



One River

By Wade Davis

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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, *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.

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One River By Wade Davis Bibliography

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Editorial Review

Amazon.com Review

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-era Amazonian 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.

From Publishers Weekly

The prodigious biological and cultural riches of the vast Amazon 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 Amazon 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 Amazonian 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.

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From Library Journal

While not technically a biography, this is the story of Timothy Plowman, a young ethnobotanist who died while looking for medicinal plants in the South American rain forests. The author, who explored with Plowman in 1974 and 1975, tells a vivid story of adventure, Amerindian culture, and, to a lesser extent, the social and political climate surrounding Harvard in the 1960s and 1970s. Plowman was the brilliant protege of Richard Evans Schultes, one of the world's leading authorities on hallucinogenic plants and the Amazon rain forest. The author mixes the backgrounds and travels of the two men with sociology of South American tribes and their sacred plants. Because use of hallucinogenic plants is described, this is not a book for young people. For adults, it's a fascinating story of ethnobotanical exploration and an excellent real-life tale of science out of the laboratory, and only peripherally the sad story of a brilliant life lost to AIDS (Plowman contracted the disease as a result of pretrip inoculations). It also reveals the effects of development on the dwindling rain forests and their endangered cultures. Recommended for large collections.—Laura E. Lipton, Center for Urban Horticulture, Seattle

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Users Review

From reader reviews:

Nancy Reese:

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