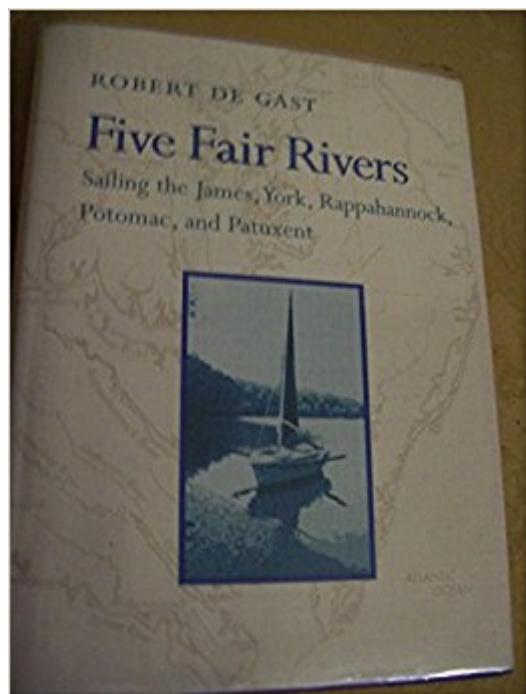


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# Five Fair Rivers: Sailing The James, York, Rappahanock, Potomac, And Patuxent



## Synopsis

"Good-humored, observant, and knowledgeable, Robert de Gast is an ideal cruising companion on the historic rivers of the Chesapeake's lower Western Shore. In an unconventional small boat with a four-inch draft, he takes us where few other sailors can. Five Fair Rivers will delight all who love Tidewaterland." -- John Barth A devoted sailor, Robert de Gast takes his inspiration for these trips from Captain John Smith who, while exploring the Chesapeake in the early seventeenth century, found himself mesmerized by the magnificence and unexpected charms of the bay's "fayre and navigable rivers." Travelling in Smith's wake, de Gast records the details of wind and sail, landscape and water -- always with an eye toward how things differ from what greeted the captain almost four hundred years ago. Five Fair Rivers captures the beauty of unspoiled stretches of marsh, shore, and isle; the luxury of dry socks; and the pungence of the air surrounding the Westpoint, Virginia, paper plant. Here is an adventure that will appeal equally to sailors and arm-chair travelers alike.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

"In five voyages over as many months, de Gast sailed, rowed, and motored his double-ended Dovekie, Fiddler, up all the fair rivers -- enjoying the access that his light and trailerable 21footer, with its 4-inch draft, afforded him to their shores and shallows. The result is an observant, literate, and gently humorous combination of ship's log, personal essay and local history." -- Mid-Atlantic Country "Sailors will enjoy it, and other readers will enjoy... his riverward approaches to well known places... As de Gast points out in his conclusion, these wonderful rivers offer beauty, solitude, and adventure, and amazingly enough, all within a day's drive of half the population of the United

States." -- Virginia Librarian

"Good-humored, observant, and knowledgeable, Robert de Gast is an ideal cruising companion on the historic rivers of the Chesapeake's lower Western Shore. In an unconventional small boat with a four-inch draft, he takes us where few other sailors can. *Five Fair Rivers* will delight all who love Tidewater land." -- John Barth

Well written, narrative. If you're into "Dovekie" sailboats and shallow water cruising, you'll like this.

I have sailed the Chesapeake Bay and tributaries since 1971 in sailboats drawing 5 feet or more. But de Gast makes me wish I could enter the scenic shallow waters of the Virginia and Maryland rivers. In every one De Gast finds interest and beauty in the natural flora, the wildlife, and much history in the man made features. His boat allows him to get in close and examine some of the most interesting places on the water. And his conversational writing style keeps you turning the pages to learn whatever he will report next. Each chapter is the journal of a one-week mini-cruise in a sailboat with a draft of 4 inches. You can't get there in your trawler. But if you have a kayak, sailing dingy, sailfish, windsurfer, or paddle board, and especially if you keep one of those on the deck of your cruising boat, this book is for you. You can plan the next vacation with the kids. Explore the rivers of the Chesapeake Bay and when your trawler runs aground, get the kids out on the little boats and the adults can have time alone. What's not to love?

Robert de Gast was born in den Hague, Holland and came to the US at 22. He has spent his life around and on the Chesapeake, and raised a family of sailors. He tells a simple, innocent and inviting story about one of his many adventures. He describes the Chesapeake, the "five faire rivers" and other sights of beauty and wonder that Captain John Smith and the early settlers found and described in such exuberant terms -- and reports that much is unchanged. He mixes geography, geology, history and personal experience in a wonderfully entertaining and natural way, and makes the reader feel as if he were there too. From trivial detail (toast from a frying pan, two eggs and a banana for breakfast and the complexity of rigging his solar shower), to historic analysis (why chose Jamestown Island, when the natives knew it was inhospitable?) to profound observation (from the profound effect of clear cut colonial farming on silting of these rivers to more modern use as sewers), he spins a lively yarn. Like Jimmy Cornell in his "Passion for the Sea", de Gast sings the praises of shallow draft sailing and makes us deep keelers wonder if we are somehow missing

something important. I think we are. This book is a delight to anyone who enjoys simply messing about in boats, or has a love for Virginia's beautiful tidewater region and its tributaries.

De Gast, let's us see Colonial America from a hidden side seldom viewed from the freeway's blur of contemporary homogeneity. The slowing down of the mind and the pace of the soul as he explores the rivers that feed Chesapeake Bay in a small sailboat is intoxicating. Somehow this Dutchman has found the magic we first experienced with Huck Finn and Jim on that raft on the Mississippi. Ah! To be messin' about in boats.

As a sailor who relishes using a shallow draft boat to explore remote water passages, I thoroughly enjoyed Five Fair Rivers by Robert DeGast. His modest 21' sailboat with 4" draft brought him up the rivers on the lower western shore of the Chesapeake Bay to for a close-up investigation of the both the historical aspects of the Virgina Tidewater and their current state. DeGast's writings reminded of Tom Horton, another good writer who has poked about the Chesapeake Bay and shared observations about this fascinating estuary. Thoroughly recommended for all small boat explorers and those interested in the natural history of the Chesapeake Bay and its tributaries.

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