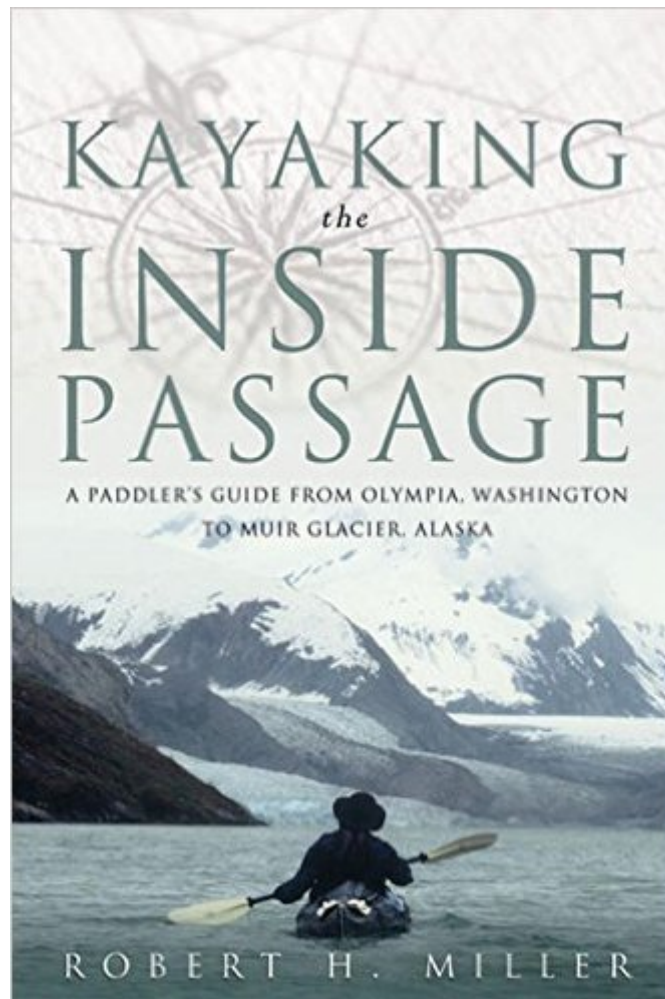


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Kayaking The Inside Passage: A Paddling Guide From Olympia, Washington To Muir Glacier, Alaska



Synopsis

The Inside Passage is something of a holy grail for contemporary sea kayakers. It is without question the most scenic and challenging paddling trip in North America. Kayaking the Inside Passage will aid kayakers both in planning and in carrying out paddling trips on the rugged Pacific artery that runs along the western edge of North America. It is a complete through-trip guide to sea kayaking the entire 1,300-mile length of the Inside Passage along one select route with some alternate variations. This route runs from Olympia, Washington, past Vancouver Island and up through Glacier Bay National Park in Alaska. No other paddling guide covers the entire length of the Inside Passage. There are 33 maps, 50 photos, and pen-and-ink illustrations. Miller includes complete historical and natural background along with proficiency and equipment recommendations. 50 black & white photographs, 33 maps, index.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

This summer 2005 I used this book to kayak the inside passage from Anacordis WA to Glacier Bay, AK. I left Anacordis on 18 June 05 and reached Glacier Bay on 25 Sept 05. This book was my guide the entire way. I tried every recommended campsite, and paddled the recommended route almost entirely, without stopping, for 1400 miles, and 3 1/2 months. So ... perhaps, in a small way, I am qualified to review this book. The book's recommended route is impeccable - perfect all the way from Anacordis to Glacier Bay, with one exception, as follows: Between Petersburg and Juneau AK, the author routes the kayaker along admiralty island to see a bear sanctuary, and then into a blind

lagoon where the kayaker is forced to use a land trolley to transport his kayak across a peninsula. This route is a poor selection because 1) The bear sanctuary is impossible for kayakers to see because of beligerant forest service policies requiring advance reservations. No exceptions; 2) The blind lagoon's trolley has the rails disconnected at the north end, requiring the kayaker to CARRY his kayak on his back down a steep, high hill to finish the portage. Instead, kayakers buying this book would do best in ignoring the author's Petersburg to Juneau route, and instead paddle along the mainland shore, where multitudes of iceburgs float, where the second best whale-watching area in north america is, and best of the best, where the Tracy Arm Glacier is, arguable the finest, most impressive and actively calving glacier in all of Alaska. Why the author bypassed the miraculous Tracy Arm to NOT see a bear sanctuary that doesn't permit impromptu kayakers ... we can only guess.

Campsites: The author openly admits that he lost his notes on what his campsites were for much of the trip. Thus, the campsites recommended on the book's maps are anotated in the book with painful phrases paraphrased like "... the topo map shows this to be flat ground, so there maybe SHOULD be a campsite there...." OUCH. Speaking as a traveller who has visited all the author's recommended campsites, the author is right only better than half the time, and when the campsite he recommends turns out to be a swamp ... or indeed IS flat ground but is fronted by jagged rocks impossible to haul a kayak up the beach on ... that means the tired kayaker must continue paddling blindly and exhaustedly, perhaps with light failing and conditions deteriorating, looking for a campsite on his own. Now this wouldn't be so bad, except that for the vast majority of the inside passage, the mountains fall directly into the sea, leaving jagged cliffy coastlines where campsites appear only once every ten miles or so. Campsites are as scarce as hens teeth. So ... a tired kayaker having timed his paddling day to end at the author's recommended campsite ... has only a 50-50 chance of indeed finding shelter there, and will perhaps be forced to continuing paddling on ... and on ... and on.

Author's commentary and background research is superb. Many times I found myself teaching the locals about their own area by reading them this guidebook's commentary. The book is very readable and fun, yet is highly educational. The author's anecdotes had me rolling on my tent floor in laughter many times. Exceptions: The author comments that one can expect to see one to five bears a day along the inside passage. This is not so. I paddled 3 1/2 months, and only saw 6 bears, all of them black, none of them browns. Bears, and signs of bears, were few. Land wildlife is actually very rare along the entire inside passage ... but marine wildlife abounds. Only three places in 1400 miles did I see a deer, for example.

Overall, this book earns its 5 stars. But note the exceptions above to correct the book's few quirks. Hats off to the author on doing such a good job guiding us through such a demanding, lengthy, and thrilling journey.

Miller's book is filled with delights on every page. I picked it up because I'm heading up The Passage by ferry for the first time and I thought a kayaker's perspective could be interesting. I was not disappointed! Every page is an entertainment. From the trials of flood and ebb tides to the ever-present danger from bears to the capsulated history about almost every one of the 3,000 islands along the way. I felt I was present. This is not just about paddling, which is detailed to the max, but about economics; and the climate; and the sheer brutality as well as the compassion of the men and women who braved it; As I go on my comfortable armchair cruise, I will now know not only what is in front of me but what transpired at this spot 100 years ago, 500 years ago and even how the surface of the earth came to this spectacular visage. How the eminent naturalist, John Muir got his come-up-ence from an elderly chief; how the first settlers crossed the land bridge into the new continent; how the more recent "discoverers" overcame hardship and missed opportunities to enter into a struggle between nations that, although currently without bloodshed, is still continuing. I received much more than I was expecting from "Kayaking...". I received a wealth of background which will make my coming trip a true "delight".

Alaskans have a term for folks who show up, do a one week backpack trip someplace, then promptly label themselves as authorities on all things Alaska. And that term is "One Week Wonder". In general, I expect a paddler's guide to contain plenty of information on paddling the region it is intended to cover, written by someone who has spent an extensive amount of time on every segment of the trip. Reading through this book, I find that, of the four-hundred and some odd pages contained herein, fewer than 10% of those pages are actually "guide" information, with actual descriptions of the territory you'll be paddling. . The vast majority of the book is stuffed with "witty anecdotes", Miller's interpretation of historical events, Heloise's beginner helpful hints about subjects that anyone even remotely thinking about doing this trip should have mastered a decade before they consider this trip, etc. I suspect that all this voluminous gobbledygook is in the book because Mr Miller only paddled the route once, lost notes along the way, had very little first hand information about the route itself, but had spent hundreds of hours reading history books and other people's "witty anecdotes" about the region. So he felt compelled to write a book to cover his trip costs. Now, it's commendable to write a "paddler's historical guide to witty anecdotes" to a region, but if you intend to write an actual GUIDEBOOK, then, for pete's sake, son; fill it up chock full of information on the landings, the beaches, the secret flat bivy spots on otherwise inhospitable stretches of shoreline, the best creeks for drinking, where the good berry patches are, etc etc etc.

The kind of information you'd get from going on the trip with some old salt who'd paddled the route ten or twenty times. But the author admittedly lost all his notes on camp site information, so even that scant would be "guide" information that he put in the book is suspect. I'm currently distilling his entire guidebook into 3 pages of 7 point font notes, to be printed out on waterproof paper. Because that's about all the critical information it has in it, and I sure as HECK am not gonna carry around an extra pound of witty anecdotes about lighthouse history on my actual kayak trip up the I.P. So, I say plaintively, Children: when you set out to write a paddler's guidebook to an area, please spend more than a fleeting amount of time ACTUALLY PADDLING there. Not to do so opens one up to criticism. You may even be confused for an overly erudite guidebook author from a well known outdoor school in the desert southwest.

I was looking for more of a resource for making this trip. This book went into more depth about the history of the region than the specifics of the trip. In general I was pretty disappointed with it.

Full of history, regional politics, and local knowledge, this book is not just for kayakers. Anyone planning or dreaming of an Inside Passage voyage will enjoy this read. And yes, it has the maps, references, and all the hard-to-find details for actually doing this trip.

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