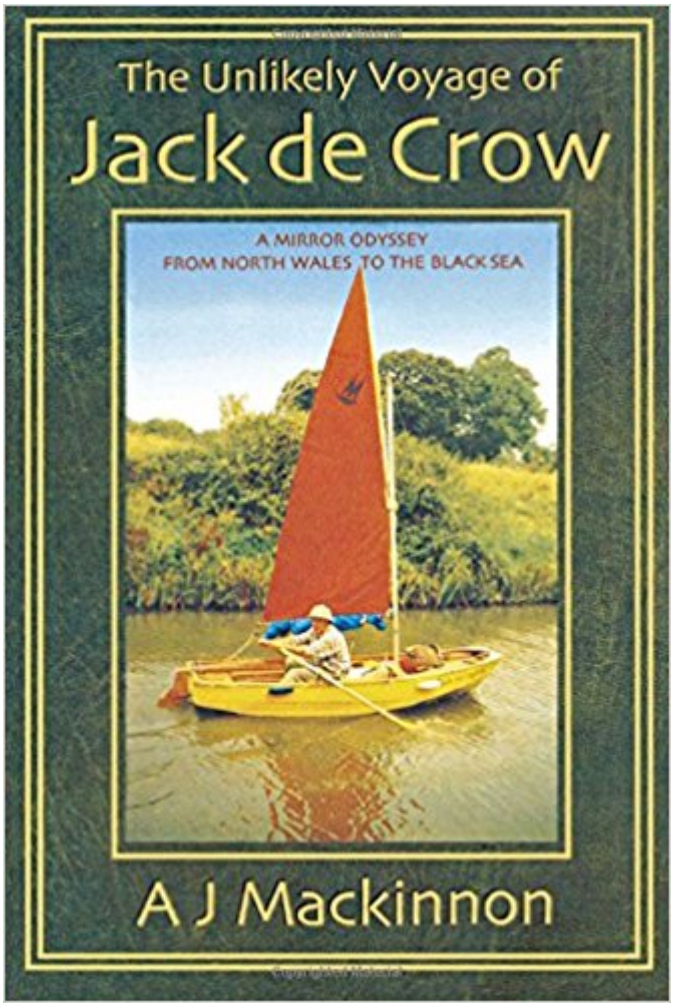
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The Unlikely Voyage Of Jack De Crow: A Mirror Odyssey From North Wales To The Black Sea



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Synopsis

Equipped with his cheerful optimism and a pith helmet, this Odysseus in a dinghy takes you with him from the borders of north Wales to the Black Sea - 4,900 kilometers over salt and fresh water, under sail, at oars, or at the end of a tow rope - through twelve countries, 282 locks, and numerous trials and adventures, including an encounter with Balkan pirates.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

More nutty stunts come from the British Isles than from anywhere else on earth, and the escapade Australian-born Mackinnon recounts here is as addled as anyone's. One day, he stepped into a dinghy, intending to sail a few hundred miles down the Severn River, stopping at pubs and having a lark for a few days. He named his little craft Jack de Crow in honor of his childhood dream of owning a tame crow (not a cuckoo?). To make a short story even shorter, he passed up most of the pubs in England, almost got gored by a bull, sank Jack in a drunken stupor, patched the little boat back up, battled pirates, and landed in Romania. Loaded with self-deprecating humor and one giddy adventure after another, this fun account of Mackinnon's voyage is definitely for armchair travelers. as it is highly unlikely that anyone would be wacky enough to use this book as a guide to try a similar stunt. Highly recommended for all public libraries.Joseph L. Carlson, Allan Hancock Coll., CACopyright 2002 Reed Business Information, Inc.

...[a] blend of high adventure, immeasureable charm and comedy... (Latitudes & Attitudes)...a wonderful idea for a book--a series of ever bolder improvisations...undertaken in praise of the spirit

of adventure. (Times Literary Supplement)...one of the most original and entertaining books on sailing and voyaging to come out in years. (Sailing)...the cavalier attitude, wit, and romanticism of this book are enough to capture the heart of any adventurer... (WaterCraft)...will have you alternately laughing and shaking your head in disbelief at the brilliant insanity of the ill-defined quest. (Cruising World)There are as many ways to live aboard as there are boats that float. Some sailors take a more Spartan approach. Mackinnon took this latter style to its perhaps illogical extreme, when he sailed a Mirror dinghy from Wales to the Black Sea. The Mirror is about 11 feet long, and is used primarily as a sail trainer by instructors who believe in giving students lots of strings to pull; it has a gunter mainsail, a tiny jib and a toy spinnaker. I can't imagine a less suitable vessel for a trip across Europe, but this voyage provided the material for a fascinating book.The author borrowed the little boat from the secondary school where he had been teaching, intent on a brief holiday before leaving England. But, seduced by his initial success in battling down small brooks and drainage ditches to the River Severn, he continued on, powered only by oars and that small mainsail, wearing his trademark pith helmet. His achievements encouraged him...and even his frequent disasters proved motivational once he figured out ways to overcome them.Eventually, he reached a port on the English Channel and discovered to his surprise that no one in a position of authority was inclined to forbid him from crossing. So away he went, and fortune preserved him despite a serious navigation error. Once across the Channel, it was clear sailing to the Black Sea. Over the course of this great adventure, he sailed or rowed through 12 countries and 282 locks.Readers may be inclined to dismiss Mackinnon as the sort of amusing, colorful, harmless eccentric famously produced by England, although the author is not English. But there's more to it than that. In his miniscule boat, Mackinnon was not only close to the water, he was close to the hearts of those who saw him rowing his way east, and he was taken in, repaired, fed, and generally treated with great affection by those he met on his voyage.Mackinnon has a pleasant outgoing personality, and he writes with the sort of stylish flair you might expect from a literature teacher. However, the smallness of his boat was probably the largest factor in attracting so much kindness from the strangers along his route. Sometimes he slept under a tarp on the damp floorboards, but more often he stayed with newfound friends. (Living Aboard)"This amiable book is about what can, but probably should not, be attempted in a Mirror dinghy...The experience is by turns cheering and terrifying, but always met with humor and described with style...It's the sort of book people buy in quantities to give to their friends." (Classic Boat)Loaded with self-deprecating humor and one giddy adventure after another, this fun account of Mackinnon's voyage is definitely for armchair travelers. as it is highly unlikely that anyone would be wacky enough to use this book as a guide to

try a similar stunt. Highly recommended for all public libraries. (Library Journal)

Living totally on Social Security most of the books I download from are the free ones, but since I'm contemplating a single-handed voyage starting on Lake Champlain in Vermont and ending in Mobile, Alabama via canals, three of the Great Lakes and much of the Mississippi river on a slightly larger boat than Jack de Crow (19-feet) I bet the bullet and shelled out the shekels for this book. I was NOT DISAPPOINTED.Not only did I enjoy the story itself, but I loved Mackinnon's wry humor.If I could I'd add another 1/2 star, but five star books really need to blow my socks off.

I loved this book! I would have given it five stars and a tiger except it rushes through the eastern European, final part of the author's amazing trek by paddle, oar and quant from Wales to the Black Sea. I rushed through that part too so I could learn how the author got away from the hoodla (plural of hoodlum) who kidnapped him. I think both of us, the author and I, were in a hurry by then to complete the experience. Or maybe he was pushed along by the mighty Danube at a speed too fast to allow for reflection. Clearly the trek was grueling and I think the author's magnificent narrative powers made me feel something of his exhaustion. The author is funny, insightful and helpful to those who would learn how to row through Europe. I suppose I never will do so, but I have benefited by reading this splendid account by this brilliant writer. My thanks go out to him for his having written this wonderful narrative and my recommendation goes out to all who might read this book to do so

This book came up on an unrelated search and the foolishness of the trip peaked my interest, thinking it was a how NOT to attempt an adventure. In reality it is a book about pushing the boundries; personal and socially expected. Small goals turning into an epic trip. This book cronicals the help of strangers and new friends beyond expectation. The author writes without reservation about his lack of knowledge and skills, but overcomes all problems with an easygoing optimists style, by planning for the worst and hoping for the best. A good read about an average person taking on a small trip in which he and the trip grow from page to page thanks to the help of others. A great contrast to the safety contious world we live in today.

I loved this book. A fantastic adventure written in a lovely tone. The way he describes things, particularly the people he meets along the way, is just hilarious.

A very enjoyable read with some really laugh out loud funny moments. Beautifully written albeit a bit

tedious in a few places. This is better than a travel recount and the author can really tell a good tale. I wanted to really give this four and a half stars as I am not sure the subject matter will appeal to most people. Although anyone who sails or has taken a river cruise can't fail to appreciate this story. I suggest you also listen to a podcast of the author talking about his travels. He is very amusing indeed.

Mackinnon's odyssey, traveling in an 11 foot sailing dinghy from Wales through rivers, streams, locks, canals, across the English Channel, and ultimately all the way to the Black Sea, is an unforgettable read. He's a very funny guy, and I laughed frequently as I read the book. His story is full of misadventures and mishaps, courage and determination, flexibility and improvisation, challenges and overcoming of obstacles. The author has wonderful encounters with people all along the way, most of them incredibly helpful, a few of them extraordinarily the opposite. It's a page turner, and I stayed up several nights till 2 or 3 in the morning, unable to put the book down. As soon as I finished it, my wife started it, with the same reaction. We bought 4 copies to give to friends on the next suitable occasion, and are contemplating buying more. I've read a lot of travel adventures, and this book is one of the best. The author has also illustrated the book with a number of hand drawn maps and illustrations of his boat and various events and scenes. Totally delightful!

This very readable travellers' book is an absolute gem. It is the story of an Australian schoolteacher who finished a stint in an English private school and decided to travel by boat through some of the inland waterway systems of England. The trip was meant to take just a couple of weeks but the author, Sandy Mackinnon, was enjoying the challenges and successes so much that he just continued rowing and sailing in a small 11 foot Mirror class dingy. Weeks turned into months as he kept extending his trip. After navigating down to the River Severn he found his way down the Thames to London and, after a break, on to Dover, then, remarkably, across the English Channel in an amazing and risky solo effort and on into the canals and waterways of Europe.McKinnon is a teacher of English literature and drama and so was well-equipped to tell the story and illustrate it with delightfully chosen literary references. He also does a nice line in sketching and is the author of the book's more-than-capable illustrations.I read it with UK and Europe maps beside me, which added to the fun. Next time I will try Google Earth.It is so easy to get swept along with the narrative and the helpful characters he meets that you could find yourself finishing this book very quickly. It made me want to go out and have adventures of my own.

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