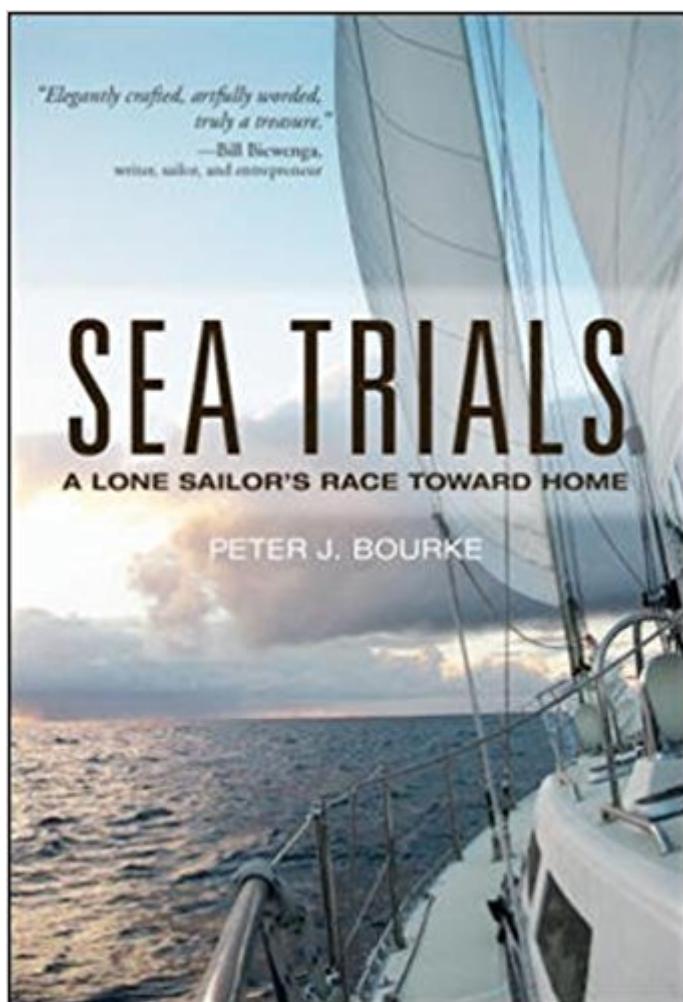


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# Sea Trials: A Lone Sailor's Race Toward Home (International Marine-RMP)



## 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 singlehanding 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**

Series: International Marine-RMP

Hardcover: 240 pages

Publisher: International Marine/Ragged Mountain Press; 1 edition (June 5, 2014)

Language: English

ISBN-10: 0071821929

ISBN-13: 978-0071821926

Product Dimensions: 5.8 x 1 x 8.7 inches

Shipping Weight: 14.4 ounces (View shipping rates and policies)

Average Customer Review: 4.2 out of 5 stars 31 customer reviews

Best Sellers Rank: #1,341,963 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) #87 in Books > Sports & Outdoors > Outdoor Recreation > Sailing > Excursion Guides #690 in Books > Sports & Outdoors > Miscellaneous > Essays #1203 in Books > Sports & Outdoors > Outdoor Recreation > Boating

## **Customer Reviews**

"In all, beautifully written and wonderfully inspiring." The Wall Street Journal 20140622

Following three years in the Marine Corps, Peter J. Bourke went to college on the GI Bill and discovered economics. This is his first book.

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.

First, the bad. I wouldn't call the story "gripping". Don't expect any seriously dramatic moments. The Kindle price as I write this is \$13.99, as in, too much. This is a first time author who's penned a well written account of a sail across the Atlantic, but this isn't best-seller material here. He calls it a race, but it's not the kind of race where you're neck and neck with other boats. It's a race mainly against the elements, himself, and a few unexpected equipment malfunctions, though none of these adversarial elements Peter encounters are truly of an overly serious nature. This writing is not literature, and to some extent, approaches blog-hood. Peter as well mixes in a good deal of self-thought - his thoughts about his marriage, relationships, upbringing, and career. But again, the man in this book brings to the table nothing out of the ordinary, except for the fact that a 58 year old former investment banker was lucky enough to get out of the market (and his career) just before the Great Recession, and use the time and money made available to dedicate himself to learning to sail, buying a capable boat, and sailing across the Atlantic. Yes, that is a story worth hearing about, and perhaps the main reason why this book has a market. But given that he's new at the writing game (it shows), and given that the book, overall, lacks gravitas, I'm not seeing the \$13.99 price tag. (Perhaps \$4.99 to \$6.99). Now, the good. The quotes he included at the beginning of each chapter, are inspiring and wonderful. The description of the little things that can go wrong on a boat during a trans-Atlantic cruise are great lessons-learned for all sailors. And occasionally, Peter offers a bit of wisdom himself on playing the life well lived. He also takes the time to explain in layman's language sailing terms and concepts which would otherwise likely be opaque to non-sailing readers. All that said, a part of me suspects that the Wall Street Journal endorsement somehow landed on the jacket due to his contacts as an investment banker, but that's just a suspicion, and I have no hard facts whatsoever to prove that. In sum, halve the price of this book, and I'd say it belongs on any sailor's

bookshelf. It's worth reading to show that a man who retires in his late 50s of good health can learn to sail and adventure across the Atlantic in one of the great ocean crossing races.

Sea Trials equates sailing the Rubicon with life, Peter's life. It's a clever, well-written biography and interesting read for a novice sailor, like me, who has sailed in big oceans and has a slight understanding about this blue water challenge. Each chapter is one day of a solo North Atlantic passage in a sailing race, a short story that correlates to Peter's personal life, and the lessons he learned in both areas. The stories evolve as a succession of sailing calamities where Peter must improvise solutions to keep the boat moving towards its destination. When Peter is not sailing, he is scouring the boat for daily inspiration, specifically, in the form of music and food. All the while, others in the race are not so lucky. In the end, the reader will admire Peters' tenacity, grace, humor and resiliency under pressure.

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.

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.

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.

Good story, well told. Anyone with interest in sailing, boating, or even wilderness trekking would enjoy this book. Peter not only tells the day by day tale of his solo journey, but also brings forward a number of lessons for life.

First two-thirds was a great read of author's sail, and very poignant recollections from his life. The last third lost the drive of the earlier portions, and seemed to be in a hurry to wrap up and end the story. Would still recommend for the first sections though.

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