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Orca



Synopsis

The inspiring and hilarious true story of an unworldly twenty-two year old California surf punk and his faithful girlfriend who tire of their parochial and drama-filled home town. They decide to buy a thirty foot sailboat and disappear. They must overcome spectacular nautical ignorance and defeat a cunning sabotage attempt by safety-conscious parents armed only with a shoestring budget and an unshakable sense of humor. Once on the high seas, unexpected enemies and incredible allies soon propel little Orca across the Pacific and into the unforgiving Southern Ocean. Before long, the crew realizes they've gone too far downwind: in order to return home, they must sail around the world. Nothing will ever be the same.

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Customer Reviews

Two or three years ago I happened to find the blog - Orca's Log, and followed the boat and the people around the world, always looking forward to the next posting. So I was happy to discover the book. It would have been nice to have some photos or illustrations in the book, but that omission was probably economic. It's more than made up for with John's excellent writing. I got to know this plucky couple well, John and Kara, through all their dreadful and sublime moments at sea, as well as the close bonding with other circumnavigators when at port. It's fun reading, The four year life they lead of wild singular adventures on the high seas certainly has a vicarious appeal to us locked at our safe and predictable desks. Thanks for the trip John and Kara. Your next our challenge lies before you, reintegrating back to our rather dull little world. That is, unless you want to do it again.

I enjoyed John's account of their circumnavigation on Orca. We know the Orcas. We first saw them anchored in the harbor in Strahm Tasmania but did not meet them until they rowed up alongside our boat in Rodriguez a year later. The Orcas are incredibly competent sailors with a reputation in the cruising fleet for their parsimonious use of diesel, always entering port with a trim vessel well sailed, and for their friendly and cheerful attitudes. It was interesting to contrast their experiences in some places with ours. We had wanted to sail across the Australian Bight to the west coast but had decided that we had waited too late in the year. But the Orcas did exactly what we declined to do. Their reception in Perth was not at all typical of our experiences in Australia where they were essentially snubbed to a snooty yacht club and denied safe harbor along a hazardous coast. The yacht club members were the real losers in that situation. John writes well and does a good job of condensing a big adventure into a little book that does a good job of describing their adventure.

I was looking forward to John and Kara's account of their travels after meeting them briefly in Honolulu and reading some of their blog posts late in their journey. John writes well, so when I found out he'd written a book, I bought it immediately. My own life is so busy I rarely take time to sit down with a book in hand, usually waiting until it's available in audio so I can "read" on the way to work or while walking the dog. I'm so glad I got this one - it did not disappoint. Beautifully written, it tells of their experiences as novice 'yachties' circumnavigating the world in a small sailboat. It is filled with rich detail about their life aboard, wonderful characters they meet, and diverse places they visited. I couldn't put it down, staying up late into the night to finish chapters, alternately laughing aloud at John's dry, intelligent humor, or tensed into a knot as ferocious storms tossed little Orca. The boat herself becomes a beloved character in this story, which reads more like an adventure novel than nonfiction. John makes every moment enjoyable, always leaving the reader longing for just a little bit more. When the book was finished, all too soon, I was left with deep respect for these two intrepid young people. I'll be first in line to buy John's next book, whatever the subject may be.

What a terrific journey. Most of us, myself included, will never circumnavigate the globe. What John and Kara give us in this very personal account, is a confessional voyage to so many places and experiences that opened the world up in a new way. Reading Orca in one hand and using Google directions on my phone, I could type in the locality of an atoll in the Pacific and see where they were and why the channel was so dangerous, or how the comments in his text were so interestingly put. As a Cape Dory owner myself, it is also a solid tribute to the stability and durability of the Cape Dory Sailboat, now in almost every instance "a Classic," they testify to the phenomenal design of

architect Carl Alberg. A book I could not put down and felt the author took me on the voyage because he wrote it with passion and clever humor rather than professional perspective. Plus, I've been to several of the places he sailed and had just as much interest in the localities that he found. He described them accurately from the perspective of a sailor. Loved it.

As a Cape Dory sailor myself, I was intrigued by the story of a 30 footer CD on a circumnavigation. At first, it was a bit slow and the beginning chapters were not so much about sailing but more about the family troubles, which got me somewhat impatient. Somehow, after putting the book down in typical impatient fashion, I would come right back for more. It is not an intellectual book, it is easy to read, and entertaining. But it is very well written, and even the cliches used to describe some of the situations, are easily forgiven. It is revealing,... And for a coastal sailor who single hands most of the time in very safe waters, it is a fantastic adventure the kind of which I can only dream, or read about. And it is a true story. And daring... And it was possible! My hat off to John and Kara for having the guts of doing what they did, and even better, to John for writing this book and sharing their lives and experiences with the rest of us. You both are really an inspiration. Sincerely, Zeida Cecilia-Mendez, S/V Bandolera II - Cape Dory 33 sloop, home port, Miami, Florida.

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