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The Long Way is Bernard Moitessier's own incredible story of his participation in the first Golden Globe Race, a solo, non-stop circumnavigation rounding the three great Capes of Good Hope, Leeuwin, and the Horn. For seven months, the veteran seafarer battled storms, doldrums, gear-failures, knock-downs, as well as overwhelming fatigue and loneliness. Then, nearing the finish, Moitessier pulled out of the race and sailed on for another three months before ending his 37,455-mile journey in Tahiti. Not once had he touched land.

The Long Way Details

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Author : Bernard Moitessier

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Morgan McBride says

I was excited to read this, having learned about Moitessier a few months earlier and developing more of an interest as I learned about him.

As a non-sailor, but a person with an interest in the cruising lifestyle as well as a respect for Moitessier's decision to continue sailing on after rounding the horn, this book did not disappoint.

A little sailing knowledge helps understand Moitessier's activities, especially in the beginning, where the book is more technically-focused. I took about an hour to learn some basic sailing theory and terminology and could follow along alright.

The book picked up for me around Moitessier's entrance into the Indian Ocean. Here he is at his peak in blending the day-to-day technical aspects of sailing with ruminations on his thinking and role in the world.

From there through to entering the Atlantic, the book is at its best. As others have mentioned, the last portion of the book gets a little metaphysically heavy; I got the feeling that Moitessier didn't really know how to end his story and definitively state some final concrete conclusion he came to on his trip. However, the Steinbeck references at the end of the book sealed the deal for me, a huge Steinbeck and East of Eden fan.

The appendix, while I'm sure is now quite outdated, was also worth reading. It provided some great insights into life at sea as well as details about the last part of the trip, which Moitessier sort of glosses over in the actual text of the book.

Overall, definitely worth reading if my situation resembles yours at all.

Ray says

The last few chapters made the entire book for me. The world could use a few more barefoot, hippie, vagabond French poets like Moitessier.

Lysergius says

As an armchair sailor I love to read books about the sea. There is something about the challenge of the sea and sailing, the maintenance of the boat and the navigation that intrigues me.

This account of Moitessier's is absolutely fascinating. Packed with good tips about how to survive months at sea, it occasionally wanders off into poetry and mysticism, but is well worth reading.

Premal Vora says

In 1968, the Sunday Times of the UK held the first (and only) Golden Globe race: sailors had to single-handedly circumnavigate the globe in a sailboat race with the sailboat staying within certain specifications. The race began and ended in Plymouth, UK. No fancy navigational aids were allowed (there was no GPS then in any case), no radio, nothing. To mark the 50th anniversary of that race, another will be held beginning in the summer of 2018. This is an appropriate time to read or revisit Bernard Moitessier's book, *The Long Way*, describing his own experience in that race.

Moitessier was already an experienced sailor and well known in the sailing world and had friends who were also participating in the race. Moitessier had a 39' steel ketch, *Joshua*, named after Joshua Slocum who was the world's first solo circumnavigator. I believe *Joshua* was 10 years old when Moitessier started from Plymouth on August 22, 1968. We are privy to all that goes through the solo sailor's mind and all that happens to his boat on this voyage. Moitessier went around the Cape of Good Hope (South Africa) in October 1968, crossed Cape Leeuwin (Australia) in early December 1968 and Cape Horn (Chile) in February 1969. In March 1969 he reached a point off the south-western coast of Africa where he had previously been. During this time, he encountered numerous challenges including several gales and his boat being knocked down twice (the main mast hitting the water due to a large wave hitting the boat broadsides). However, he also encountered many beautiful sights on the open ocean: fish, birds, the stars, the moon, and just the water.

After crossing Cape Horn, and navigating much of the Atlantic Ocean to reach the point off the south western coast of Africa, Moitessier is mentally and physically exhausted. This is when things get a bit weird. For about 8 months, he has had virtually no contact with humans except for handing off a couple of messages to passing fishermen. We know right from the introductory chapter that he has a loving wife and children waiting for him back in Plymouth. The right thing for him to do would be to head north and make for the Ascension Islands, then onto Europe and Plymouth so he can complete the race and be reunited with his family. Here's a passage that describes his thoughts at that time: "Saint Helena is 1300 miles away. Just looking at the chart, I can feel all the gentleness of the trade wind in the cabin. It caresses me, so soft, so good. I look a bit further north: Ascension Island, 1700 miles, almost on the direct route. In that case, better make it Ascension. If I can work things out with the heavens to catch the trades without delay, I should make Ascension in two weeks at the outside, sleeping twenty hours a day if I feel like it. Two weeks! What a relief for all my loved ones! And for me! I feel good now that a decision has been taken that is reasonable for all concerned."

Then on the next page, "I have set course for the Pacific again...last night was too hard to take, I felt really sick at the thought of getting back to Europe, back to the snakepit." If you want to be present when someone sane turns insane read this part of the book. Particularly if you speak and read French because Moitessier being French himself has reproduced his original diary in French in this book. The English translation is good, but I'm assuming it can't beat the original.

Moitessier actually skipped Europe and rounded Cape of Good Hope again, Cape Leeuwin again and ended up in Tahiti! To (barely) understand what led him to do this, read this book. So, officially he never did finish the race. Only one person who started the race actually finished it and he has become a hero to all aspiring sailors (Robin Knox Johnson). Some of the others who started have their own stories of course, and one, Daniel Crowhurst, became mentally ill and committed suicide.

This is obviously a fascinating race and the 50th anniversary and the re-running of the race appears to be a promising and interesting event to look forward to. If you choose to follow the race as it unfolds in 2018, do read this book to get some context -- it will make your journey all the more richer.

This book gave me a lot of courage to try out things on my own for it isn't always easy to get others to

subscribe to your dreams. As a storybook, it's just mediocre because there isn't much high drama here of the type one expects in a novel. But for sailors...a must read!

Richard Kastelein says

My favourite boating book of all time. The man is a legend.

Alex says

Or the adventures of a totally free spirit, told in a simple and charming way. Moitessier was first in the race around the globe and chose not to land and reap the glory but rather keep on sailing.

Kitson says

In 1968 the London Sunday Times sponsored a circumnavigating the globe single handed sailing race. At that time, no one had sailed around the world alone without stopping. With the media attention there was even more of the romanticism always intertwined in *The Sea*.

The race, however, would come to expose all the real and terrible tragedy of "nature". Alone in that empty, mystical plain of ungovernable, unfathomable wild, one man would step off his boat's deck sinking forever into the oblivion. Moitessier, leading at the time, elected to turn his boat around and just keep going. Winning was really and truly not the point.

The second half of the twentieth century had no shortage of false mystics touting philosophies and lifestyles they knew nothing about. Moitessier was real and knew what the fuck he was talking about.

Chris says

Lost at sea.

This is a log book of a mind too long left alone. It's part madness, part sailing, and part rant. I wish I had read it when I was younger so the angst and despair could've been closer to me. It's a good book though, so I don't regret reading it.

The appendix reads like a different book and was a pure pleasure. The author takes us on a technical tour of the boat, the sails, the rigging, the weather in the 40s and so much more. This part is a necessary read for any would-be sailor or those who dream of the life.

Artnoose McMoose says

If you haven't yet read the book *A Voyage For Madmen* about the Sunday Time Golden Globe

circumnavigational race, you should read that first and then read this, an account by one of the participants. Bernard Moitessier was not just a participant in this incredible event, he was the lone participant who once he completed one single-handed loop around the three capes, decided to give Western Civilization the finger and keep on sailing, giving up all prizes and monies associated with officially winning the race (but securing a book deal, of course).

There are of course numerous technical passages about sailing, which are a bit overwhelming for the non-sailor. There was also sometimes a little thought in the back of my mind that with this trip, he essentially leaves his wife and kids, for good. "But all the world's children have become my children; it is so wonderful that I would like them to feel it the way I do." And who knows, maybe someday they eventually came to terms with it, but I can't imagine his wife used that rationale when explaining to the kids why their dad wasn't coming back. Oh, and the descriptions of jettisoning unnecessary goods to lighten the weight of the boat was sometimes a little weird to read--- jerrycans of chemicals, etc.

In general though, it was a moving narration of a man's extended trip through a natural environment. I enjoyed all the interactions with animals, and of course the sea.

"With a clumsy and premature gesture I risked breaking something very fragile. Wait a while longer, don't rush things, don't force things. Wait until the waves of friendship, made of invisible vibrations, reach their full maturity. You can spoil everything, trying to go faster than nature."

John Humber says

I came to this book after reading *A Voyage for Madmen*. I was just fascinated to learn more about someone who sails alone around the world, without touching land and when almost home decides "Nah. Let's just keep sailing".

The book doesn't disappoint but here is a man so obsessed he must have been impossible to live with. I have seen film of an interview with his wife and she says (I'm paraphrasing here) "That's Bernard. It's just the way he is and you have to accept that". Strikes me that she is just as remarkable a woman as he is a man.

Tim says

I really enjoyed the early parts of this book and the appendix which focus on his trip famous trip a time and a half around the world. There was a nice balance between the technical aspects of sailing and the psychological adventure of the long voyage.

However, he really lost me around the time he made his decision to keep going around Good Hope for a second time. He presents his decision as "how could I not" and "I know I have to keep going" but without any compelling internal or external reason. I found myself put off by the profound self-absorption with which he assured us (and himself) that his wife and children would understand that he needed to go to Tahiti instead of home to them.

The last part of the narrative was pretty disjointed and trippy, talking to birds, ceding his royalties to the Pope, raging against "The Monster". The last chapters read much more like a hippie (his word) manifesto than a sailing memoir.

I read this because I was curious about the man and his voyage after reading *A Voyage for Madmen*. I don't regret the read, but in terms of sailing memoirs, Josh Sloacum's *Sailing Alone around the World* is a lot more satisfying.

Wm Pope says

Funny that I had not read this book previously. My brother asked me to read something at his wedding that was nautical and talked about life, this was his first thought for inspiration.

Moitessier conveys his love for the sea and sailing. Central to the book is what it means to be a creature living on this planet. This is the story of a solitary voyage, racing around the planet in a small boat. The other competitors are nearly absent. What is present is the sea, the boat, Moitessier, and his thoughts and memories.

The author talks to us about the experience of being alone out on the water and how it causes him to reflect on his relationships with other people and with society. He claims space for the "vagabond" who lives outside of the "monster" that society has become.

Perfect book for me. I'm shopping for boats ;)

Melissa Luna says

Oh Moitessier, you are such a romantic! A french hippie poet vagabond. This book is pure nectar, poetry, adventure, love of life in script. But I had to knock half a star off for going overboard with the tangents about the "Machine." Not that I don't agree in spirit, it just rubbed me the wrong way, felt badly written, trite. It actually hurts me to say that about this incredible book. Read it, do! I'll read it again just to hang out with this precious man.

Dan says

I wanted to like this, but ultimately it wasn't for me.

The first half was a pretty standard sea tale consisting of weather updates, sea conditions, etc—your basic log entry stuff—peppered in over a lot of talk about the freedom of the sea and the sort of vague spirituality that engenders. Not bad. There were a few choice quotes and moments of rumination. But the second half really went off the hippy-dippy deep end. There was a lot of talk about the "Monster," which, as best as I can figure, is the personification of humanity's avarice. There's a fine line between working with technology—say embracing a boat designed to harness the wind for the express purpose of allowing a yachtsman to circumnavigate the globe single-handedly—and decrying technology's ability to divorce mankind from nature. Moitessier chooses instead to approach the subject in blunt terms. At one point he goes on this long rant—at least I think he was talking about himself; I wasn't paying too much attention by then—about how he's going to donate all the proceeds from the book to the Pope, so the Pope can use it to safeguard the Earth from this "Monster." I pretty much gave up reading at that point, but since I was close to the end, I figured why not hate-read this to the end.

If you're looking for warmed over hippie philosophy with a salty flavor, this is for you. If not, avoid it like so many shoals for a deep-keeled boat.

If you liked this, make sure to follow me on Goodreads for more reviews!

William Graney says

This is a an amazing saga and the writer delivers the story in a captivating style that is not the least bit egotistical. This is one I'll never forget.
