

River Rough, River Smooth: Adventures on Manitoba's Historic Hayes River

Anthony Dalton

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Manitoba's Hayes River runs over six hundred kilometers from near Norway House to Hudson Bay. On its rush to the sea, the Hayes races over forty-five rapids and waterfalls as it drops down from the Precambrian Shield to the Hudson Bay Lowlands. This great waterway, the largest naturally flowing river in Manitoba, served as the highway for settlers bound for the Red River colony, ferrying their worldly goods in York boats and canoes, struggling against the mighty currents.

Traditionally used for transport and hunting by the indigenous Cree, the Hayes became a major fur trade route in the seventeenth to nineteenth centuries, being explored by such luminaries (Pierre Radisson (1682), Henry Kelsey (1690) David Thompson (1784), Sir John Franklin (1819), and J.B. Tyrrell (1892). This is the account of the author's invitational journey on the Hayes from Norway House to Oxford House by traditional York boat with a crew of First Nation Cree, and later, from Oxford House to York Factory by canoe in the company of other intrepid canoeists – modern-day voyageurs reliving the past.



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