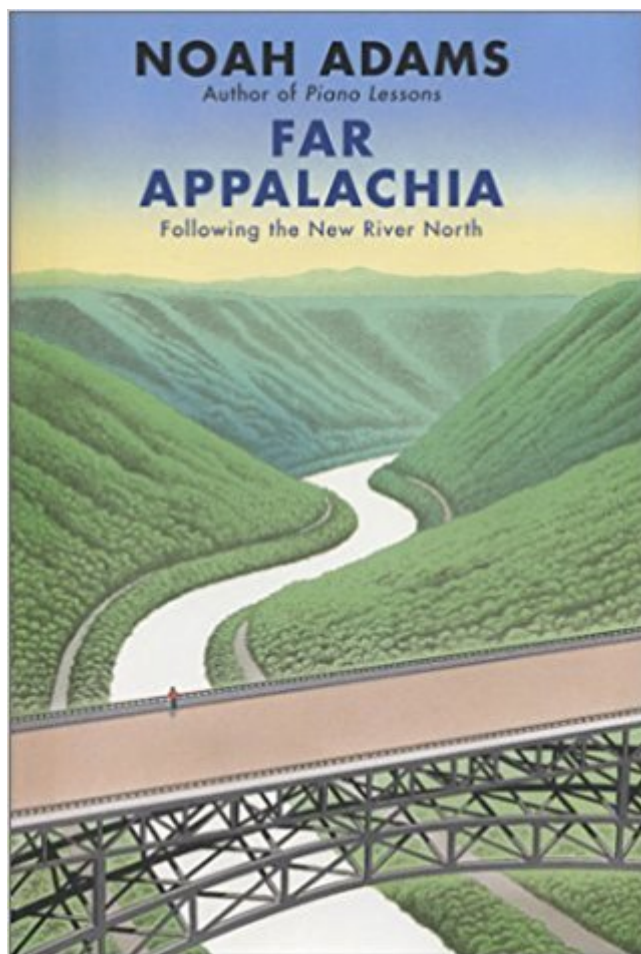


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# Far Appalachia: Following The New River North



## Synopsis

With his sharp eye and gentle wit, Noah Adams doesn't just tell stories, he lets them unfold -- quietly, powerfully, and eloquently. Now the beloved host of NPR's *All Things Considered* and bestselling author of *Piano Lessons* takes us on a river journey through the heart of Appalachia -- a journey shared by pioneers and preachers, white-water daredevils, bluegrass musicians, and an unforgettable cast of vivid historical characters. Noah Adams has Appalachia in his blood. A native of eastern Kentucky, he comes to the headwaters of the New River not just in search of adventure but to better understand his own unique heritage. Following the New River from its mile-high source on North Carolina's Snake Mountain to its West Virginia mouth, Adams travels by Jeep and by bicycle, by foot and, most thrillingly, by white-water raft to explore the history, natural beauty, and fascinating characters waiting around every bend and turn. Distilling history from legend, Adams tells of men and women whose lives crossed the New River before him: Daniel Boone, fleeing his farming family in search of wilderness; Cherokee Indians driven west on their Trail of Tears; and the ill-fated men who traveled thousands of miles to work on the Hawk's Nest Tunnel, making a fortune for a company while their lungs filled with deadly silica dust. And along the way Adams follows the echoes of his own distant heritage, interweaving his river journey through Appalachia with yet another voyage, thousands of miles away. With eloquence and compassion, Noah Adams paints a luminous portrait of a land and a people as richly vital and complex as America itself. At the same time, his quietly personal chronicle captures the sheer magic of the flowing waters: their sound, their eddies, their utter unpredictability. A vibrant and unforgettable read, *Far Appalachia* mesmerizes and haunts like the bluegrass music that still rings through the mountains and valleys in which it was born.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

Noah Adams, the amiable host of NPR's *All Things Considered*, is no stranger to the world beyond the Beltway; a native of Kentucky, he's logged plenty of time in wild country, and the travels he recounts in his latest book take him through some of the most rugged in the eastern United States. Adams travels along the New River, which rises in the mountains of North Carolina, flows generally north into Virginia and West Virginia, and eventually merges with the Ohio and Mississippi. Along the way--traveling by car, bicycle, and canoe--he explains the workings of rapids, his ancestral connection to Appalachia as well as its the history, and even the origins of the term hillbilly. As he wanders, Adams points out local oddities (such as a school bus that incongruously rests on a huge boulder in the middle of a stretch of the New River) and takes in bluegrass festivals, family picnics and the occasional family feud, and little towns and large vistas, by all appearances having a grand time along the way. "This is just a book about a river. There was no quest involved, only a wish to understand more about this part of the country and my family's past." So writes Adams, with characteristic understatement. It may lack grand purpose, but his book is a pleasure for anyone who knows the country of which he writes, and anyone who enjoys a backroad adventure. --Gregory McNamee

In his last book (*Piano Lessons*), Adams described the year he decided, at age 51, to learn to play the piano. The host of NPR's *All Things Considered* now takes readers on another year-long journey, this time through Appalachia by canoe, bicycle and white-water raft. A native of eastern Kentucky, Adams takes a personal interest in Appalachia: "a wish to learn more about this part of the country and my family's past." Gently and thoughtfully, he does just that, covering everything from the ecosystems of the New River whole universes under the eddying water to the ghosts of the pioneers and Native Americans who roamed the riverbanks. (Curiously, despite a passing reference to a Confederate flag, Adams never mentions the Civil War or even African-Americans.) Through the people he meets along his journey including bluegrass fiddlers and fishermen, storytellers all Adams also tells a story of present-day Appalachia, a complex view that challenges Deliverance stereotypes. But challenging the reader isn't Adams's purpose; instead, in easygoing and understated prose, he takes readers up the river with him into the darkness of coal mines, down

Class VI rapids and into local pubs, inns and churches. He skims lightly over the depths and navigates the rapids with humor and a sharp eye for telling detail. Indeed, some of the best passages of the book are Adams's simple descriptions of the water: "The boat rocked, then steadied, and the current caught the bow and turned it downstream. Then a touch of the paddle to add some speed. This is the moment of grace." Whether white-water rafters or just along for the ride, readers will find Adams's story of a year following the New River full of this same quiet, and often unexpected, grace. Copyright 2001 Cahners Business Information, Inc.

This book made me want to visit some of the places along the New River that Noah Adams writes about. I've read that the New River Gorge is "the Grand Canyon of the East." That idea alone is one to make a person visit. On my way to cities in the Northeast, I've driven past the exit on I-64 that will take you to the Canyon Rim visitor center, frequently wishing I had allowed myself extra time to explore. Rich in history and culture - some say being settled by American Indians before 8000 B.C., then by Europeans in the late 16th century as a result of the de Soto and Juan Pardo expeditions. Before the railroads and highways, the New River was an important means of transportation into the mountains enabling hunters, farmers and entrepreneurs to settle towns and cities along its banks. Imagining Mary Draper Ingels trying to get back to her family, the once-bustling lead and coal mining towns, pioneers passing through on their way west and stories of famous floods and river freezings, Noah Adams winds his way down the New River, taking the reader along. I was sorry when the book ended, wanting to know more about the New. I'll keep Far Appalachia in my car as reference for the day that I get off the highway to see the New River for myself.

As you read this book, you can hear Adams talking: slowly and carefully, stopping here and there to dwell on a minor detail that focuses on the essence of a place. This is a good place to start if all you know about Appalachia and its people is what you learned from seeing "Deliverance", but it's also fine reading if you're from the hills or have spent some time on the New River. As a native son of the Mountain State, whose ancestors settled on the Bluestone River in 1790, I was amused to discover that some folks still regard West Virginia as a scary place populated by violent, barefoot hillbillies (only the guides on the river are barefoot here). One small quibble: Adams doesn't devote any time at all to the geological history of the river itself. Given that it's generally regarded as the oldest river in North America, I thought this was surprising. My only complaint is that, just like a rafting trip down the New in Spring, it's over way too soon.

I honestly only ordered this book because I needed it for a presentation we were doing in my college English class, but I ended up loving the book. It provides a very relaxing read, and anyone who lives around the Appalachian area will certainly appreciate it, and everyone has something to learn from it about really taking in and enjoying everything that life has to offer at a much slower pace than we are accustomed too. Recommended for anyone who likes adventure or a relaxing read. Also, packaging and delivery was fantastic, product arrived in perfect condition and in two nights with having me signed up for prime as a student.

He has been reading this and really likes it. Says it's short stories about the New River, which my husband used to guide whitewater on. Says the author is not the "best" writer but it's entertaining. Worth the read.

This is a good book about experiencing the New River from North Carolina up north to West Virginia. Neat perspective and entices the reader to experience parts for themselves.

I picked this little book from my Aunt's bookcase looking for a quick read. What a nice surprise! On the 1st page I find that the author is from my hometown & it got better from there. After I got home I ordered 2 of these books to give as gifts!

Great

So descriptive that I could visualize the trip on the river.

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