

Paddle Tales: Backcountry Canoe Adventures in Saskatchewan's North

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Paddle Tales draws on the experiences of a group of sporting family and friends to proffer practical guidance for fellow paddlers.

Part guidebook, part collective memoir, Noreen Rapin's book *Paddle Tales* draws on her adventures on the water in Canada.

Gathering stories from friends, family members, and fellow paddlers in Saskatchewan, Canada, this is a multivoiced text about shared experiences and lessons learned on the water:

We decided the time was right to present not only our points of view and crazy stories, but our practical recommendations to make your own trip more attainable.

The first chapter introduces the setting in terms of its multiple lakes and mountain ranges. The book then moves into covering specific trips alongside introductions of the contributors, who themselves discuss how they came to the sport and what they get out in turn.

Individual memories come at rapid-fire pace, and their organization is haphazard; the timeline is hazy, and the significance of individual stories to the larger project is often vague. Still, on an individual basis, the stories are engaging—full of instances of danger, fun, and disappointment—and replete with tips and warnings of varying applicability for fellow paddlers, as with the bold-print note “I have learned to leave all four of my diamond earrings at home. In addition, we leave our gold rings at home and wear silicone rings instead.”

A bevy of perspectives are represented among the contributing paddlers. One is drawn to the thrill of white water, one to the fishing opportunities, one less to the paddling and more to the camaraderie by the campfire. Some prefer the open water and others prefer portage points. One is interested in the technical aspects of the sport, including the construction of the canoes; another focuses on the spirituality of time spent on the water.

However, some of the references are quite insular, as with the belabored reiteration of a passed-around comic strip about two buddies in a canoe. And while many of the tales are complementary, several stories repeat, if told from different perspectives to somewhat refresh their content. Still, the prose is straightforward and conversational, and it tends to hold attention as it amicably shares the ups and downs of days spent on the water. The more narrative content is followed by practical chapters, as with a long list of items to pack, including clothing, sunscreen, and sleeping bags; sample itineraries; and recipes for dishes that can be prepared while camping.

A collection of sporting stories gathered from friends who enjoy time together on the waters of Saskatchewan, *Paddle Tales* includes practical guidance for fellow paddlers.

CAROLINE GOLDBERG IGRA (November 5, 2024)

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