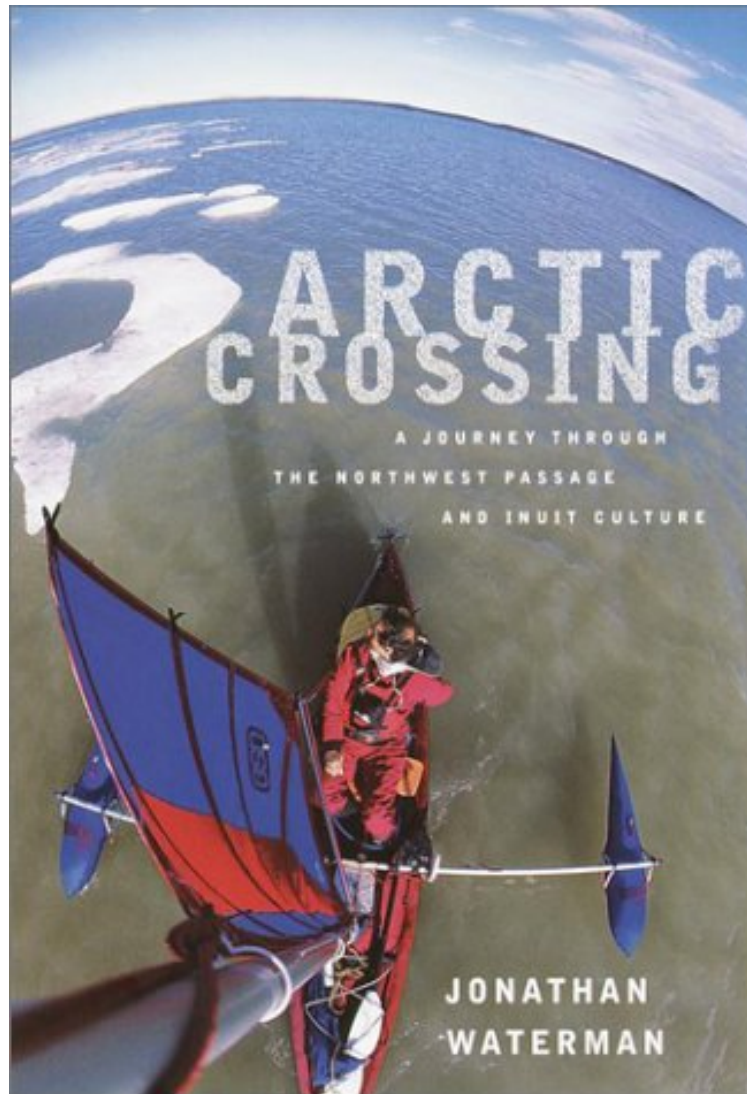


(Read free ebook) Arctic Crossing: A Journey Through the Northwest Passage and Inuit Culture

Arctic Crossing: A Journey Through the Northwest Passage and Inuit Culture

Jonathan Waterman

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Jonathan Waterman : Arctic Crossing: A Journey Through the Northwest Passage and Inuit Culture before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Arctic Crossing: A Journey Through the Northwest Passage and Inuit Culture:

2 of 4 people found the following review helpful. The island within usBy Guy de la RupelleThis is a "must read" for anyone in four categories; the traveler (as opposed to the tourist), the kayaker, an anthropologist or one interested in hunter-gatherer types of peoples, and the armchair traveller who enjoys a good read. I fall into all groups, but

essentially the first three, and for this reason I thoroughly enjoyed practically every page. As I plan to be in the northern isles of Japan for a month and half, alone with my kayak, in part for the physical challenge and in part to take a contemporary look at the Ainu, the indigenous peoples of Hokkaido, the Kurile Islands and Sakhalin, I can fully appreciate the difficulties Mr. Waterman went through in a predominantly harsh climate, turbulent seas, dealing with wild and unpredictable creatures, and finding a people who once had a "noble" way of life (or at least very close to nature) now enjoying motorized transportation, over-heated houses, at violent videos (the author mentions that Claude Van Damme seems to be especially popular). I will likely face the same challenges and disappointments. The only criticism I have lies in the writing style. If I had been Mr. Waterman's editor, I would have told him to keep in mind that those subjective references - "me, my, mine I" distance the reader. I realize it is difficult being isolated and writing the narrative about your own journey not to include those words, but my advice would have been to try not to "own" too much. One doesn't want to appear ego-centric or repetitive. I was previously aware of Mr. Waterman's endeavors from his 1996 book, "Kayaking the Vermilion Sea" (Touchstone), and had noticed those writing traits then, though his present book is tenfold better. However that said, just the mere difficulty of what this author undertook, his sentiments towards nature in general, the peoples of the Arctic (well-researched as can be seen in the bibliography), his subjectiveness, and his enduring love of his lady friend, June, will earn this book a well-deserved place of honor in my library. 0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. Five Stars By Jeffrey Barth Great read and education about the Inuit people. 0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. Fantastic story. I really felt like I was on this journey with him. By Kevin Downing Fantastic story. I really felt like I was on this journey with him.

The Arctic with its twenty-four-hour daylight, surprisingly curious animals and inexplicable humming noises is a world of constant danger and limitless possibility. This unforgiving landscape is home to the Inuit (the name they prefer to Eskimos), whose complex and little-studied society is fascinating in its divergence from as well as its assimilation into Western culture. Jonathan Waterman's 2,200-mile journey across the roof of North America took him through Inuit communities in Alaska to Nunavut, Canada's new, 770,000-square-mile, self-governed territory. His story, at once illuminating and alarming, offers firsthand observations of their life, language and beliefs; records their reactions to global modernization; documents their centuries of unjust treatment at the hands of Kabloona (bushy-eyebrowed whites); and witnesses unemployment, teen suicide and such persistent plagues as spousal violence and substance abuse. From the perspective of his 1997-1999 voyage as the Inuit stand on the brink of a more hopeful, independent future he also looks into a past marked by famous (or infamous) Arctic explorers, government cover-ups and environmental destruction. This beautifully written work of intrepid reporting and even scholarship also reveals the physical risks and psychological perils of crossing the legendary Northwest Passage. Utterly alone for weeks at a time, Waterman struggles against freezing conditions, the tricks played on him by his own mind and dangers more complex than aggressive bears, stormy seas and mosquito blizzards. Following the advice of an Inuit shaman, who said that those things hidden from others are discovered only far from the dwellings of men, through privation and suffering, Waterman kayaks, skis, dogsleds and sails across the Great Solitudes in a thrilling and ultimately successful quest for this true wisdom, arriving at a profound understanding of environment and culture.

.com When Jonathan Waterman set out to cross the Arctic Circle by way of kayak, cross-country skis, and a dogsled, he was less interested in conquering the 2,200 miles between the Pacific and Atlantic oceans than in learning to live as the Inuit had before him (Inuit, for The People, is the name Canadian Eskimos prefer). Good thing, for the Arctic, as revealed in this candid and engrossing travelogue, is no place for jock-style adventure. Over the course of three summers, Waterman paddled through storms, capsized in 39-degree water, blacked out, and was bitten by thousands of mosquitoes, smoked out by exploding underground seams of coal, and chased by a grizzly bear. The land was so vast and empty that swans and bears vanished before him, ice chunks appeared as kayaks, and driftwood morphed into people in a disorienting series of mirages. Perhaps most challenging of all for Waterman was spending weeks at a time in this setting without seeing another soul. Under these circumstances, he had no choice but to draw on remnant instincts to avoid disaster, forget about time and goals, and to connect deeply to "the Earth and Its Great Weather," as the Inuit say. "Any committed adventurer eventually learns that equipment and performance are just a means to that greater end of finding your place in the natural world," writes Waterman, who proves he is willing to go the extra thousand miles for a moment of insight. Of course, he also experiences moments of unparalleled serenity--caribou trotting out to his boat, belugas spouting around him, grizzlies on the shore--and creates warm friendships with the Inuit themselves, who have changed radically since their own days of traveling by kayak and dogsled. Waterman works admirably to understand The People without judging them, though he is discouraged by what he finds left of the culture he emulates--communities caught in a "depraved limbo, somewhere between paradise and tuberculosis." As with the Arctic itself, the Inuit turn out to be more complex in reality--and ultimately more appealing--than in mythology. Waterman's stark and satisfying account excels in its ability to grapple with the human condition while illuminating a mystical world inaccessible to the rest of us. --Lesley Reed From Publishers Weekly In 1997, Waterman (In the Shadow of Denali) embarked on a series of solo journeys across the arctic, taking the southernmost water route

through Canada's northern islands. During the first summer, he went west, from the Mackenzie River delta to Prudhoe Bay in Alaska. In ensuing springs and summers, he completed his 2,200 mile odyssey, proceeding east in stages from the Mackenzie delta to Lord Mayor Bay. Waterman made most of the trips by kayak, but walked across the Eskimo lakes and took one snowmobile side trip with Inuit guides. He vividly portrays the arctic landscape, people, weather and wildlife, but as he reiterates ad infinitum, his goal was to experience solitude in the wilderness, and much of the book consists of self-absorbed ruminations on braving arctic waters alone in a kayak and pulling a sled across frozen lakes and tundra with only a dog for company. Waterman admits that he didn't get all that close to wilderness since he was supported by a wealth of modern technologies, from a Gore-Tex dry suit to a specially constructed kayak, and could fly home any time. His encounters with the Inuit and his candid observations of their culture and poverty-stricken, often brutal lifestyle provide the most interesting passages. Interwoven discussions of arctic explorers, the history of the Northwest Passage and the Hudson Bay Company, relations between the Inuit and the Canadian government, and anthropologists who have studied the Inuit flesh out his narrative. Though there is no map to help the reader follow his complex itinerary, Waterman includes appendixes of the birds and animals he saw, a Canadian arctic cultures timeline, a section on Inuit language and an extensive bibliography. 85 bw photos and illus. Copyright 2001 Cahners Business Information, Inc. From Library Journal Waterman (Most Hostile Mountain, Kayaking the Vermillion Sea), a mountaineer, birder, photographer, and avid kayaker, spent three summers crossing the Northwest Passage from west to east by kayak, skis, and dogsled. More than just a self-propelled journey across the frozen north, this is an in-depth look into Inuit culture. Journeying across remote areas alone in a kayak, the author portrays the Inuit people as hospitable and willing to share their food and shelter with a complete stranger. He also explains that they were content to live as nomads, following the game and living off the land until the "Kabloona" (an Inuit term for bushy-eyebrowed whites) tried to help by paying them to live in stationary villages. Waterman's compassionate account reveals a people who are far happier to be out on the land hunting for game than gathered together in squalid, government-built towns. He freely uses many Inuit terms throughout the book and includes a glossary, a complete list of his wildlife observations, an Arctic cultures time line, and a very detailed bibliography. In addition, this gifted writer beautifully describes the natural wonder of the countryside and the animals. Highly recommended for public libraries. John Kenny, San Francisco P.L. Copyright 2001 Reed Business Information, Inc.