



## Adirondack Guides

**Main Idea:** Guides had an important job helping people explore the Adirondacks safely.

**[Taylor]** Have you ever heard of a “tour guide”? You might have met one on a tour at a museum or public place you have been to. Today, tour guides tell us where we’re going and provide helpful information when we’re in an unknown place. Long ago, visitors to the Adirondacks didn’t have tour guides as we know them today. They had people who simply called themselves guides.

**[Diane]** On today’s episode, we’re going to introduce you to the guides of the Adirondacks & by the end of this podcast, you’ll know ...

**[Taylor]** What is a guide and what did they do?

Who hired the guides? & How did they select who they wanted as a guide?

Why did people need guides in the first place?

And more!

**[ADKX Podcast Intro:]** Ready to earn some extra credit? This is Taylor and Diane and you are listening to ADKX-tra Credit. A history podcast for students made by the Adirondack Experience, the Museum on Blue Mountain Lake, located in the heart of the Adirondack Park of New York State.

**[Diane]** It's 1875. You're from the port city of Boston. Bustling with activity and excitement. But you yearn for a different kind of excitement. One that will take you away from the crowds and noise and into the quietness of nature...[fade out sounds]

**[Taylor]** In the 1800s, many people from cities, such as New York City and Boston, were coming up to the Adirondacks to spend time in the wilderness. However, many of those people didn't exactly know what they were doing up here. And how could they? They grew up and lived in busy cities for most of their lives, not around the forests,

mountains, and lakes you'd find in the Adirondacks. However, they weren't going to let their lack of Adirondack knowledge stop them from coming up north.

**[Diane]** Many of these city people hired an Adirondack guide: a person to help them experience the Adirondack wilderness. A guide would act very much like a tour guide does today by showing people around. Guides would teach the people who hired them how to do a lot of things— how to hunt, fish, where to find the best hunting and fishing places, how to travel throughout the Adirondacks, and more! They knew how to build boats and shelters and cook whatever they hunted/caught. They also bought all the needed supplies for themselves and the people who hired them, making sure they had everything they would need for a stay lasting anywhere from a week to more than a month.

**[Taylor]** We call the visitors to the Adirondacks who hired guides a “sport”--which is short for “sportsman” or a person who hunts, fishes, or spends lots of time out in nature as a hobby. Sports would often form a small party of friends and family to explore the Adirondacks with. The party would then hire one guide to help them for however many days they needed.

**[Diane]** Guides were expected to know a variety of different tasks in order to help their sports. And many guides would acquire the needed knowledge through living up in the Adirondacks for many years or their entire life. They knew the land and how to get around and survive.

**[Taylor]** And because they knew so much, sports needed to pay their guides! Back in the 1800s, it wasn't uncommon for guides to be paid \$2.50 to 3.00 a day, which is about \$56 to \$70 in 2020.

**[Diane]** Today, guides can be paid anywhere from \$45 for a couple hour hiking session to \$400 for a daylong, activity filled session. However, today's guides also need to be certified with the state of NY.

**[Taylor]** And there's a lot involved to become certified. You can be a guide for a wide array of different outdoor activities--from hiking, camping, fishing, hunting, or navigating small boats such as a kayak or canoe. No matter what activities a guide decides to be certified in, they must have good navigation skills to help them guide people safely around the Adirondacks. Guides must take certification training courses and tests to achieve all the needed safety skills to safely be a guide, such as First Aid and CPR.

**[Diane]** Back in the 1800s, there were no official certifications or classes for guides. You had to figure out through word of mouth if you were hiring a guide who knew what they were doing. You would talk to people who had hired or worked with an Adirondack guide themselves...Or you read guidebooks that would tell you all that you needed to know about visiting the Adirondacks, like what to look for in a guide before you hired one. One of the most famous guidebooks written about the Adirondacks is called “Adventures in the Wilderness” written by William H.H. Murray.

**[Taylor]** Murray and his book are what initially caused the huge surge of people from the cities to come to the Adirondacks and explore the wilderness in the late 1800s . Because of this, we often refer to Murray as Adirondack Murray.

**[Diane]** In his book, Adventures in the Wilderness, he covered every Adirondack topic you can imagine. Murray said choosing a guide is the most important decision you can make when visiting the Adirondacks.

**[Taylor]** This is what Murray wrote about guides:

“Every guide should be immediately responsible to the party hiring him. His chances of future employment should depend upon his present success. It is beneficial to both parties. The sportsman is well served; and the guide, if he is faithful, secures constant employment from season to season.”

**[Diane]** By this, Murray means that guides have a big responsibility to look after the sports that hired them! If the guide did a good job, they would probably be hired again by other sports. Word could spread fast back in the 1800s. Although they didn’t have cellphones or the internet, they could read guidebooks, like Murrays, or write to different Adirondack hotels to find out the names of the best guides!

**[Taylor]** Although guides were busy navigating, hunting, and fishing, they also had to find time to entertain the members of their party. Nights at camp were meant for cooking dinner over a campfire and relaxing after a long day spent out in the wilderness.

**[Diane]** This was the perfect time for the guide to tell stories. Guides could tell any kind of story they wanted, from ghost stories to tall tales. Tall tales are fiction stories that start out with truth to them and then the truth is stretcheddddd with lots of made up elements to it. Guides would often tell stories about their adventures out in the wilderness, and a lot of them are about hunting or fishing--here’s an example of what an Adirondack tall tale could be like..

## **[Transition]**

**[Guide:]** *On a calm, but hot, July day, I was guiding a party of 2 sports out on clear, Blue Mountain Lake in my guideboat. These sports, all from Boston, wanted to spend their time up in the Adirondacks out on the lakes, reeling in as many fish as their fishing hooks could catch. I, their knowledgeable guide, knew exactly where to find the most impressive fish. I also had the incredible strength to bring them out of the water. Out on Blue Mountain Lake, there is an island named Rock Island, and right off the western shore is where we paddled our boat to. Both of my sports sat quietly, lines out in the water, looking carefully to see what may be out there. I sat on the opposite side of the boat with my line in the water, knowing a big one would make its way in my direction sometime soon. Then suddenly, it happened. My line tugged in the water, and I assumed a standing position and started reeling it in. I tugged and I pulled. And I pulled and I tugged; fighting my hardest to reel this huge fish in. But then, my strength ran out, and the fish pulled my fishing reel and myself into the waters of Blue Mountain Lake. In all my years of living and being a guide in the Adirondacks, this has never happened. However, I was determined not to lose my reel, and I held onto it with the little amount of strength I had left. Now that I was in the water, I had a clear line of sight on the fish who had pulled me in. Boy--was he the biggest I have ever seen! He pulled me all over Blue Mountain Lake, settled on making me let go of my fishing pole. But oh no--that wasn't going to happen on my watch. I needed to show my sports exactly what kind of guide they had hired. I regained my focus and strength and began to fight back against this monster of a fish. I was able to push off of a rock and get enough momentum to start swimming back to the boat. I tugged and kicked, and used every bit of power I had to swim my way back to my sports. The boat was now in sight, I was ready to reel this fish in. Once I made it to the boat, my sports lifted me in and started helping me bring the fish in closer to the boat. As soon as the fish was close enough, all 3 of us lifted the sea monster out of the water and onto the boat. While I knew it was to be the biggest fish I had ever seen, I did not expect it to be as huge as it appeared on the boat. This fish was easily the size of a full grown man, if not more! He was bigger than the 3 of us! We struggled to paddle the boat back to the shores of Blue Mountain Lake with the fish on board, but we did it. None of us could believe how we accomplished bringing in this ginormous fish. We hauled it back to our camp and couldn't wait to tell others about our incredible fishing adventure.*

**[Diane]** Pretty crazy tall tale, right? Back in the 1800s, guides would have to get really creative in order to keep their sports entertained with their campfire stories. So while it's

great to know how to hunt and fish, as a guide, you also needed to be able to bring some fun into camp whenever possible.

**[Taylor]** So...do you have what it takes to be a good guide? Do you know how to catch the best fish and how to tell a good campfire story? If not, you still have time to study up and learn and maybe one day you'll be one of the best guides in the Adirondacks.

**[Podcast Outro]** Thank you for joining us for an episode of ADKX-tra Credit. This podcast is brought to you by Adirondack Experience, the museum on Blue Mountain Lake. Our mission is to expand understanding of Adirondack history and the relationship between people and the Adirondack wilderness, fostering informed choices for the future.

Listen in again two weeks from now when we will have a brand new episode. In the meantime, if you want to learn more fun Adirondack history visit our website, [theadkx.org](http://theadkx.org).