

(Download free pdf) In Southern Light: Trekking Through Zaire and the Amazon

## In Southern Light: Trekking Through Zaire and the Amazon

*Alex Shoumatoff*

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**Alex Shoumatoff : In Southern Light: Trekking Through Zaire and the Amazon** before purchasing it in order to gauge whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised In Southern Light: Trekking Through Zaire and the Amazon:

5 of 5 people found the following review helpful. Jungle Journeys in Brazil and the CongoBy Bob NewmanAnyone who likes travel literature will certainly not be disappointed in Alex Shoumatoff's IN SOUTHERN LIGHT. It is a book in two parts. In the first, he travels with a friend up a large, but seldom-visited tributary of the , the Nhamunda, in search of any clues about the eponymous s themselves. He finds mostly caboclos, mixed race people who live off fishing, hunting, and a little farming when possible, and the last remnants of the Indian peoples who lived in the region for centuries. The second, less-focussed journey is in the former Zaire, now Congo (again). Though the current wars and massacres had not begun, the reader gets a strong impression of the crumbling, decaying society that existed under Mobutu. The author travels by truck, by riverboat, and through the jungle on foot with some BaMbuti (pygmies). I liked two things about this book. First, I liked Shoumatoff's attitude towards the people he met: neither condescending and critical, nor full of gushing admiration. He took each person as they came, just as he would have in his own society. If you are tired of the snide, superior writing style of a Theroux or Naipaul, this could be a welcome change. Secondly, I liked his descriptions of the natural world of the forests, rivers, and interactions between people. My criticism is that both sections lack focus and sometimes the book and the diary are a little too close together. The section starts off with a very fascinating description of the Greek legend and how the early Europeans were influenced

by it, how the Indians may have fed it back to successive explorers once they realized what the intruders were looking for. But, since Shoumatoff found no vestige of the legend in his travels, there really was no point to setting up this "straw woman". He was basically "messing around"; travelling to see what he could see. That would have been enough I feel---travel for its own sake is just as good a reason as any. Nothing much holds the Zaire section together either: it's just a bunch of impressions. I happened to like them, but some people might feel the book is a little diffuse. Criticisms notwithstanding, IN SOUTHERN LIGHT is well worth reading. I recommend it to anyone looking for a different sort of travel book, one not about the pastel, effete joys of Provence or Tuscany.

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From Publishers Weekly Vicarious travel with Shoumatoff is always rewarding not only is he well informed, he is interested in everything. An earlier journey produced *The Rivers*; here he treks to the remote and sparsely populated Rio Nhamunda in northwest Brazil. Legend has designated the area as home of the s, "women without husbands," and Shoumatoff traces this universal myth among fragmented Indian tribes. In the jungles of Zaire, he walks with pygmies through the Ituri Forest, visits missionaries and hitchhikes to a nature reserve at the Ugandan border. It is an extraordinarily colorful voyage; Shoumatoff captures the essence of people on the move as well as the sights of exotic places. First serial to the *New Yorker*. Copyright 1986 Reed Business Information, Inc. From *Library Journal* Although few people could consider trekking in Zaire and the to be an ideal vacation, this book is undeniably enthralling. Shoumatoff seems equally at home in the Brazilian jungle searching for a legendary tribe of women or marching through an African forest with BaMbuti pygmies. On every page the reader is sure to find intriguing details about local flora and fauna, exotic natives, or the latest calamity to befall the intrepid author. Shoumatoff's grasp of jungle lore, his appreciation for natural wonders, and his taste for high adventure make this one travel account about which readers won't exclaim, "Not another book on . . ." Ian Wallace, *Agriculture Canada Lib.*, Saint-Jean-sur-Richelieu, Quebec Copyright 1986 Reed Business Information, Inc.