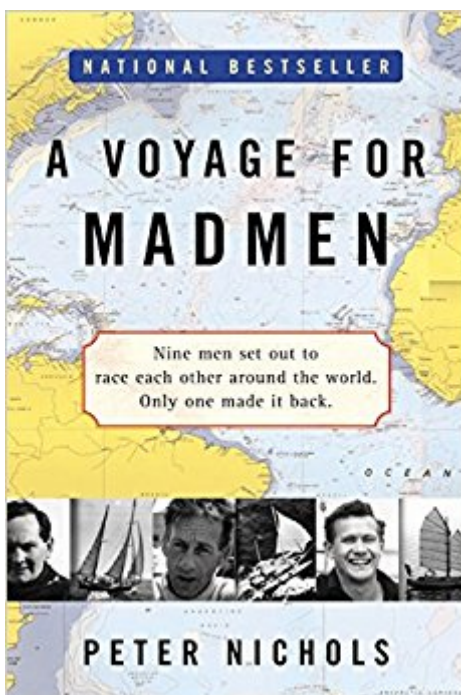


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# A Voyage For Madmen



## Synopsis

In 1968, nine sailors set off on the most daring race ever held: to single-handedly circumnavigate the globe nonstop. It was a feat that had never been accomplished and one that would forever change the face of sailing. Ten months later, only one of the nine men would cross the finish line and earn fame, wealth, and glory. For the others, the reward was madness, failure, and death. In this extraordinary book, Peter Nichols chronicles a contest of the individual against the sea, waged at a time before cell phones, satellite dishes, and electronic positioning systems. *A Voyage for Madmen* is a tale of sailors driven by their own dreams and demons, of horrific storms in the Southern Ocean, and of those riveting moments when a split-second decision means the difference between life and death.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

In the psychedelic summer of 1968, as Apollo 8 soared toward the moon and the Democratic Convention crashed in Chicago, nine men tried finally to accomplish the sailor's age-old ultimate goal: a solo, nonstop circumnavigation of the world. Nichols (*Sea Change*) deftly introduces myriad aspects of a voyage that promised "dubious, unquantifiable" rewards. He insightfully contextualizes the endeavor as an offshoot of Sir Francis Chichester's famous 1967 solo circumnavigation (with one stop), which represented to England a "longed-for" heroism. Detailing the British media's successful exploitation of the so-called race, he approaches the voyage as the remarkable result of nine men wishing to outdo Chichester. Nichols painstakingly describes the enormous difficulty of solo navigation in the pre-global positioning system of the 1960s. These "hardcase egomaniacs

driven by complex desires and vainglory to attempt an extreme, life-threatening endeavor" used only rudimentary equipment and their wits. Nichols is at his liveliest when describing the only two participants who "were really happy aboard their boats": the French-Asian Bernard Moitessier, the most skilled sailor, whose mystical seamanship brings surprises, and the British Robin Knox-Johnson, who was energized during his journey by the memory of "the Elizabethan sea heroes of his youth." Nichols also delivers a compelling portrait of English Donald Crowhurst, an electronics engineer whose "supercharged personality" wreaked havoc on the entire race. While Nichols's pace is neither breakneck nor suspenseful, his careful details and psychological insight make for a riveting account of the triumphant human spirit. 16-page photo insert, 8 maps. Copyright 2001 Cahners Business Information, Inc. --This text refers to an alternate Paperback edition.

In 1968 there remained one major nautical challenge yet to be accomplished: sailing single-handedly nonstop around the world. Nine men set out to achieve it in one of the most widely publicized yacht races. What could possess nine otherwise sane and responsible men to risk their lives, careers, and the well-being of their families by undertaking such a reckless endeavor? Nichols introduces the reader to the contestants, giving a vivid portrayal of the men attempting the feat. He expertly tells their individual stories in great detail: why they entered the race, what they had staked on winning, and their struggles at sea. He weaves their story together to form a comprehensive account of the race that reads like a suspense novel. Readers will eagerly turn the pages to discover how some were defeated by the ocean or the race's harsh rules and the lengths to which one contestant went to be declared the winner. An interesting slice of history that makes for a worthy seagoing adventure story. Gavin Quinn Copyright © American Library Association. All rights reserved --This text refers to an alternate Paperback edition.

Unbelievable true story. Have to wonder what most of the participants were thinking about. Don't know if this is a reflection of human nature in general, or a reflection of only this specific group. At a time when navigational technology was minimally advanced and accurate, particularly for the novice, only adequate, intense, and proper training could increase the odds of long distant sailing success. This group seemed to operate more on the "wing and a prayer philosophy" with an outcome that was almost guaranteed. Could have been better written, but the story itself is so amazing, that any literal shortcomings are minor. If you have any experience as a sailor, captain or crew, this book is well worth the read.

In today's world of professional sports and sponsorship, of satnav and Gps, it's difficult to believe the rudimentary nature of this challenge - to sail around the world without stopping - and the near naïve willingness of its participants to try on a whim. Especially in 1968 when most were focused on either the Apollo missions or the social upheaval of what's thought of as the 60's, that reach its crescendo that year. What set this book apart for me were the human stories and the peek into the minds of the individuals that participated. The line between self assurance and self delusion is thin indeed.

I'll start this review by making a confession: I don't know much about the sea. I think it is fascinating, mysterious, and makes one reflect about so many things, it is a sort of a philosopher's fountain in almost a literal sense. But I know it makes me sick, and the sole idea of spending more than a couple days without my fair share of land is hard to bear, even when I think about the fascinating destination I might reach at the end of a trip. And despite all this, I find sea stories quite appalling, and actually I don't think I have found any book about the subject dissapointing, even when surrounded by hype (e.g. life of pi, another 5 star). "A Voyage for Madmen" recounts the story of the 9 sailors (9 brave men) who set out to circumnavigate the world non-stop, without assistance other than radio and the occasional face to face encounter, on the Sunday Times' sponsored Golden globe race of 1968. The details given about their lives are brief and very well laid out and makes it very clear from the beginning know who the true seamen are, or who's testing their luck, in the the personalities pop out so nicely it makes me suppose the author knew them well personally. Peter Nichols loves the sea and respects those who dare to challenge it, having himself crossed the Atlantic on a solo trip. The prose is the kind you'd expect from such an exciting adventure. It might seem a bit over the top at times, but you just have to consider the years when the stories take place to realize how suiting it is, for in that era of marconi radios, not too many satellite systems and definitely no gps, the circumnavigation of the globe, let alone a solo race, was such a dangerous endeavour. There are several photographs of the participants and their boats, but I'd suggest you take a look at them after finishing the book to not spoil the ending (in case you don't know how it all played out, like myself). There were some "technical" terms here and there -at least for someone who, as I said before, doesn't know much about the sea-, but even though I'm not a native english speaker I could get most of it by simple internet searching or a quick look at the dictionary. I have no doubt that for the true seaman or old salt the reading will be easy breezy. I'd recommend this book to anyone who's interested in a good sea story, about the events surrounding the said Golden globe race of 1968, or any adventure in general.

I read this book on the recommendation that it was one of the best books they had ever read. I'm sure if I was into sailing, it may have been. It was a well written story about a race I had not heard of. Sailing around the world alone seems daunting and horrifically lonely which I think the author makes clear through all accounts. Would I recommend this book? Yes, but it would only be to a certain crowd and I would not be able to say it was quite possibly the best book I had ever read. I seem to be in the minority on that so take it with a grain of salt.

Mr. Nichols did an excellent job of writing about this incredible race and the driven men who challenged it. I was twelve years old when this race took place, yet short-handed racing yachts were in their infancy and their navigation technology was little better than that of Columbus and Magellan. Only the most daring would attempt racing them around the world, much less non-stop. Mr. Nichols reports the immense challenges of a solo nonstop sailboat race around the world. The author's description of the sailors was a psychological study of how this feat challenged each of the nine men who entered this race, and how they responded to that challenge. He did this without judgement, but with the attempt to understand why each man responded as they did to the situation in which they found themselves. A talent often lacking in the reportage of today. I highly recommend this book. Once begun, it is hard to put down.

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