

OVER A BARREL QUITE LITERALLY

Likely inspired by the motto “It’s better to die trying than to have never tried at all,” many thrill seekers have pitched themselves over the brink of Niagara Falls. Check out a few of their stories below.



The first to survive the descent over the Falls was Annie Edson Taylor, who, on her 63rd birthday in 1901, crawled into a barrel with her cat. Her bumpy plunge over the Falls left her with only a gash on her forehead. She hoped that her stunt would bring her fame and fortune, but it did neither. She reportedly died destitute.




A decade later, Englishman Bobby Leach, survived a drop over the Falls in a steel barrel, and spent the next years toting his barrel to vaudeville shows where he recounted his heroics and posed for pictures. Fifteen years after his perilous feat, he slipped on an orange peel while walking, broke his leg, and died from an ensuing infection.





In 1930, riding in a barrel weighing almost a ton, a Buffalo resident chef named George Stathakis and his pet turtle, Sonny, roared over the brink of the Falls. His heavy barrel got wedged behind the cascade for 20 hours, during which the oxygen inside ran out. George did not survive. Sonny, however, did.


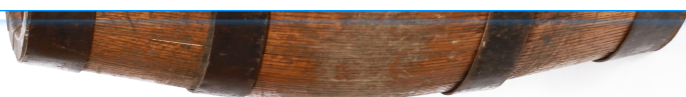




In a 1995 stunt intended to raise awareness of homelessness, professional stunt man Robert Overacker sped over the edge of the Falls on a single jet ski. Strapped to his back was a jet-propelled parachute that was designed to lift him away from the roaring water. Sadly, the parachute failed to deploy and he fell to his death.



After testing the current with pieces of Styrofoam to map out the safest route over the Falls, a 40 year-old man from Michigan, Kirk Jones, climbed into the Niagara River with only his clothes on and was swept over the edge in 2003. He survived the plunge, suffering only a few bruises. A second attempt in 2017, this time inside an inflatable rubber ball, was not so successful. Mr. Jones's body and the ball were recovered separately.



In a display of steely nerves and cool determination, high wire maestro, Nik Wallenda, crossed the Falls on a tightrope in 2015. The world watched as he stepped from the American side and, holding his balancing pole, walked for 25 minutes across the 1800 feet that it took to reach the Horseshoe Falls on the Canadian side. Mist and winds made for difficult moments, but Wallenda was up to the task.

