, maybe he can? After all Rambo defeated the entire Red Army single-handedly.

This book is a wonderful combination of adventure on the water, as well as a vision of the African culture, and the way a Westerner deals with the vicissitudes of the people he meets and confronts. The author's approach to troublesome characters is straight forward -- a handshake and resolute behavior works well most of the time, if not, then flee as best you can. If ever, we in the provincial US, can overcome our ignorance and bad behavior toward other cultures, we need to take

advantage of pioneers like the author.

I felt like a passenger in the canoe. Vivid descriptions, exhilarating adventure, interesting meetings with locals. Congratulations to the author on the completion of this journey! Thanks for sharing it.

This story takes the reader on an epic journey that makes you wonder how anyone could put themselves through such life threatening events. And he enjoyed and relished the trip.

An insightful Odyssey into the Heart of Darkness. Huckleberry Finn with a machete.

wonderful

A good look at the DRC, its people, and the many problems to be confronted when traveling in this part of the world. The physical act of canoeing the length of this river almost pales in comparison to dealing with the effects of the political and economic situation of that region.

Like several predecessors (Jeffrey Tayler, Tim Butcher) here is an account of a modern-day adventurer travelling along the Congo River in the DRC. What sets this work apart from the others is the fact that the author canvassed the entire river from its headwaters in Northern Zambia to the Atlantic using only a canoe, and for a better half of the time, by himself. Although not too many surprises (corrupt officials, extreme poverty, beautiful scenery - you know, things Africa as a whole is known for) the book is well written and was quite enjoyable to read. He provides adequate contextual history where pertinent without digressing from his narrative. I also liked his writing style - straightforward without bogging things down with transcripts of whole conversations he had with people, etc, a pitfall which unfortunately many travel writers fall into. There is also a video he made of this trip which should be worth a look (if the preview on youtube is anything to go by).

recommended

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