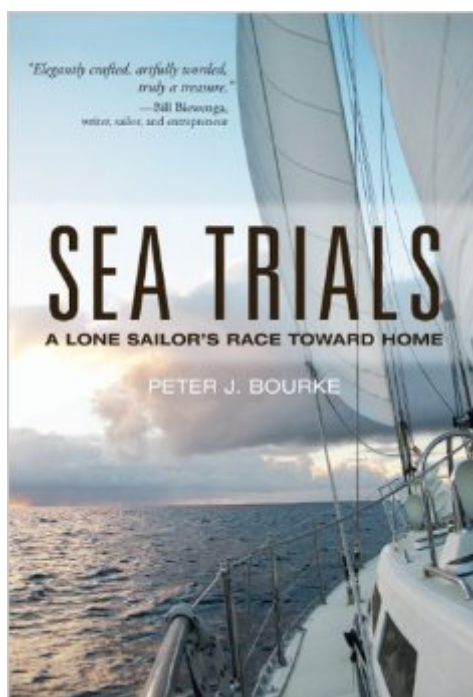


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Sea Trials: A Lone Sailor's Race Toward Home



Synopsis

"In all, beautifully written and wonderfully inspiring."--The Wall Street Journal "Crossing the Atlantic under sail, alone, is a nexus of sorts for all sailors, a dream and an adventure that seems obtainable within the framework of life and work, and it's in this context that *Sea Trials* provides inspiration to all of us. Bourke's route across the ocean, as a participant in the 2009 OSTAR, is circuitous at best as he battles headwinds and mechanical snafus, but he keeps it in perspective and never loses his sense of humor and awe. Sure he wants to do well in the race, but getting to the starting line is already a victory, and finishing, when others would have retired, seems in character. Bourke deftly weaves his life story into the narrative, from the tragic death of his wife that leaves him an angry single parent, to postponing his dreams until his kids are settled, to his rather bumbling attempts to become a sailor. It takes a good writer to make this work within the framework of a voyage, and Bourke is a very good writer. . . . I was in the cockpit with him as he spent long hours at the helm, attuned to the sea and alone with his thoughts. He doesn't whine but he's not a hero either, just a sailor dealing with his boat, the Atlantic, and life, and he relishes it all. This is a brilliant book." -- John Kretschmer, author, *Sailing a Serious Ocean* and *At the Mercy of the Sea*

Peter Bourke first heard the siren call of the sea as a young boy when he crossed the Atlantic from England with his family. Decades later, three years after his wife's sudden death, he bought a boat--even though he did not yet know how to sail. His friends thought he was crazy; but for Bourke, buying his first sailboat was a lifeline, a glimmer of hope in a world turned upside down. Learning to juggle single parenting, a career in finance, and a growing urge to set sail was akin to walking a tightrope of sanity. Small voyage by small voyage he gained his sea legs, balancing the risks of singlehanded sailing while raising children, holding his sailing dream lightly until his children had safely transited out of high school. Bourke entered the Oldest Singlehanded Trans-Atlantic Race (OSTAR) at age 57. *Sea Trials* is the humble account of those 40 days of racing on his 44-foot sailboat *Rubicon*. As he shares his highs and lows at sea, he also weaves his intimate story of grief and rediscovery into the narrative: pain and joy, seasickness, fear, and his boundless gratitude. You are along for Bourke's racing adventure--the good, the bad, and the very unpredictable. Gear failure and reefing sails on a pitching deck in the double dark of the mid-Atlantic night intermix with wet twilights of Da Nang, Vietnam, where artillery shells pierce the sky; we also travel with Bourke down the pastoral streets of his suburban hometown toward a neighbor's house, wondering how he will find the words and courage to tell his daughter and son they have lost their mother. Bourke's offshore passage is a passage home, to the core of his humanity and humility--and as Bourke and *Rubicon* cross the finish line in Newport, Rhode Island, the world had been simultaneously opened wide and

brought closer. To dream and to sail the dream is to journey off and come home again, changed. And undoubtedly you will be inspired to take a big--but satisfying--risk of your own to fulfill your lifelong dream, whether it's on the big blue or dry land. "Life and circumstance had left me working flat out trying to maintain my professional position, be a good father, and keep everything together. At the late-night end of many days, I found myself mumbling: 'I can't keep doing this, this is killing me, I'm dying.' It wasn't a question of wanting out of the parenting role, or the business role, but I needed a third ball for balance . . ." "To be at sea is to be in a different world, and to live alone for a time in this alien place can yield a spiritual calm. . . . In such a calm, order and perspective can enter your thoughts. Life can be harsh at sea, but it is never sordid. The simple necessities of food, drink, and sleep are received with gratitude, and always there is the sea's reminder that you are a speck of dust in the cosmos. The rush of thoughts slows, and order replaces the chaos as you consider your journey." -- From the book SEA TRIALS is a poignant account of one man's pursuit of a dream that will inspire you to tackle challenging endeavors as well as squarely face life's emotional challenges, finding the courage to live a fully engaged, authentic life.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

Sea Trials, the gripping story of a solo race across the Atlantic, is not just a book for sailors. As someone who can't distinguish starboard from Starbucks, I found it a compelling read. (I finished it in a single afternoon.) Alone at sea, the author reflects on love and loss, the challenges of being a single parent, service in Vietnam, and emigration from Britain to America as a child--all leavened with a distinctive wit and self-deprecating humor. More than sailing, this is a book about trying to find

the right balance between courage, common sense and compassion, whether on the high seas or back on land. In *Sea Trials* hi-tech navigation equipment may fail, but old-fashioned honor, pluck and perseverance don't. The author, bedeviled by equipment failures and a few rookie mistakes, may not have won this race. But the reader comes away with a sense of having shared victory in a more important race.

Cast off on a voyage of discovery with one of America's most talented sailors. I've sailed offshore with Peter Bourke and he tops my short-list as one of the best skippers around. In "*Sea Trials*" he shares how he was able to overcome great personal loss to fulfill his dream of sailing across the Atlantic. An excellent read from cover-to-cover. Add this book to your sailing library today!

This book has truly become one of my all time favorite books. Such a gripping story so artfully told, and even more artfully the weaving of high adventure with the deeper reflections on our significant adult passages. So engaging and well written - congrats to the author - a gifted writer, engaging storyteller and explorer of the depths of life's passages.

This book is wonderful. The author takes you on a sailboat race across the atlantic while reflecting on his life. The descriptions of being alone at sea are alluring and the recollections of past and current life situations come from the heart. I couldn't put the book down.

I picked this book because I'm interested in learning more about sailing, sailing bigger boats, and thinking, dreaming, contemplating buying a boat and starting my own adventures. This one struck me as a story I might enjoy and I did. The author describes his struggles throughout the race with equipment failures and bad weather, which makes me think twice about casting off. The story is uplifting as the author makes repairs, corrects course and rigs a temporary driving mechanism to keep his boat on course - even if only long enough for him to take quick nap. I got tired just thinking about all the work required in solo sailing. But, the canon shot and warm reception from family and friends as he crosses the finish line would inspire anyone to considering entering the race. Learned a great deal and felt like I was riding along in the boat and a part of this adventure.

It seems a shame to read this book in the summer. It really should be enjoyed in deep winter with snow falling beside a fire with a tot of rum. It's another great sailing book to join the many others on my bookshelf that carry me through the cold months until I can get back out on the water with

Spring. The book is well written and in a style that I found enjoyable. I purchased it in a Kindle edition for my iPad, but will probably buy a used hardcover so I can physically take it down from the shelves to read again when the weather turns cold.

As I read *Sea Trials*, I was captivated by the woven stories of Captain Bourke's life and solo race across the Atlantic. His reflections are a meditation on being alone on the ocean and being in the fullness of life on shore. I loved his thoughtfulness and his humor! I also learned a bit about sailing and found myself dreaming at night that I was on a sailboat at sea. This is a book that is a joy to read. I hated to have it end.

Certainly an interesting read if you have an curiosity about blue water sailing. I'm always glad there are people that do this stuff and those who write about it. It allows us to share the experience 2nd or 3rd hand without subjecting ourselves to the risks. It's one of those things I've thought about doing, but am now convinced to pass on after exploring the realities involved.

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