



Fearless: One Woman, One Kayak, One Continent

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Freya Hoffmeister takes on sharks, crocs, and huge surf in the most audacious paddle adventure of the century.

Fearless: One Woman, One Kayak, One Continent Details

Date : Published January 24th 2012 by FalconGuides

ISBN : 9780762772872

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Format : Paperback 224 pages

Genre : Adventure, Nonfiction, Sports and Games, Sports, Biography, Environment, Nature, Travel



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From Reader Review Fearless: One Woman, One Kayak, One Continent for online ebook

Julie says

I enjoyed this book and would recommend it. As far as real-life adventures go, it's a great read. My only hangup is how unlikeable Freya Hoffmeister is as a person. You don't quite get the full picture of how truly difficult her journey was, because it's written in third person and she refused to talk in detail about the hardships she faced. None of this is the author's fault, and it is very well-written for what he had to work with.

If Freya hadn't been so stubborn and arrogant, she probably wouldn't have succeeded in her journey and there wouldn't have been a story to begin with. So I suppose I can't fault her for being who she is. All in all, it was an interesting book.

Jean says

Inspiring story of one woman's determination to kayak around Australia, only the second person ever to do so. Her unshakeable confidence is something else!

Elizabeth says

Who would have thought I would be fascinated by a kayaking story? But I was! I couldn't put it down.

Gisela says

The achievement documented in this book is truly impressive and the woman involved is clearly a force of nature but I found this book a bit of a slog to read. I'm not sure if this is because of the author's competent but rather pedestrian writing style (I'd have to read his other books to judge this properly) or if it is because of his ambivalence about the woman he was writing about.

The book is a competent and apparently thorough and accurate account of Freya's solo circumnavigation of Australia in a kayak but too much of the book is a routine account of what happened on day X, day Y and day Z etc. What was missing was an overall "flow" in the narrative and a consistent thematic thread that carried you along.

There were some terrific minor detours into trying to understand what makes Freya tick, attempts which lead the author into areas like the difficult time Freya's mother had in WWII and speculation on how this family history might account for some of the toughness in Freya's own body and mind, but overall the book didn't flow in the way that it might have if Freya had been more forthcoming and if Joe had been able to get a bit more truly inspired by her and her achievement.

I'm really glad that he allowed Freya to talk him into writing the book and I'm glad I read it. Joe has done the world a favour in telling this story as Freya clearly would never have written the story herself and would probably not have cooperated to the extent that she did with anyone else. However, I just can't help feeling that another writer might have made a much more gripping read out of it.

Molly says

I have to admit, from the picture Glickman painted of Freya, I kind of liked her: she's brash, confident, aware of her attractiveness and body. She's strong and she's brave. And right now, she's in the middle of doing South America in 24 months.

Descriptions of Freya from the book:

- combination of jock and siren
- she was more an object of curiosity than desire.
- this big, tough, German sheila, who lacked humility and a sense of humor
- And it didn't hurt that the stubborn sheila did it dressed all in black.

On her decision to take this on with a child:

- Women, in particular, were outraged that she would leave her twelve-year-old son for a year. It didn't help when I told them she hadn't made that decision lightly, that the boy spent most of his time with her ex-husband anyway, and that she had cried when we first talked about it.
- Of the many criticisms I have heard of Freya's trip, her decision to leave her son for a year, perhaps never to return, has drawn the harshest attacks. I have a daughter the same age as Helge, and I understand that the need to chase a dream that takes you far from home, and even into danger, doesn't go away when you have a child. And when the adventurer is a woman people tend to chirp louder. I was reminded of Alison Hargreaves, the first woman to solo Everest without supplemental oxygen. Generally considered the best female alpinist in history, Hargreaves had two young children and when she announced that she aimed to climb K2, the world's second-tallest mountain and one that claims a higher percentage of climbers than Everest, she was roundly criticized. On August 13, 1995, she reached the summit, becoming the first woman to climb both peaks without supplemental oxygen. On the descent a storm swept her off the mountain, and her body was never found. The criticism sounded all over again.

Other clips I found compelling:

- When Freya paddled around New Zealand she named her boat***** Veni, Vidi, Vici, the phrase made famous by Caesar upon his victory over Pharnaces: "I came, I saw, I conquered." I'm a sucker for a good Latin phrase, so I thought that was pretty cool—but Freya Shakti? It's the name of a song Freya found on iTunes by a kilt-wearing band from Georgia named Emerald Rose, an homage to all female goddesses but especially Freya, the Norse goddess of love, beauty, sex, and war. "Shakti" comes from the Hindu tradition and means sacred force or empowerment. Put the two together, and Freya thought it fit her pretty well.
- She was paddling a Nigel Dennis boat, the Explorer. She modified the name with a big red S to read "SExplorer."
- this is how Freya thinks: OK, wind, if you can get stronger, I can get stronger, too.
- The experts saw paddling alone around Australia as an impossibility; Freya saw failing as an impossibility.

And:

- One of the main ingredients in urine is, in fact, ammonia, a disinfectant. Ammonia is also used to reduce the stinging and itching resulting from insect, jellyfish, and anemone encounters. Letterman fans might remember that Madonna once told Dave on his show that she used urine to cure athlete's foot fungus. And, during her days as a gymnast, Freya was told that urinating on her blisters would toughen her skin.

- soil so old and depleted that folks who study dirt classify it as "skeletal."

- Generally speaking, a howling wilderness does not howl: it is the imagination of the traveler that does the howling. —HENRY DAVID THOREAU

- water in this shallow, "flattish gap" was far from flat. Waves rebounding from the shore colliding with incoming breakers were haystacking up into standing waves, a condition the French call clapotis—"lapping of water"—and paddlers from Brooklyn call a bone yard, but by any name it's a nightmarish mish-mash of water moving everywhere at once.

Laurel says

Not a book I would have picked on my own, but my adventure loving daughter enjoyed this book so I read it too. I didn't much care for Freya at first, but I have a lot of respect for her abilities, and enjoyed the author's way of telling the story.

Joe Glickman says

The Banff Mountain Book Competition just announced the finalists for the 2012 competition and I'm happy to say that Fearless by Joe Glickman made the list for the adventure travel category! We are up against 4 other titles in the category. The winners will be announced on November 1 at the Banff Mountain Film and Book Festival. There will be a \$1,000 winner in each category and a \$2,000 grand prize winner for best book of the year!

<http://www.outsideonline.com/blog/out...>

Bernadette Calonego says

I devoured this book. There are not enough good published stories of modern women who are truly adventurous - at least not for me. But this is a great one! The German business woman Freya Hoffmeister (among other accomplishments) circumnavigated the entire continent of Australia in her kayak, an incredibly dangerous trip. One has to admire this woman for her courage and mental strength. Although author Joe Glickman painted a at times critical portrait of Freya, her flaws only make her a more interesting person (and it makes an interesting book). And although Glickman did not accompany Freya on her adventure, his tale is vivid, direct and compelling.

Helen says

If you are looking to read about a woman's spiritual transformation as she journeys solo around a continent almost as large as her ego, then this book is not for you. It is not an Eat Pray Love-athon, but more so, a true story about a woman who decided what she wanted to do, connected all the dots to do so, and then set out and proved to many nay-sayers that she could do it. And so she did.

As a paddler, I knew something about Freya's trip through articles by Joe Glickman, and from occasionally reading her blog entries. Because I found the blog almost painful to read due to her flat and dull writing style, overabundance of emoticons, and self-adulating nature, I had already decided I didn't think this was the type of gal friend I would call up to go get a pedicure (although it appears she prefers to do this herself...well, of course she does!) Yet, I looked forward to the book's release, and when it arrived, I was ready to give it a go.

From page one, Joe Glickman draws you into the Who, What, Where, and attempts to answer the Why of this most complicated, frustrating, and goal-driven woman. He does a swell job in describing the geography, environment (sharks and crocs, oh my), history, and culture of Australia. These descriptions and stories provided mental visuals that helped me in realizing the significance of Freya's trek and the absurd mental strength needed to persevere day after day...alone. (The chapter on the Zuytdrop Cliffs was most striking and my favorite). The stories of the interactions between Freya and Oscar Chalupsky and other key characters, and the author's own personal stories such as his encounter with the blue bottles were darn amusing. Do not doubt: Joe Glickman is a funny man.

As the story progressed, I found myself feeling sympathetic towards Freya, even sorry for her, as I sensed loneliness and a desperate need for attention combined with a conflicting need for privacy. I'm not convinced she is fearless (as a matter of fact, in one chapter, she admits being afraid), but I am convinced that what kept her going is her refusal to give into that fear and her driven nature to complete what she started. In Fearless, the author creates a fair balance of factual and personal information where, no matter what the reader thinks of the subject, one cannot deny this journey was a most amazing and historical accomplishment. Journalism at it's finest.

Fearless should appeal not only to the obvious mob of kayakers, canoeists and other lovers of water sports, but also to anyone with a curiosity of foreign lands, quest for adventure, and to those who appreciate and ponder the ability to overcome extreme adversity. It's a quick and easy read, made enjoyable by the author's wit and insightful contributions.

(Note: My only criticisms: there were a few--less than 5 small fingers--typo/grammatical errors uncaught by the editor, and the ending seemed a little rushed--perhaps the book was as eager as Freya was to finish.)

Jen says

Fearless is right. Hot damn, this woman's a machine! And right now she is attempting to circumnavigate North America. Literally right now, today, June 29, 2017. She's somewhere along the Alaska coast, heading northwest. And here I am all thinking I'd like to kayak across our local lake.....lol

Aaron says

I read Freya's blog since day 1 of her Australian circumnavigation! Can't wait to have a hard copy!

Kristy McCaffrey says

In Fearless, Joe Glickman writes about Freya Hoffmeister, the first woman to circumnavigate the entire continent of Australia in a sea kayak. The feat, which she accomplishes in just less than a year, puts her in a league that few other adventurers, male or female, occupy. That alone makes this book worth reading, whether you're a kayaker or not (which I'm not). What's truly fascinating is Hoffmeister herself, a 40-something German with an incredible ability to focus on a task at hand. She ignored repeated warnings from people far more experienced than her about the dangers she would face. And face them she did, from giant crocodiles to great white sharks to sea snakes. But she prevailed.

Her incredible physical stamina and problem-solving abilities, along with an almost dismissive attitude to any fears she may have harbored along the way (of which she very rarely professed), puts one in mind of an elite warrior. The story, as told through Glickman, himself a kayaker, reveals how threatened the ol' boys kayaking network was of her feat but eventually grows into admiration. There's no disputing the magnitude of what she's done. Freya comes across as haughty, unlikable, and uncompromising, but clearly she isn't worried about impressing others, except where it counts. And that's in her kayak. That those closest to her pay the price of her obsessive single-mindedness and extended absences is the one heartbreak of this story.

Rob Mousley says

Joe Glickman is well known in the kayaking world for his highly entertaining style of writing and he doesn't disappoint in this, his book about Freya Hoffmeister's extraordinary paddle around Australia.

Humorous and insightful by turns, Glickman describes how Hoffmeister took on the challenges of sharks, salt water crocodiles, sea snakes and, most of all, some of the most savage weather conditions to be found on the planet. Apart from the 375 mile direct route that she took across the Gulf of Carpentaria (seven nights on the open ocean, "sleeping" balanced on the back deck), the most trying section of the trip was along the notorious Zuytdorp Cliffs - a 120 mile stretch along the western Australian coast that combined massive swells rebounding off sheer cliff faces, a headwind and no way out. Hoffmeister suffered brutal seasickness but toughed it out to become the second person ever to solo the route. She completed the circumnavigation in 332 days, paddling 8,565mi (13,790km) as she did so. Her aim was to beat the (only) previous time by Paul Caffyn who did the trip (assisted the whole way; Freya was assisted only the final 20% of the distance) in 360 days in 1980

Most intriguing though, is Glickman's treatment of Freya "the woman in black" Hoffmeister the person.

Glickman's exasperation with Hoffmeister's almost total lack of interest in the history of her surroundings (she landed on Restoration Island - visited in 1789 by Captain Bligh on his epic journey after the mutiny on the Bounty), and her refusal to admit to or discuss any hint of fear ("What's the problem?") is obvious, but,

by the end of the book it is clear that he has a whole-hearted admiration for Hoffmeister's achievements and an empathy with her somewhat unusual character.

And it's this that makes the book so much more than a run of the mill epic adventure story - and perhaps the reason that the non-paddling members of my family enjoyed the story so much.

Sea Kayakers will love this book - simply because it describes one the most extraordinary journeys ever undertaken in a paddle craft. But having observed the reaction of the other (female, non-paddling) members of my household, it seems to me that this book has a much wider audience.

As for me, I devoured it and was left asking for more.

David Barnes says

As a sea kayaker I was anticipating the release of Fearless in paperback. I am a sea kayaker and write about the topic. Though the art of marathon endurance paddling I leave to others, and happy to sit back and read vicariously. Freya Hoffmeister give us a glimpse of what it takes to endure, overcome and master that art. My review of Joe Glickman's book, Fearless, about Hoffmeister's attempt to circumnavigate Australia is on my kayak blog and I invite you to stop by and read it.
<http://www.kayakrogue.com/?p=2049>

Anna Schubert says

I tried to read this months ago and couldn't get into it, but this time around, I really enjoyed it. The story is fascinating, and although I would love to have had more narration on the nature side of things, I know that wasn't really the focus of the trip.
