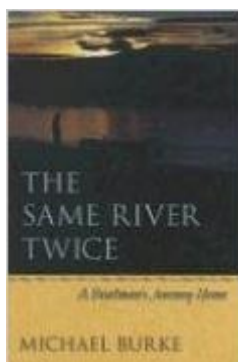


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The Same River Twice: A Boatman's Journey Home



Synopsis

In the summer of 1991 Michael Burke, an experienced river guide, embarks on a three-week journey down a series of remote rivers in British Columbia. Leaving behind his pregnant wife, he embraces the perils of a voyage with a companion he barely knows in a raft that may not weather the trip. He attempts to reconcile the shifting fates of his life—his transition from river guide to husband, father, and academic. At the same time, he hopes to explore his connection to a distant relative, Sid Barrington, who was a champion canoeist and water pilot of the Northwest in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. As Burke contemplates what he and Sid may have had in common, he meditates on the changing meaning of rivers, and the impossibility of fully recovering the past. In clear and graceful prose, Burke blends Sid's colorful history with his own uncommon journey. He also reflects upon the quick currents of time and the fierce passion he shares with Sid for the life of river running in Alaska and the west. Unlike most river-running books that often describe waterways in the lower forty-eight states, *The Same River Twice* introduces readers to rough, austere, and unfamiliar rivers in the northern wilderness. Burke has an intimate understanding of these remote, free-flowing rivers. He effectively captures the thrill of moving water, the spirit of rivers and river canyons, and the life of river guides. This insightful memoir brings readers into a confluence of rivers, where past and present merge, revealing the power of wilderness and the truth about changing course.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

What happens to white-water guides when they leave the rivers? Michael Burke gives us one

answer: they never leave the rivers, and the rivers never leave them. Burke's story is part memoir, part "road trip," and part love story about the wild places that "can't be improved by changes." His tale of a 1991 trip down the wildest of British Columbia's rivers is one hundred percent enjoyment. Having guided seasonally since he was a college student, Burke at thirty-eight was married, a professor at a college in Maine, with a baby on the way. This ambitiously planned trip was a three-week-long pilgrimage to the places where a distant relative, Sid Barrington, had lived a life of legend on the wild rivers of long ago. Burke, along with a stranger named Max whose only qualification was availability, set out with an ancient rubber raft, a heavy load of gear, a rifle in case of bears, and jury-rigged arrangements with bush pilots. From this unpromising start, Mike and Max had a soul-stirring experience in this "humbling land." Putting in by plane to breathtaking Chutine Lake, they worked their way down glacier-fed rivers with wild names: the Chutine, the Stikine, the Sheslay, the Taku. Along the way they encountered black bears, grizzlies, moose, and on one memorable evening a wolf with two pups. Burke's deep love of the challenging terrain is evident throughout the book. Stories of the old river runner, Sid, are woven in, along with some hair-raising stories of Burke's younger days as a guide; a wild, adrenaline-saturated life that he remembers with affection at this settling-down time of life. Thoughts of his pregnant wife are with him always but he was unable to resist the pull of the river. Why do this crazy, dangerous thing?

This work is a delightful memoir that is a pleasure reading, starting from the first page, right along to the last word of the last page. This is the story of a man; a middle aged man at the time the story takes place, and at the same time is a history lesson, a journey of enlightenment, and a tour into one of the truly wild areas left in North America. It is also, and most importantly, a very insightful look at human nature. The author, Michael Burke, dropped out of the University of California-Berkeley, and became, through faking his lack of experience, a white water river guide. Burke has apparently been guiding now for over thirty five years. The author obviously continued his education, as he now teaches at a University, and beyond a doubt, the guy can certainly write. In 1991, when the author was 38, he found himself with a pregnant wife, two step-children, an academic career, living in Maine and driving a station wagon. Now, although the author does not admit to the fact, it is pretty obvious he is probably losing some of his hair, getting less muscle tone than he had when he was twenty, and, most importantly, (again, not really stated) is feeling rather trapped. Gosh, it does not take much of a creative leap to figure out that a gigantic mid-life crises is about to descend on this poor guy. This is okay though, at least Burke faced his crises with class, like a man, and did not go the route of gold chains around his neck, a little sports car, a poor

comb-over and chase twenty year old undergrads around campus; something we see all too frequently. Rather, he returned to the roots of his youth, the river! The Same River Twice is the story of Michael Burke's journey down three rivers in the Canadian Wilderness of British Columbia.

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