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"Inside: One Woman's Journey Through the Inside Passage" is a plucky adventure memoir of the sea and soul told by a woman on a big adventure in a small boat along the coast of western North America. In Spring 2010, with her world scaled down to an 18-foot sea kayak and the 1,200 mile ribbon of water called the Inside Passage, Susan Conrad launched a journey that took her north to Alaska. On the way, she forged friendships, lived her dream, and discovered the depths of her own strength and courage.

Inside: One Woman's Journey Through the Inside Passage Details

Date : Published May 15th 2016 by Epicenter Press

ISBN : 9781935347576

Author : Susan Marie Conrad

Format : Hardcover 288 pages

Genre : Adventure, Nonfiction, Autobiography, Memoir, Womens



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From Reader Review Inside: One Woman's Journey Through the Inside Passage for online ebook

Michelle Delappe says

The strength of this book, and the parts I enjoyed the most, were the vivid, detailed descriptions of the Inside Passage trip from a kayaker's perspective--and the perspective of a solo woman kayaker at that. I'm incredibly impressed with the author's feat and appreciate all the helpful advice--even down to the lists at the end of all her gear and recommended reading (including kayak safety and navigation classics that every paddler should read). Since I live in Seattle (along the longer version of the Inside Passage route) and love to explore this region, I also really appreciated all the interesting facts and stories about events and people--including the B.C. ferry incident in 2006 that I didn't know about.

The reason I give the book only two stars is because the only way I could get through the book was to skim much of it. This is not prose to savor. I learned more than I ever wanted about details like the type of chocolate bars she ate on various occasions or the type of rum or wine she sipped. I cringed at frequent passages waxing lyrical about gratitude, wonder at nature, or trepidation about the risks of the trip, whether written by her or by Jim Chester (a prominent figure in the book). She may have succeeded in inspiring those sentiments if she had more consistently followed the common admonition to writers: show, don't tell. She unfortunately veered frequently into telling.

The parts that show us the wonders and quirks of the Inside Passage make this worth reading for those interested in this subject. But the weaker aspects of the book mean that it misses the mark for the broader interest that it might have been able to achieve on a literary level or as an inspiring example of what was, truly, and impressive journey.

David says

I had the pleasure to hear Susan Conrad give a presentation about her journey through the Inside Passage and knew I had to read her book. I was not disappointed. It is a wonderful, insightful read. The motivations of people that take on the challenges climbing mountains, trekking thousand of miles, or in this case, kayaking for 66 days from Anacortes, Washington to Juneau, Alaska, can be hard to discern. Everyone has their own reasons for the challenges they take on. Conrad gives us insight into the why by revealing what she gained from the experience.

We all make plans. Sometimes they are just notions rather than full blown itineraries and they often don't match reality. Conrad planned as if her life depended on it because it did. The planning, preparation, and physical training were intense and part of the journey. She encounters unrelenting rains, dangerous tides, bears, black flies, a few creepy characters and more. Those aspects are more than counterbalanced by the natural beauty she finds and the solitude she enjoys. She lets the reader see that the journey is about understanding yourself by taking a time for a moving meditation and reflection where the surroundings leave you awestruck. Feeling small and vulnerable but overcoming physical and mental challenges can leave you strong, humble, and more self-aware.

Her story is told in a refreshing, personal tone. As I read I thought "well I've heard her speak and even had a brief conversation with her. Of course it sounds personable to me." But I began to notice descriptions and word choices that made me feel she was writing to tell about her adventurer in a one-to-one conversation—a kind of writing that sets this book a notch above.

I highly recommend this book.

Rue Roberts says

Some of the better adventure writing I've read; parts of it would even stand alone as beautiful writing outside the context of what must be one of the most enchanting, raw journeys to be had on our little Eden. I thought some of the revelations of childhood traumas were a little joltingly personal and imperfectly braided into the "present day" narrative, but I appreciated the thoughtfulness and self-reflection as a whole and would probably have been less absorbed without it. I expect this book has inspired many, women particularly, to set out on journeys of similar relative scale. I came to it already inspired, but it raised that inspiration to fever pitch and the afterglow of finishing is making it difficult for me to tolerate my remaining sentence of indoor life before my next adventure. Thank you, Susan, if you read this, for sharing. It is a gracious, gently told, vulnerable, mature, unaffected narrative that speaks volumes of your nature.

Leslie says

Loved this journey. While I have read a number of extended journey books (Wild, other long term backpacking trip books on the PCT or Appalachian Trial) authors' approaches to these vary. Some are logistics heavy with less inner journey, others are more inward but fail to capture what it is really like "out there" or what the reader needs to picture in order to truly "go on the trip with you." This book is fantastic in its detail while not being self-indulgent. Having travelled the Inside Passage on the Alaska Ferry Conrad mentions, it takes a keen eye and care to really capture the feel of the place, to be able to picture each campsite etc. Her pacing of the story neither rushes nor drags, I never lost interest. Lastly, while I would have loved even more of her inner journey (particularly in the 1st half of the book as we get a wonderful dose of it in the 2nd half,) I enjoyed her balance of both. It was both a journey we were on (the Inside Passage) as well as her struggles out there. This book will sit with the best of adventure travel books that I have read.

Carrie says

I bought Susan's book after taking one of her classes and having a lovely conversation with her at lunch. I'm so glad I did. Not normally a memoir reader, I was struck by Susan's candid and visceral story that swept me up in her journey just like she'd stowed me away in a pocket and taken me along for the ride. Except I didn't have to endure swarms of flies or encounters with bears! Wonderful story and one heckuva adventure!

Debbie says

3.5 maybe because in my mind I kept comparing it to Wild. I would have like to have known more about Susan and her motivations to undertake such a journey. If you have been to Alaska, you will enjoy being reminded of it and if you haven't, you will want to go, although perhaps not alone in a kayak. One important observation that stuck with me--"There is a difference between fear--that unpleasant emotion associated with

the belief that someone or something is a threat--and being scared. Being scared is an in-the-moment feeling caused by an actual threat..." An important distinction to remember, I think, especially for those of us prone to worry.

Eva La Mar says

As with this genre, one gets more from some stories when they are looking into the depth of an experience. I thoroughly enjoyed her story, flashbacks and hardships included. Her story is that of being a human- with an extraordinary drive to overcome hardships be the hardships from childhood to that of kayaking a challenging IP course.

Look carefully and you will find odd flashbacks and some abrupt jumps, but that is part of the human experience. I don't want to read about the Inland Passage from an author that has not lived through it themselves. I want to taste the salty air and feel her bruises. I want to sense the grizzly challenging her for her pitstop area, not through a professional travel writer on a cruise ship, but through the writing of a traveler.

While I am only a PNW flat water kayaker, I had a strong desire to read about a woman who didn't let modern-day sexism hinder her adventure. As I enjoyed Into Thin Air, I also enjoyed this book. I loved the danger and adventure. Woman led.... and no one died. She recognizes and reflects on her internal growth as she ventures forward. Honest and humbling.

It is a compelling read. It's screaming for an online companion with photographs of each stop, though.

Paddle on!

Patia says

Disclaimer: Susan is a dear friend, so I'm biased. I witnessed her hard work and persistence in both paddling the Inside Passage and writing this book. Her memoir is a tale of both her inner and outer journey while paddling 1,200 miles of challenging ocean waters and attempting to synthesize 50 years of living — which has its own unique challenges. "Inside" has been called "'Wild' by kayak," but frankly I think Susan's story demonstrates far more self-awareness and awareness of the natural environment around her than "Wild." Not to mention MUCH more preparation. Without such careful preparation, a person could easily suffer a fatal mishap on a journey like this.

Susan has accomplished things most of us only talk about doing. She is one of the most accomplished and impressive women I know; yet she is also kind, humble and down to earth. I enjoyed getting to know her inner world better while reading "Inside." I also loved her tale of adventure and roughing it in the wilds of the coastal Pacific Northwest, interspersed with intriguing people and places. A gifted photographer and visual artist, Susan has a knack for colorful, quirky written descriptions that capture the imagination and make me want to see these places in person. She also demonstrates a concern for protecting these wild woods and waters, and a deep respect for the humans and creatures who inhabit them. I'm honored to call her a friend and proud of her for sharing this beautiful book with the world.

Bruce Cline says

Susan's narrative is about her nearly 1200 mile, mostly solo paddle adventure from Anacortes, Washington to Juneau, Alaska over a 66 day period in 2010. By other, less conventional measurements, her voyage spanned "102 chocolate bars, 28 ibuprofen gel caps, seven temper tantrums, five anxiety attacks, two pairs of underwear, one foul wetsuit, and a million magical moments." Arguably, the latter is a better measure of her trip than the former; this memoir is as much about her own internal personal journey as it is about the water miles and her adventures/experiences along the way. Susan's book superbly illustrates the power of long-distance soloing to serve as therapy for whatever ails the adventurer, as well as offering time and space for reflecting on the many good aspects of one's life. Ms. Conrad's story is both introspective as well as outwardly descriptive, alternating between her struggles with the harsh seagoing environment and wrestling with aspects of her personal life, both past and present. If you choose to read this book to learn about the physical challenges and objective dangers of such an endeavor you will not be disappointed. And if you opt to read it for the arguably more difficult mental and emotional challenges of facing your own life and experiences, it is equally rewarding. It is a fine addition to my library of solo adventures and adventurers.

Karl says

I had the pleasure of meeting the author, Susan Conrad, in the ferry lineup on Salt Spring Island. I became immediately interested in her Inside Passage adventure, as my family and I experienced the I.P. and other parts of Alaska as a "shakedown" cruise on our 41 foot sailboat, prior to going off-shore for 5 years. Reading the book, I could relate to many of Susan's venturesome encounters.

There is much to like about this book. It is well written, detailed and informative. It is a "must read" if you are into kayaking.

Jim Corson says

I too paddled the Inland Passage eight years before the author. I always find it interesting to hear about and in this case read about how others approached this trip. I can relate to much of what she writes. I was fortunate in not having a rigid schedule to meet and was able to stay off the water or otherwise wait when the wind and waters didn't look good to me as a solo paddler. I also didn't have the psychological strain to deal with that Susan had. At any rate the Inland Passage is a wonderful beautiful waterway and I found this to be an interesting read.

Lori says

This was a gift from Dave and Garrett last Christmas, and I thought I would throw it in a dry bag and read it on summer kayak adventures...which we never had. An enjoyable read, though, no matter what the season. I wondered if I would feel inspired to expand my paddling skills after reading this book, but no. To plan an expedition like the author did, and to paddle solo takes years of preparation and skill-building. I'm inspired to find more time in the future to sit in my kayak and connect with nature, but I'm a fairweather paddler and a

can live with living vicariously through other people's larger adventures.

Taylor M. says

Loved the concept of an woman in the wild, adventuring alone. However, the writing itself lacks personal insight and thoughtfulness. She is an excellent descriptive writer. The landscape and physical experience of the kayak are well told and easy to imagine. She lacks in emotional depth and introspectiveness that a solo adventure might elicit. At the beginning of the book, she expresses a desire for time with herself to contemplate, yet never seems to. The focus instead on the exterior panoramas and happenings. She, also, comes up short on delving into the people she meets along the way. A few people who host her overnight, or at least offer shelter/campsite, are briefly described, but never become characters. I see this not as a lack in her wiring, but in her attempt to interact with others in a curious manner. How could one not wander about the man who lives quite isolated in a deserted town? I would have wanted to know their stories.

The kayaking and navigating is quite detailed in description. To the point that one feels they are a trip guide, not a narrative. Harrowing experiences nonetheless, she shows strength and bravery that carry the reader through to wanting to see her finish. Which...SPOILER ALERT, she technically doesn't.

Michael says

Incredible voyage, very detailed, from chart reading to experiencing the day to day, life and nature's challenges, thick, takes time to get through. Quite the woman! A journey of the heart as well as one of personal transformation. Well done!

Kris says

I picked this book up at the Ketchikan airport on my way back to Portland while a great fishing trip came to an end. Ketchikan and SE Alaska have become a mystical and magical place for my family to spend time fishing, exploring, and photographing.

When I see a story of a woman doing some adventure solo, I'm drawn to it. Susan's book did not disappoint. A wonderful blend of memoir and adventure journal. I even picked up a few new skills in seamanship. More importantly, I picked up more inspiration for solitude and pushing myself to the limit.

This incredible journey is work reading, be it your desire to paddle the IP or get a view into another's life.
