



Godforsaken Sea: The True Story of a Race Through the World's Most Dangerous Waters

Derek Lundy

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"The best book ever written about the terrifying business of single-handed sailing--. Lundy tells a harrowing tale, as tight and gripping as **The Perfect Storm** or **Into Thin Air**."--*San Francisco Chronicle*

A chilling account of the world's most dangerous sailing race, the Vendée Globe, **Godforsaken Sea** is at once a hair-raising adventure story, a graceful evocation of the sailing life, and a thoughtful meditation on danger and those who seek it.

This is the story of the 1996-1997 Vendée Globe, a solo sailing race that binds its competitors to just a few, cruelly simple rules: around the world from France by way of Antarctica, no help, no stopping, one boat, one sailor. The majority of the race takes place in the Southern Ocean, where icebergs and gale-force winds are a constant threat, and the waves build to almost unimaginable heights. As author Derek Lundy puts it: "try to visualize a never-ending series of five- or six-story buildings moving toward you at about forty miles an hour."

The experiences of the racers reveal the spirit of the men and women who push themselves to the limits of human endeavor--even if it means never returning home. You'll meet the gallant Brit who beats miles back through the worst seas to save a fellow racer, the sailing veteran who calmly smokes cigarette after cigarette as his boat capsizes, and the Canadian who, hours before he disappears forever, dispatches this message: "If you drag things out too long here, you're sure to come to grief."

Derek Lundy elevates the story of one race into an appreciation of those thrill-seekers who embody the most heroic and eccentric aspects of the human condition.

Godforsaken Sea: The True Story of a Race Through the World's Most Dangerous Waters Details

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From Reader Review Godforsaken Sea: The True Story of a Race Through the World's Most Dangerous Waters for online ebook

Christopher Fry says

I'm very interested in sailing, so I need to qualify my 5-star rating. Derek, who also sails has described something at the heart of human experience.

Christopher Winn says

Detailed and through book on the 1996-1997 Vendee Globe race that covers not only much of the play by play action, but the visceral feel of the ocean and the challenges and decisions faced by the racers.

Numidica says

The Southern Ocean does not appear on any map of the world, but it is well known to serious sailors as the awe-and-fear-inspiring area south of 40 degrees south latitude. The ferocity of the winds, waves and storms there is unparalleled, yet this is the part of the world where sailors in the great round-the-world races must go. There are parts of the Southern Ocean that are so remote from Australia and Chile that practically speaking rescue is impossible if something goes wrong. As Derek Lundy says, you might as well be on the Moon. In writing this review, I thought about whether this book would appeal to non-sailors; I am a sailor, and I can tell you this book gripped me, hard, but I concluded that in the same way that Jon Krakauer's *Into Thin Air* held me rapt, even though I am not a mountain climber, *Godforsaken Sea* could appeal to those who have never set foot on a boat.

The author begins with a description of his own experience as a cruising sailor in a "yachtsman's gale", and I share that history – I once sailed for 18 hours in Force 8 winds with gusts to Force 9, and there was nothing about it that I could describe as fun (though it made a good story later). Fyi, Force 8 / 9 translates to winds in the high 30's (knots) with gusts to low 40's, or in mph, 40 to 50mph. The competitors in the Vendee Globe Race, which is the book's subject, regularly sailed in winds above 60 knots, and sometimes sailed in hurricane force winds. To say that the skill needed to do that without dying is above the level of most mortals doesn't quite cover it. For those who do know something about sailing, here's a good way to illustrate what these magicians do (paraphrasing the book): these guys can be sailing downwind with 35 knot winds, flying a spinnaker and mainsail, riding the crests of 25 foot breaking waves, and then do a controlled gybe, at night, singlehanded. The level of skill and nerve required to do what these men and women do for weeks and months in the Southern Ocean is in a class of it's own.

The story of Pete Goss's upwind beat for 150 miles to try to save the life of Raphael Dinelli is inspiring and amazing. It is a highlight of the book, told with skill and grace by Derek Lundy. It always makes my heart rise when I hear these sorts of stories, wherein one sailor puts his or her life at stake to obey the unwritten law of the sea: that those capable of it must render aid to other mariners in distress. If you are around real sailors for a while, one finds this generosity of spirit to be among the very best things about being in their company. It is the camaraderie of those who know, truly, there but for the grace of the sea gods go I. After the story of Goss' rescue got out the French press uniformly referred to him without irony as l'heroe Pete

Goss.

Certainly I loved this book because I appreciate the wonders of skill these people performed on the sea, but also because, like them, I'm a bit of an adrenaline junkie, so I get these people, at least a little. One of the woman competitors tells the story of being on deck in 50 knot winds when her boat was knocked down by a wave, and she had two thoughts in immediate succession: she wondered at the beauty of the blue and turquoise ocean colors (one who has seen the particular blue of ocean where it is thousands of feet deep knows what she means), and then thought, "Well it's sad to die at only 34 years old". But then her boat slowly righted itself and she was saved. It is telling, that while all the sailors were heartily glad to round Cape Horn and head north of 40 degrees again, almost every one of them said the same thing months later: "I want to go back". I understand that. Ocean sailing is one of the few remaining activities where one is truly free of the minutiae and bureaucracy of modern life, where one is totally responsible for the little world you occupy - your boat. Life can be hard, but choices are clear.

I liked how Derek Lundy worked into the book's chapter names and headings quotes from famous chroniclers of the sea, and how he made frequent reference to the earlier sailors like Moitessier and Knox-Johnston, who did this same route in the Golden Globe Race of 1968. This book is a good companion to *A Voyage for Madmen*, by the way, but read *Voyage for Madmen* first. And if you are into this kind of thing, do yourself a favor and read Moitessier's *The Long Way*. I liked how the book seemed to become better and more compelling the further I got into it. Lundy as a writer is not Jon Krakauer, but he tells a compelling story with understanding and passion.

Highly recommended.

Erick says

Very good and answers a lot of questions for the non-sailor.

Jim says

I am fascinated by people who desire living on the edge, and find experiencing their travails vicariously through books is the best for me, cause you wouldn't get me coming near the top of Everest or, in this case, sailing solo on a four-month voyage around Antarctica and back to France. Yep, these folks are crazy. This book probably would have made a nice long article, and there were parts I just slipped through quickly, but it was still informative and thrilling. Just the thought of sleeping in a tinderbox in raging seas with icebergs and flotsam about all alone sends chills down my spine, and in fact, many of the competitors in this race got little downtime. The Vendee race is the ultimate in pushing the nautical envelope. Nevertheless, there were a lot of fortunate sailors in these pages. And despite their harrowing experiences, they all seem to want to immediately get back into the Southern waters. More power to them.

My biggest gripe with this book is that there were way too many typos, possibly gained through the LP process. It is almost as if they scanned the pages and went with what they got. Please, hire some copy editors.

Lynn says

Great adventure

Brought the world of solo global sailing into detailed examination. Like the great adventure books, this tale is filled with drama, pathos, great jubilation, triumph over adversity, and heroism, all the more satisfying because it is all true. I enjoyed it very much and would recommend it highly.

Linda says

Enjoyed it! Wonderful way to adventure vicariously, but also addresses the question of whether adventures as extreme/dangerous as these should take place at all.

Unusual with books on sailing, he explained nautical nomenclature where you ran into it - you didn't have to constantly reference to another section of the book. As a non-sailor, I truly appreciate this. And the explaining was often used as part of the stories, and therefore interesting.

Jessica says

Another gripping account of sailing, this time of the Vendée Globe - a single-handed, non-stop, around-the-world race, which must count as one of the most audacious sporting events ever. The descriptions of the Southern Ocean are terrifying, and the stories of the participants in this particular race (1996-7) are fascinating and sometimes bizarre. I devoured the book over the course of some blustery nights on the coast of Ireland and enjoyed every minute of it.

Dan says

I could have done with less technical detail and more story, but a solid effort nonetheless.

Carolyn (in SC) C234D says

I was really fascinated by this book. I had no past knowledge of or particular interest in ocean sailing, but this story just mesmerized me, and I still feel that way many years later. What I noted at the time: Very interesting story about the 1996-97 Vendee Globe, a single-handed sailboat race from France to the perilous Southern Ocean, around Antarctica and back to France. It generally lasts 3.5+ months! Just fascinating, and requires true courage. It made me think of Into Thin Air, another favorite about people who need extremes to be happy.

Portia Leigh says

Incredible. High tension pressure, the unpredictability of mother nature, and the inspiring men and women who set out as single-handed sailors in one of the toughest races in history.

Emilio says

Mais um livro de aventuras !!!

Jana says

review to follow. at a petrol station in the middle of nowhere. loved this though

Review: This was one of those books where when I started it I was already sad knowing I'd have to finish. I love stories about the sea, and I am obsessed with stories about real-life adventure and survival. This delivered in spades, and long-distance sailing is now up there with mountaineering and polar exploration in supplying me with heroes to worship.

Godforsaken Sea is about the Vendee Globe, a single-handed race which begins and ends in France but which, for the most part, takes place in the Southern Ocean surrounding Antarctica. Aside from being the most dangerous ocean in the world, it is the most remote, and in places the racers were thousands of miles from the nearest inhabited spot. Waves dozens and dozens of feet high, storms with hurricane-strength winds and icebergs appearing out of nowhere, and these people go there in tiny little fiberglass boats, alone. Just blows my mind.

This book is about sailing, and I definitely learnt a lot of new stuff, including a few references to other famous books on the topic. But it's mainly about the people who undertake this insane journey, and what motivates them and makes them different. For the most part they are incredibly disciplined, self-sufficient and calm, but my favourite parts were the unavoidable humanity--the woman who took a tiny garden along so she could have fresh greens, the French sailors who (despite ruthless weight-saving measures) all took a few bottles of wine along, the English sailor making constant cups of tea.

There is a reason why I love these kinds of stories, and many of the racers in this book mention how they experienced this themselves: they went to a place where control was taken from them, where their decisions had only as much influence as the sea allowed, and where their lives were dwarfed and made utterly insignificant by the devastating, raw force of nature. On her return, one of the women said that she found she was calmer, less temperamental than before, because 'nothing is that important'. We are so surrounded by a world of our own making that small things can begin to matter so much, and we forget that it can all be taken away in an instant. Just calm down.

I'll definitely be reading a lot more in this topic. Can't wait.

Louis says

This is an account of the 1996 Vendee Globe sailing race from the Bay of Biscay, down into the Southern Seas, around Antarctica and back past Cape Horn. The race is single handed and the sailor is disqualified if he/she enters any harbour along the way. It is an epic journey, only 6 boats out of 16 entered finished, one sailor was never seen again. I can recommend the book, the intricacies of sailing in the massive oceans of the far southern seas, and the tests of courage and endurance are well described.

Bob says

Sail alone, in a sailboat, from Europe, around Antarctica, and back. What could possibly go wrong? This has to be one of the most crazy things anyone has ever come up with.
