



# Chattooga: Descending into the Myth of Deliverance River

*John Lane*

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Before the novel and the film *Deliverance* appeared in the early 1970s, any outsiders one met along the Chattooga River were likely serious canoeists or anglers. In later years, untold numbers and kinds of people have felt the draw of the river's torrents, which pour down the Appalachians along the Georgia-South Carolina border. Because of *Deliverance* the Chattooga looms enigmatically in our shared imagination, as iconic as Twain's Mississippi—or maybe Conrad's Congo.

This is John Lane's search for the real Chattooga—for the truths that reside somewhere in the river's rapids, along its shores, or in its travelers' hearts. Lane balances the dark, indifferent mythical river of *Deliverance* against the Chattooga known to locals and to the outdoors enthusiasts who first mastered its treacherous vortices and hydraulics. Starting at its headwaters, Lane leads us down the river and through its complex history to its current status as a National Wild and Scenic River. Along the way he stops for talks with conservation activists, seventh-generation residents, locals who played parts in the movie, day visitors, and others. Lane weaves into each encounter an abundance of details drawn from his perceptive readings and viewings of *Deliverance* and his wide-ranging knowledge of the Chattooga watershed. At the end of his run, Lane leaves us still fully possessed by the Chattooga's mystery, yet better informed about its place in his world and ours.

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