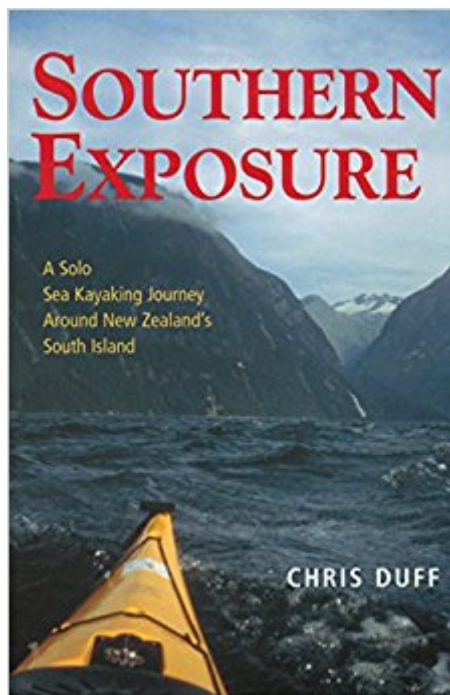




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Southern Exposure: A Solo Sea Kayaking Journey Around New Zealand's South Island



Synopsis

In this epic tale of sea-kayaking adventure, award-winning author Chris Duff places readers in the cockpit of his 18-foot kayak and lets them experience the full power and beauty of the South Pacific Ocean and the wild energy of the Tasman Sea as it thunders onto New Zealand's uninhabited west coast. Not just an account of human physical endurance and determination to attempt what had only been accomplished once before, this exquisitely written narrative reveals the philosophical and psychological life of a man who has chosen the sea as the master to sit before and to learn from. The intense and often terrifying sea journey is balanced by serendipitous meetings along the way with friendly New Zealanders and with the diverse wildlife of this tiny and remote island country. Southern Exposure is a force of writing that will captivate the armchair adventurer as well as the seasoned ocean traveler.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

"Chris takes us on an intimate journey He explores not only some of the most challenging coastline in the world, but also the inner joys and torment of the long distance solo paddler . . . a beautifully written and compelling read."--John Dowd, author of Sea Kayaking: A Manual for Long-Distance Touring
"Southern Exposure is perfect for armchair travelers, kayak enthusiasts or anyone interested in New Zealand." -- Chicago Tribune (March 2003)

Experience the full power and beauty of the wild seas off the largely uninhabited coast of New Zealand's South Island. Southern Exposure is the firsthand account of how Chris Duff accomplished

what only one man had done before. Not just a tale of physical endurance and determination, this epic sea kayaking adventure reveals the philosophical and psychological life of a man who has chosen the sea as his spiritual master. Southern Exposure's stunning photos and vivid descriptions of Duff's setbacks and triumphs will captivate the armchair adventurer as well as the seasoned ocean traveler.

There are so many wonderful moments in this book - the feeling of being surrounded by massive power everywhere, the stories of the fishermen in New Zealand, and the surmounting of life threatening obstacles. Reading the Duff's description of Fiordland National Park took me back to this wonderful place as few could. But most of all, Duff presents an epic human journey full of wonder and the power of man. Yet at the same time, Duff sees the sea and knows how small man really is. There is also a passage or two where Duff speaks about the meaning of his life - how he wants to look back and say that he took advantage of his short time on earth. After reading Southern Exposure, there is no doubt he did. On the down side, the book's maps could be better. The rudimentary maps in the book have several instances where Duff capsizes but the reader never learns about these instances save for one. I want to know! How did he get back in the boat!? Was he on the ocean?! Also, vast parts of the journey are left off and I want to know more. Like what happened in Christchurch? Tell me more about Fiordland.

Loved this book, I wish Chris had made many more trips of this type (and the Ireland circumnavigation) and written books on all of them. I lived it while reading it, vicariously of course, but still so enjoyable. Well written, Chris's personality and likability just add to the story that is so well told.

This is the second Chris Duff book I've read. Can't put it down. Chris makes you feel like you're right there with him in his kayak. Great read.

one of the best authors ever.

breath taking adventure!

Unfortunately, I do not quite share the enthusiasm expressed by the other reviewers. Although Duff is an excellent descriptive writer, the numerous descriptions and philosophical musings in this book

tend to go on and on needlessly; I do not need to read three pages about what it was like to find two apples in the ocean and eat them, or read description after description of the joys and epiphanies one experiences while paddling in a remote area. A little of that goes a long way. I guess the upshot is that I was looking for an "Into Thin Air"-type battle against the odds, keep looking. Although the journey required considerable paddling skills and Duff faced a few close calls, overall the book records little actual adversity aside from large waves and days of waiting out storms -- often in homes of hospitable New Zealanders rather than on his own. I also agree with other reviewers that the photos are mediocre and certainly are not "stunning," as the back of the book claims.

A couple of years ago I saw Chris Duff speak at Canoecopia - a worldwide paddling expo held in Madison WI. One of his talks was about his solo circumnavigation of New Zealand's south island - the same topic as this book. I, and I think the rest of the audience, was mesmerized as he told his tale. Even though he probably has talked about his trip many times it felt as if he was reliving it for the first time. His excitement was contagious. The audience could almost feel the ocean swells and smell the salty air. Chris Duff is as good of a writer as he is a public speaker. He vividly describes the scenery of his voyage, the people he encounters and his own personal thoughts. While, his adventures are WAY beyond my personal abilities I could actually feel what it would be like in his shoes (or in this case fast drying sandals) due to his excellent writing ability.

By Bill Marsano. Chris Duff's photos, which are bundled together and whacked a little perfunctorily into the middle of this book, limp under the heading of 'snaps.' Duff belongs to the old school of kayakin' shutterbugs: compose any old how, so long as the bow of the boat is in the frame; shoot in any old light; and shoot, sometimes, any old subject. There's a darn nice snap of a Hooker seal here but what I really wanted was more pix of the damage (and later repairs) to his boat from the surf landing that nearly killed him. I'm just saying. (And the maps are even worse--clear, but seldom helpful.) Never mind: This is a book of writing. Duff seems to have had no specific reason to try a 1700-mile circumnavigation of New Zealand's South Island (it's not even a first) but he is no virgin. He's looped the British Isles and then Ireland; he's paddled 8000 miles along the east coast of Canada and the U.S.; even now he may be paddling round Iceland. He, too, gets into a little gauzy mysticism about the Eternal Why and his place in the universe, but most of the time he's a little too busy for that stuff. South Island's coast is a place that goes from bad to worse, and it's instructive to

listen in as Duff relates his tactics and strategies for dealing with bad weather and dangerous, even life-threatening situations: You can learn from this stuff as well as be staggered by it. And just for lagniappe there are those occasional moments of perfect weather and following seas that surf him along in solitary joy. These usually come along just after the notoriously perverse Tasman Sea has, as they say south of here, "prit-near" beaten him to a pulp. A particular pleasure of this book is the human aspect. Despite the solitary aspect of his circumnavigations, Duff is a sociable man who enjoys and appreciates the people he meets--and appears to bring out the best in them. Add that to the fact that Kiwis are notably kind and generous anyway and you are not surprised that Duff makes friends everywhere he goes and they bend over backwards to help him in every way they can. Judging from the indications in the text, it's clear that Duff prepared extremely well for this voyage, and readers should pay close attention as they go along, because--probably because this stuff is bred into his bones by now--Duff spends very little time discussing equipment at the end. In fact, he's done with the subject in a single page. There's one incident in this book that commands my admiration and will yours. I don't want to give anything away but at one point Duff receives some help of a rather expensive kind, and his response is to pull out his credit card. "No worries, mate," he's told, officialdom is budgeted for that. All very well, but Duff insists on paying his own way. He is well aware of the fact that a well-behaved guest doesn't batten on his hosts.--Bill Marsano is an award-winning editor and writer whose own kayaking voyages fill only pages, not books.

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