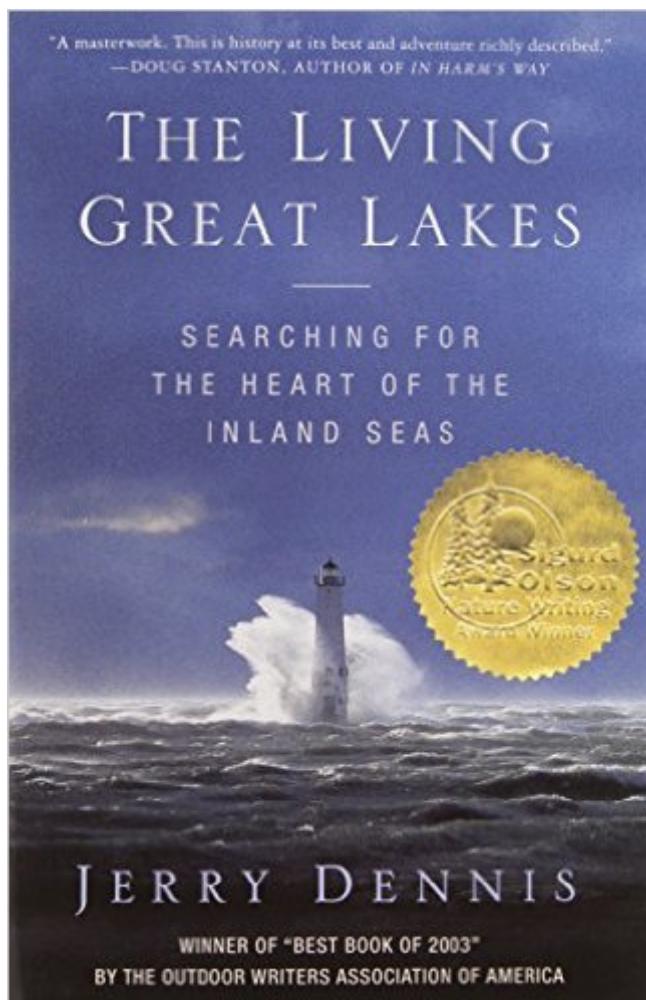


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The Living Great Lakes: Searching For The Heart Of The Inland Seas



Synopsis

If fresh water is to be treasured, the Great Lakes are the mother lode. No bodies of water can compare to them. One of them, Superior, is the largest lake on earth, and the five lakes together contain a fifth of the world's supply of standing fresh water. Their ten thousand miles of shoreline bound eight states and a Canadian province and are longer than the entire Atlantic and Pacific coasts of the United States. Their surface area of 95,000 square miles is greater than New York, New Jersey, Connecticut, Massachusetts, Vermont, New Hampshire, and Rhode Island combined. People who have never visited them -- who have never seen a squall roar across Superior or the horizon stretch unbroken across Michigan or Huron -- have no idea how big they are. They are so vast that they dominate much of the geography, climate, and history of North America. In one way or another, they affect the lives of tens of millions of people. The Living Great Lakes is the most complete book ever written about the history, nature, and science of these remarkable lakes at the heart of North America. From the geological forces that formed them to the industrial atrocities that nearly destroyed them, to the greatest environmental success stories of our time, the lakes are portrayed in all their complexity. The book, however, is much more than just history. It is also the story of the lakes as told by biologists, fishermen, sailors, and others whom the author grew to know while traveling with them on boats and hiking with them on beaches and islands. The book is also the story of a personal journey. It is the narrative of a six-week voyage through the lakes and beyond as a crewmember on a tallmasted schooner, and a memoir of a lifetime spent on and near the lakes. Through storms and fog, on remote shores and city waterfronts, the author explores the five Great Lakes in all seasons and moods and discovers that they and their connecting waters -- including the Erie Canal, the Hudson River, and the East Coast from New York to Maine -- offer a surprising and bountiful view of America. The result is a meditation on nature and our place in the world, a discussion and cautionary tale about the future of water resources, and a celebration of a place that is both fragile and robust, diverse, rich in history and wildlife, often misunderstood, and worthy of our attention.

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Customer Reviews

This book is a beauty. I suggest that after you receive it, you buy a couple bottles of strong French-Canadian beer (La Fin Du Monde, for example) throw in a Classical CD on repeat and start flipping pages. On a rainy day here in San Francisco, where I am now, I can feel myself being transported to the most mystical place I have yet to visit--after seeing nearly all of the U.S., Europe, and Asia--nothing compares to a sunset on Lake Michigan, a snowstorm on Lake Superior, or a sunrise on Lake Huron.

As I'm sure it is with many of the people that read this book, I grew up and live around the Great Lakes. My life has been sent sailing and fishing Lake Michigan and its tributaries. Jerry Dennis' book is a must read for anyone interested in the Great Lakes and what they mean to both the region's social and natural history. It's a pleasure to read all the factual tidbit's about these natural gifts carefully assembled together into a book. Jerry is not a writer that leaves you breathless with either his imagery or the depth of his prose. He has no need to. His straight forward style and knowledge of nature and science keeps you rolling along with him. He's like the smart and warm uncle whose conversations late into the night you've always cherished. Read this before planning your sailing or motoring trip through the Great Lakes and Erie Canal. It'll make you set a date for your trip instead of just thinking about it.

An enthusiastic outdoorsman, Dennis has written a comprehensive book on the Great Lakes from the perspective of personal experience, scientific data and historical background. He describes the area in its early pristine beauty, from the Indian tribes to the first European settlers and the dawning of industrialization that almost destroyed this natural preserve of geology, flora, fauna and indigenous species. With attention to the tales of the past, Dennis writes of the gradual evolution of natural beauty into a vast resource for lumber, farm products, shipping and related industries, including the influx of a population that has grown around opportunity, all imbued with the awesome

grandeur of these vast bodies of water. On a four-week voyage through the Great Lakes, Dennis views the area from the water, as opposed to his many travels along the shorelines, the exhausting, but fulfilling days on board filled with the lore of the sea, new friendships made while sailing and the eccentric individuals met along the way. Couched in contemporary terms, the author speaks of the past with reverence, his love of history enhanced by regional details, tales of shipwrecks and the personal observations of a man with great reverence for the bounty of this immense body of water and those who live on the miles of coastline that make up the Great Lakes. History is tangible in Dennis's work, impossible to ignore as the men navigate from one lake to another, reminded daily of the pitfalls of ignoring nature and the pleasures of communing with the elements. The comprehensive chapters cover: Lake Michigan, from land and water; the Straights of Mackinac; Lake Superior, canoeing, the early voyagers, surviving storms; Lake Huron, Georgian Bay and the wilderness; St. Claire River; Lake Ontario, the Erie Canal and the Hudson River. Each chapter addresses relevant information but is complemented by stories, for example, the "White City" constructed in Jackson Park for the World's Columbian Exposition of 1893, the disappearance of an entire fishing village on the shores of lake Michigan, victim of "walking dunes", Sault Ste. Marie and the rapids of the St. Mary's and The Soo Locks. His eye on an ever-changing environment, Dennis paints a fascinating portrait of nature's bounty in the Great Lakes, past and present, ever vigilant for the dangers of pollution, overuse and the avarice of industrialization: "Bracketed by mysteries, adrift, alone, despairing of our ignorance, we turn to the physical because there, at least, we can know a thing for certain." This is our legacy and the key to the future of a national treasure. Luan Gaines/2006.

I am (like many of those that have written reviews) a native Michigander. However, I am now living in upstate New York, which despite being part of the Great Lakes lacks the appreciation for the lakes that midwesterners have. This book is a must read for anyone who hasn't had the opportunity to grow up surrounded by the greatest natural wonder in the world. This book highlights not only the natural history of the lakes, but the social and environmental legacy of humankind in the lakes. For those who were lucky enough to spend time sailing, swimming, hiking, and otherwise enjoying the Great Lakes, this book will sweep you back in time to the lazy summers of youth (or retirement, as the case may be!) and remind you of why you love the Great Lakes.

Having lived amongst the Great Lakes my entire life, I thought I knew so much. I was wrong. This book was almost impossible to put down. It is a great mix of science, ecology, history, and personal

experience. Many books about the Great Lakes get bogged down in too much of just one subject area, unlike this book. Positively fascinating. No lie.

This book captures the heart of the Great Lakes and all the beauty that is found in and around them. It gives a wonderful detail of the geologic history of the lakes and the landscape around them. The author has a true appreciation for these living lakes and evokes that throughout his writing. If you live around the Great Lakes region, you will gain a new appreciation for how lucky we are to be by them and a new sense of desire to protect them. I used excerpts from this book to teach a high school earth science class when studying the hydrosphere and meterology. I recommend this book to any naturalist, Great Lakes region residence, or for anyone who wants to know why the largest source of fresh water on the planet is worth saving and preserving.

Purchased the book because I'm considering a retirement along Lake Ontario and am an avid sailor. The book is centered around the relocation of a Ferro cement schooner from Michigan through the lakes to Lake Ontario, onward down the Hudson and around New England. Along the journey, are many mini stories added for each lake taken from a combination of personal adventures, history and many interesting collection of facts covering a wide range of subjects from geology, their early exploration, later exploitation and related environmental problems. My only mild dissapointment is there was not more on Lake Ontario. The trip ends in along the coast of Maine where I was raised. It's a delightful book.

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