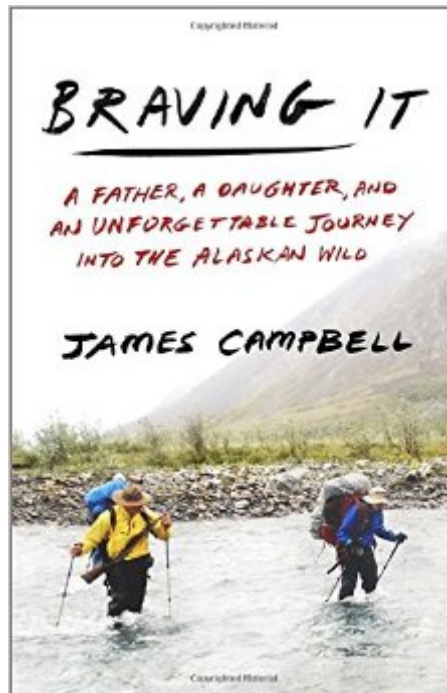


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Braving It: A Father, A Daughter, And An Unforgettable Journey Into The Alaskan Wild



Synopsis

The powerful and affirming story of a father's journey with his teenage daughter to the far reaches of Alaska — Alaska's Arctic National Wildlife Refuge, home to only a handful of people, is a harsh and lonely place. So when James Campbell's cousin Heimo Korth asked him to spend a summer building a cabin in the rugged Interior, Campbell hesitated about inviting his fifteen-year-old daughter, Aidan, to join him: Would she be able to withstand clouds of mosquitoes, the threat of grizzlies, bathing in an ice-cold river, and hours of grueling labor peeling and hauling logs? But once there, Aidan embraced the wild. She even agreed to return a few months later to help the Korths work their traplines and hunt for caribou and moose. Despite windchills of 50 degrees below zero, father and daughter ventured out daily to track, hunt, and trap. Under the supervision of Edna, Heimo's Yupik Eskimo wife, Aidan grew more confident in the woods. Campbell knew that in traditional Eskimo cultures, some daughters earned a rite of passage usually reserved for young men. So he decided to take Aidan back to Alaska one final time before she left home. It would be their third and most ambitious trip, backpacking over Alaska's Brooks Range to the headwaters of the mighty Hulahula River, where they would assemble a folding canoe and paddle to the Arctic Ocean. The journey would test them, and their relationship, in one of the planet's most remote places: a land of wolves, musk oxen, Dall sheep, golden eagles, and polar bears. At turns poignant and humorous, *Braving It* is an ode to America's disappearing wilderness and a profound meditation on what it means for a child to grow up — and a parent to finally, fully let go.

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Customer Reviews

I have been to Alaska - in the wintertime - and loved every moment of it. But I never went north of Fairbanks and, even though I'd once considered moving to Alaska, after I visited that thought never crossed my mind again. It was just too big and too lonely for me. It takes a special kind of person to live up there or even visit, especially in the sparsely populated outer northern reaches of Alaska. It IS one of the 50 United States but it's really like another country. Instead, nowadays I am an armchair adventurer and this book took me on quite a wild ride. James Campbell is an outdoorsman and an adventurer. In 2013-14 he took his oldest daughter Aidan to Alaska - on three separate trips which are chronicled in BRAVING IT. The first trip is a summer trip to help the author's cousin build a cabin. The second is a winter trip to help the cousin and his wife with their trapline and to get winter meat. The third is a summer trip also (although I just about froze just reading the tale) and tells of their canoe trip down (or is it up) the Hulahula River north to the Arctic Ocean. This is quite an unusual father-daughter team. There were squabbles on all three of the trips but they got along amazingly well. My ONLY complaint about the book is that it's written totally from the father's point of view and I wish we, the readers, could have had more insight into Aidan's feelings during this coming of age story. This book gave me some of the same feelings as reading some of Jack London's books, those based in the Klondike. The difference is that Campbell wrote his as a memoir whereas London chose to fictionalize some of his stories. This was a great adventure story, a coming of age story, and a travelogue, expounding on the beauty of Alaska.

If *Braving It* by James Campbell were ONLY a travelogue, or just a memoir, or a single adventure story, it would be a superlative read; however, it is actually three adventure stories rolled into one, and the memoir takes us not only into the intimidating trackless wilderness of Alaska in both summer and winter, but into an even more breathtaking adventure of parenting. Let me admit at the outset that I haven't even the slightest affinity for cold, snow, or roughing it. I abhor the idea of backbreaking labor which I couldn't have done in my teens like Aidan or in my 50s like James, either. Although I am a mountain person, and have occasionally fantasized about doing some minimally dangerous whitewater rafting, I can't even begin to imagine wanting to spend two weeks on an Alaskan river headed for the Arctic Ocean. However, Campbell's narrative is so intensely involving that I was able to put aside my instinctive "No, Thanks!" reaction and share both the fear and excitement with actual joy; his descriptions are breathtakingly beautiful. Aidan, as described by her father, is an extraordinary young woman. However, his account of her occasional rebellion and lack of enthusiasm during the three adventures he shared with her bring to mind an experience I had with one of my own granddaughters at about the same age.

Thinking to introduce her to relatives on the Navajo reservation, a friend of mine and I took her on a cross-country drive from her coastal Georgia home to the desert Southwest. It was NOT an unmitigated success, and years afterwards we heard how very bored sheâ™d been. Such was definitely not Aidanâ™s reaction, despite the much greater hardships and challenges she and her father endured.

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