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Fearless: One Woman, One Kayak, One Continent



Synopsis

Like the instant classic *The Last American Man*, *Fearless* is the story of a remarkable individual who accepts no personal limits—including fear. Freya Hoffmeister, a forty-six-year-old former skydiver, gymnast, marksman, and Miss Germany contestant, left her twelve-year-old son behind to paddle alone and unsupported around Australia—a year-long adventure that virtually every expert guaranteed would get her killed. She planned not only to survive the 9,420-mile trip through huge, shark-infested seas, but to do it faster than the only other paddler who did it. As journalist and expert kayaker Joe Glickman details the voyage of this Teutonic force of nature, he captures interminable days on the water and nights camped out on deserted islands; hair-raising encounters with crocs and great white sharks; and the daring 300-mile open-ocean crossing that shaved three weeks off her trip. For 332 days Glickman followed Freya's journey on her blog—along with a far-flung audience of awestruck, even lovesick, groupies—as she took on one terrifying ordeal after the next. In the end, he says, “her vanity and pigheadedness paled next to her nearly superhuman ability to master fear and persevere.”

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

“Freya Hoffmeister’s voyage was bold, ambitious, and reckless—like so many of the truly great adventures!” —Bear Grylls, author of *Mud, Sweat, and Tears* and *The Kid Who Climbed Everest*. . . a quick and entertaining read.” —*Publishers Weekly* “*Fearless*

is a compelling read about Freya Hoffmeister's 2009 circumnavigation of Australia. Author Joe Glickman intertwines the story of a dangerous and difficult year-long adventure with an unflinching look at The Woman in Black, arguably the most accomplished and enigmatic kayaker on the planet." --Sea Kayaker's Magazine's "Fearless is a page-turner, benefiting from gripping language and a conversational tone in the style of contemporary adventure-lit classics like Jon Krakauer (Into Thin Air, Into the Wild) and Susan Casey (The Devil's Teeth, The Wave)." --Canoe and Kayak "For paddlers and non-paddlers alike, the book is by all means an exciting read, marked both by Hoffmeister's tenacity as well as Glickman's for following through with the project and its somewhat stubborn star. Throughout the book, you can feel both Glickman's frustration with Hoffmeister's hubris, but also his admiration for her accomplishing one of the hardest feats imaginable in paddling." --Paddling Life's "Fearless is a tribute to the indomitable spirit of Freya Hoffmeister as she battled to become the first woman to circumnavigate Australia alone in a sea kayak. Ms. Hoffmeister's accomplishment will endure and inspire not only because of the miles she paddled or her speed on the water, but because she refused to believe it couldn't be done." -- Warren Richey, author of Without a Paddle's "I'm intrigued by people who do things the rest of us think are impossible. Fearless is just such an adventure, with the added twist that the intrepid explorer is a brash and beautiful woman who has a unique view of life. Author Joe Glickman's crisp writing puts us in the kayak with this unusual heroine on her incredibly dangerous journey. Hang on!" --Michael Tougias, author of Fatal Forecast, Overboard!, and Ten Hours Until Dawn.

Fearless is the story of Freya Hoffmeister, a forty-six-year-old former skydiver, gymnast, marksman, and Miss Germany contestant, who left her twelve-year-old son behind to paddle alone and unsupported around Australia's • a year-long adventure that virtually every expert guaranteed would get her killed. She was determined not only to survive the 9,420-mile trip through huge, shark-infested seas, but to do it faster than the only other paddler to have completed the circuit, twenty-seven years earlier. Journalist and expert kayaker Joe Glickman follows Freya's 332-day voyage, including the daring 350-mile open-ocean crossing that shaved three weeks off her trip. In the end, he says, "Her vanity and pigheadedness paled next to her nearly superhuman ability to master fear and persevere."

I had been excitedly waiting for the release of the book about Freya Hoffmeister's epic sea kayak paddle around Australia, and when I received the book, I devoured it faster than a Great

White goes through a breakfast of Amity Island tourists. It's a spectacular read! There are two main aspects to the book, both of which I found fascinating and well explored by the author: The first - and obvious - aspect is the account of the expedition itself. The author, Glickman, renders the enormous challenges and portrays Freya's hair raising actions and life-or-death decisions with an acuity that is the result of his own impressive ocean kayaking experiences. He has participated in a half dozen ocean kayaking world championships, as well as performed long distance kayaking expeditions. In addition, he has talked extensively to everyone who attempted or completed the trip around Australia and is alive to talk about it. But the other, equally fascinating aspect, is the psyche of Freya Hoffmeister, the woman whose feats are without equal among current expedition kayakers, male or female. With men's domination over the kayaking world as absolute as King Louis XIV's reign over 17th century France, Freya's revolutionary feats of skill and endurance, combined with her cockiness, apparently made some male kayakers feel like Marie Antoinette on her way to the Guillotine, and they were not quiet about it. One of the most enjoyable aspects of the book is how you can identify with Freya and hope that she proves her male detractors wrong. She is unbelievably self-possessed and confident, yet equally skilled, competent and determined. Hoffmeister is intent on breaking the record for the fastest circumnavigation of the continent and this goal drives many of her vital decisions, like the dangerous choice of a fast and tippy kayak and the 380 mile unsupported solo crossing of the Gulf of Carpentaria that most experts considered a recipe for suicide as reliable as cyanide cupcakes. The author does a spectacular job of hitting the reader with superlatives and metaphors. Especially when gearing up to describe some of Hoffmeister's more incredible feats, I felt as dizzy as a Bantamweight practicing the rope-a-dope with Mike Tyson. I highly recommend this book. It's a must read if you are a kayaker, and if you're not, it still is. The only issues I had were the fact that it's not available for the Kindle and that I didn't realize there were maps of the trip in the back of the book until I finished it. I could have saved myself plenty of clicks on Google maps if I had figured that out earlier.

If you are looking to read about a woman's spiritual transformation as she journeys solo around a continent nearly 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 and objective 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 written by Joe Glickman, and from occasionally reading her blog entries. Because I found the blog almost painful and frequently annoying to read due to her flat and dull writing style, overabundance of emoticons,

and self-adulation, 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 visuals that had me realizing the significance of Freya's trek and the absurd mental strength needed to persevere day after day...Alone. (The chapter on the Zuytdorp Cliffs was most striking and my favorite). The recollections of the interactions between Freya and Oscar Chalupsky as well as others, and the author's own personal experiences such as his encounter with the blue bottles, were darn amusing. Do not doubt: Joe Glickman is a funny man. As the book progressed, I found myself feeling sympathetic towards Freya, even sorry for her, as I sensed loneliness and a desperate need for attention contradicted by a desire for privacy. I'm not convinced she is fearless. (As a matter of fact, in one chapter, she admits to being afraid.) However, I am convinced that what kept her going is her refusal to give into fear (much less admit it), 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 its 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 Glickman's wit and insight. (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..or maybe I just didn't want it to end.)

Great read about a very impressive woman. Not quite what I was expecting -- I was expecting it to be more about what she saw and the hardships she faced. However, she is the kind of woman who truly is fearless and does not really recognize hardships or danger. So where most similar books would at least address 20' seas, she doesn't even feel the need to mention them (but the author does mention them on her behalf). So it wasn't quite my style as I was hoping to be able to learn from some of the good and bad things that happened in the book, but that was not possible given the writing style. Good overall though.

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