



## Canoeing the Congo: First Source to Sea Descent of the Congo River

*Phil Harwood*

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## **Canoeing the Congo: First Source to Sea Descent of the Congo River** Phil Harwood

'Canoeing the Congo' narrates the journey of Phil Harwood, who undertook an epic five-month solo attempt to canoe the Congo River in war-torn Central Africa. It was a historic 'first descent' from the true source in the highlands of Zambia.

## **Canoeing the Congo: First Source to Sea Descent of the Congo River Details**

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Author : Phil Harwood

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Phil Harwood**

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## **From Reader Review Canoeing the Congo: First Source to Sea Descent of the Congo River for online ebook**

### **Aarne Ylä-rotiala says**

Not only has this ex Royal Marine gone through an incredible adventure - probably "loving every minute of it" - but he can also write.

The story is compelling, and you just need to know what lies behind the next set of rapids, what is going to happen at the next town or fishing village, and will he ever reach the Atlantic.

The ending is a great tribute to the people he met and lived with during his trip.

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### **Daniel Taylor says**

An excellent adventure book written by a very open minded author. Harwood gives a great, unbiased outlook on Congo and the people he meets - less about him and more about the journey. He also sometimes dips into some interesting historical information. Very good read and highly recommended.

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### **thereadytraveller says**

An amazing five-month adventure story detailing the first ever canoeing descent of the Congo River from its true source of the Chambeshi in northeast Zambia to the Atlantic Ocean.

Harwood provides a good amount of background history to the Democratic Republic of Congo and its many travails. Where this book really stands out, is the well research information on the Congo River itself. A true adventurer and a journey for which Harwood was awarded the Mike Jones Canoeing Award, Harwood is a real-life Bear Grylls without the make-up.

Of most interest to someone interested in the underlying mechanics of the journey (and of course the Congo River), Harwood has also produced a documentary of the trip which is available for purchase on his website at [www.canoeingthecongo.com](http://www.canoeingthecongo.com).

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### **Tassos says**

A pretty good read, with an interesting concept and a lot of food for thought, specially to those travelling to countries such as D.R. Congo.

I've been there myself once, but in a completely different environment and only for a short period, but it was very useful to read some impressions about parts of the country other than the capital, Khinsasa.

The main lacking point of the book was the writing style, which was pretty light but well structured never the less. But I know that the guy isn't a writer, so still big thumbs for managing to write such a book, and even bigger for canoeing the whole Congo river

## **Petra CigareX says**

Story about me and extra-strong laxatives and my victim follows. I wrote it as I was reading the book. No review of this average book really occurs to me, so it's yet another anecdote... The author is relating a "people skills" story. He was held up at the Liberian border by an angry man and his gang with a gun saying he was taking his vehicle. After much sob stories about needing to take his friend to hospital for malaria, being robbed the previous day so not having any money and other excuses, the author finally got the car thief to compromise on some pills that would make him "very strong" ;-) They were laxatives.

It reminded me of when I did that. I was crewing for a guy, Jim, on his 50' motor yacht and he was so cheap that he didn't even have charts. One night he gave me a tablemat printed with a chart and told me to wake him next morning in St Barts as it was about a 9 hour sail. Another time we were in St. Kitt's and met a friend of mine who ran a radio station that had given us a welcome party two nights previously on another island, so we all went out to dinner. He said to her that he hoped she didn't think he was made of money and wouldn't order the lobster! (He was filthy rich, owned a marina on the Great Lakes). So I went out clubbing and met an old bf and decided to have some fun.

I went back to the boat and cooked boeuf bourguignon for dinner with several industrial-strength, prescription-only laxatives in it. Left it for him and jumped on the back of my friend's motorbike and left for two days! When I got back Jim was furious and the boat was very stinky. So he put me off the boat. I walked down the dock with my duffle bag and met the only policeman I knew in the Caribbean, from Grenada. He said that it was illegal to put me off without a ticket home, and so negotiated me back on the boat. Jim couldn't sail it by himself anyway. Things went from bad to worse after that...

(What the whole thing had been about was Jim thought the \$50 a day included sex as well as sailing and also I beat him at Trivia, every time.)

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## **Jeannette says**

I'd love to see the Congo River; would love to navigate it some day. But I know with absolute certainty I'll never canoe the length of it, as Phil Harwood did. Reading his account at least gave me a glimpse into what it would be like (and why I'd never make the cut). Harwood's writing is good enough to have engaged me thoroughly. Several times his adventures made me laugh out loud. Most thought-provoking were his reflections on what he needed to do when confronted by extortion attempts, threatened with violence, and subjected to attempts at terrorizing him. I learned from his example and was inspired by his conviction that adversity builds character.

When Henry Morton Stanley tried to follow the course of the river 140 years ago and only partially succeeded, his accomplishment made him rich and famous. It seems so unfair that almost no one knows what Harwood did -- though he did it without harming anyone (let alone killing hundreds, as Stanley did) and with grace and humor. I think I'll have to buy the DVD too!

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## **Melanie says**

Loved this book! It was a while ago that I read it, but I remember not being able to put it down and really felt like I was experiencing his adventures with him (although i was pleased to not really be there, as some bits sounded scary!)

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### **Sue says**

I find myself in the back of the canoe with Harwood as we are fighting off mosquitos, mud, each and every bend of the river and the never ending curiosity of folks. He is a perceptive writer who is going to get into more and more trouble in his life. Wonderfully dangerous adventure down a river that I most likely won't be able to experience.

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### **Paul says**

Harwood sets out to canoe the entire length of the Congo river, from the attributed source to the sea. It is an unbelievably tough journey, with 10 hours paddling in his canoe each and every day. The route is through one of the most desperate parts of the world, with the fall out from years of poverty and civil war.

He meets the entire spectrum of humanity along the way, from nasty pieces of work, real death threats, and people who could not be any friendlier and more generous, and who are embarrassed about their fellow countrymen's behaviour. Through all the trial he survives and learns as much about himself, as Africa.

A book that those who have read Blood River will like.

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### **Tariq Mahmood says**

There is no education like adversity.

There is so little written about Africa and and it's brave people which makes this book a gem. I believe that the brave adventurer had made absolutely correct assumptions before the start of his very very dangerous tour of paddling across the Congo river. He choose to trust humanity instead of rejecting it and that is why he was able to succeed in his life threatening quest.

Respect.

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### **Fayette says**

I am married to someone who grew up in DRC and have spent time there myself. I will echo what pretty much everyone else already has told PH before during and after his journey--canoeing the Congo river is INSANE! Without a doubt he has skill, but he also is very, very lucky to have survived. There are just too, too many factors that could have gone a different direction.

Having said that, it was interesting for me to read this account, being familiar with the people, customs, and

terrain. It might be a little slow for people not interested in that region simply because there's a lot of writing about paddling, being chased by customs officials, and scuffles related to bogus fees and fines (which is a real struggle!)

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### **Jemma says**

Wow..

A spectacular account of an incredible journey, well written with a surprising amount of humour!! Wonderfully moving; meeting locals who made him feel guilty about having a tarpaulin to sleep under.. Some great photography too as well as hand drawn maps of each leg of the journey, along with plenty of references to Bilbo Baggins, this real life adventure book is a fantastic read.

I've seen it's available off his own website [www.canoeingthecongo.com](http://www.canoeingthecongo.com), support the indie writers!

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### **Christine Blachford says**

Everything about this adventure sounds terrifying - canoeing from the source of the Congo river in Zambia, through to where it meets the Atlantic Ocean in the DR of Congo, through hippo and crocodile infested waters, passing by villages where white faces are understandably treated with suspicion but also with a gun, and generally surviving on rice and fish.

The book tells it like it is, and I get the feeling it was as scary as it sounds, but also massively rewarding. Seeing what our hero learns along the way is fantastic, and although I know I couldn't do it, I enjoyed being along for the ride by the means of turning the pages.

It's well written, honest and humble, particularly with regards to losing tempers, eyeing up the locals, and finding ways to get around the corruption that is littered through the country. A really good read.

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### **Chris Steeden says**

This is certainly not a Michael Palin book where all the author has to do is make sure he packs his bag and goes where he is told with full protection and just write a few notes each day while sipping a cocktail (although I do like Palin's books).

This is a true solo adventure and what an unbelievable experience. Not something I would do but great to read about. What I thought was lacking from this book, and this is where Palin is better, was more in-depth historical / modern-day detail of the different areas that the author visited. What you do get is a good visual of the characters that he meets on his route, both good and bad.

I read this in a few sittings at home on the sofa. Safe and happy that Phil Harwood did the hard work.

I really must get round to reading 'Heart of Darkness'.

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## David Canford says

If you like adventure stories you will enjoy this account of a former soldier canoeing down the River Congo. I'm amazed he survived. His attitude of facing down aggressors is not one I'm sure I'd be brave enough to try.

Whilst to read about his journey is exciting, it is sad to read about how the country and its people have suffered, first under brutal colonialism and then, following independence under corrupt dictators supported by the USA and Europe. With its vast mineral resources, Congo should be a wealthy country but its people live in appalling conditions whilst multinational mining companies and corrupt politicians plunder their resources.

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