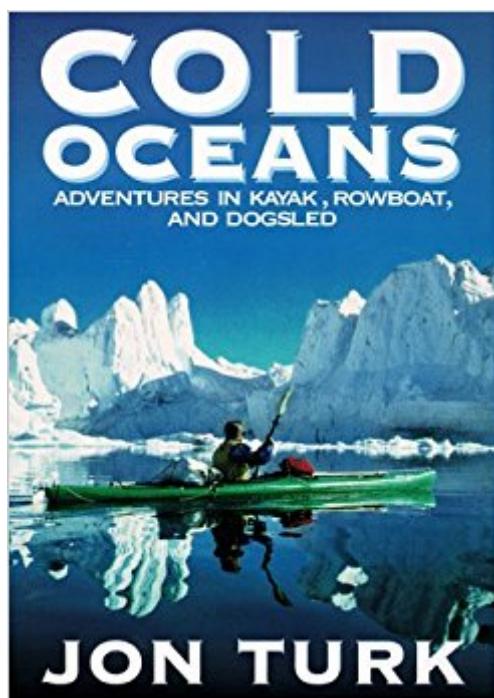


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# Cold Oceans: Adventures In Kayak, Rowboat, And Dogsled



## Synopsis

I remembered only the pleasures of adventure and the considerable gains which my travels earned me, and once again longed to sail new seas and explore new land. --Tales From the Thousand and One Nights, author unknown, translated by N. J. Dawood

An evocative and mesmerizing page-turner, Cold Oceans is the thrilling story of Jon Turk's expeditions to some of the most inhospitable regions on earth. Even after being shipwrecked off Cape Horn, stopped by ice in the Northwest Passage, and beaten back by Arctic blizzards, Turk has continued to follow an irresistible urge to explore. Guided by his restless spirit and fueled by tales of Elizabethan explorers, Turk first heads off alone to kayak around Cape Horn. But while he is paddling through the rain and mists, a racing storm scuttles his plans. On his next trip, he and his partner, Chris Seashore, attempt to row the Northwest Passage in a single season, but find themselves more often dragging than rowing their skiff through the half-frozen, gelatinous sea. Two years later, he attempts to run a dog team up the east coast of Baffin Island in the Canadian Arctic, making his final camp beneath a wind-varnished iceberg locked into a frozen sea. On his last expedition, he's again joined by Chris (by now his wife) as they paddle sea kayaks along an ancient Inuit migration route from Ellesmere Island to Greenland. Following in the footsteps of old ways, and listening to the land, its people, journey. Woven throughout the book is Jon and Chris's deepening relationship, and his reflections on the legendary explorers and adventurers who preceded him (Magellan, Frobisher, Amundsen, and others) and the aboriginal people who survived in these harsh lands. Turk writes with grace, humor, and assured knowledge of the Arctic landscape, capturing its beauty, power, vastness, and loneliness. His story is one of love, self-discovery, and his exuberant passion for wild places.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

From its opening passages, Jon Turk's *Cold Oceans* chronicles explorations in both exterior and interior landscapes. In honest, accessible prose, Turk retraces more than two decades of his varied and stirring adventures--attempting to round Cape Horn solo in a kayak, rowing the Northwest Passage, dogsledding the east coast of Baffin Island, and kayaking from Ellesmere Island to Greenland. As Turk plunges headlong through icy seas, repeated and assorted blunders, and bouts of personal lows, he transcends mere adventure storytelling to explore a changing notion of himself, deepening relationships, and the nature of failure and true success. These passages contain some of *Cold Oceans*'s greatest riches. With a host of explorers along as inspirational and literary companions, Turk evokes a landscape of life and history intertwined. After a daring 15-hour crossing to Greenland, Turk wrestles with polar explorer Robert Peary's notion of success, defined by fame and fortune, concluding, "What mattered was that he [Peary] communicated his passion to the world." And this is the success that Turk has achieved in *Cold Oceans*. Although the saga of choosing a life of adventure to stave off a more rooted and standard existence may seem a common tale, it is Turk's contemplation of this lifestyle choice that offers some of the book's finest insights. Ultimately, Turk's wanderings reveal how a thirst for adventure can at once drive, fragment, and unify a life. This incongruity is perhaps one of a traveler's greatest ponderings, and *Cold Oceans* confronts it boldly, piercing the heart of what it means to adventure. --Byron Ricks

Some of the most forbidding areas of the planet, from the Antarctic seas to Canada's Baffin Island, form the backdrop to this lumbering, highly personal memoir of dangerous treks and voyages across inhospitable terrain and water. Despite little experience and, it would seem, not a lot of common sense, Turk, a chemist and adventurer who works on promotion and product development for the outdoor apparel company the North Face, consistently embarks on grand journeys in "some of the coldest, wettest, most remote regions of the world," then bites off more than he can chew. Ill-planned efforts to kayak around Cape Horn and dogsled across Baffin fall short of their goals. There are poignant moments along the way?Turk's account of a sled dog's death and images of snowmobile-riding Inuits who reverentially refer to "the old days" are memorable. But Turk's belief that he can tackle any endeavor without training or wisdom extends at times to his writing. His many wilderness descriptions and epiphanies sometimes lead to prose as rough-hewn?and nearly as compelling?as the landscape itself: "When you climb a mountain, the way back is always downhill."

Though readers will likely find tough sledding even when on familiar territory, most will find it hard to be too put off by an adventurer who lost an opportunity to paddle through the Northwest Passage because, in planning, "I had ignored distance, ice, and wind." Five maps. (Sept.) FYI: The North Face is sponsoring Turk's six-city book tour in September. Copyright 1998 Reed Business Information, Inc.

thrilling!chilling literally!spine-tingling!and well-written besides

If you are into mountaineering, whitewater, adventure, etc, this is the book for you! Jon is a wonderfully well written explorer, and this book will be hard for you to put down! It will leave you pining for more of Jon's books!

I found this book at a cheap book store, you know the kind that has the sign "Giant Book Sale" on occasion I'd go in and browse. Most of the time there are coffee table books with lots of pictures, or calendars that didn't sell. However, I've learned that if I looked hard enough with an open mind I may find a really good book. Initially when I saw the book, I thought "It looks like something that will pass the time if I'm extremely bored" The sticker price said \$24.00 then under it it said "Our Price \$12.00" since the store was going out of business the book was marked down to \$1. What the heck! So I bought it. A month past and I decided to read it.. I kept reading it. In essence I could relate to him.- Marriage to a lady who didn't understand me and going thru a divorce because we didn't have the same dreams or ambitions.- A constant itch to explore and always dreaming about the next adventure.- Working just to pay the bills.- Find myself doing most adventures solo. Mr. Turk is a humble author. You see that in his failures and success'. In this day and age of editing film for time. we only hear of the success, and that does us a dis-service. Failure isn't so bad as long as you deal with it in a positive manner i.e. try, try, again! also enjoyed "In the Wake of The Jomon" I look forward to his next book (hopefully he is writing one). Lastly, my heart goes out to him and his family over the loss of Chris. She seemed like quite a lady.

I am 2/3s of the way finished with the audio edition of this book. I do find the writing to be good, and the stories inherently interesting, but I am struck by the casual way in which the author avoids the reality of his life (two marriages, 3 children) and the reality of the dangers he faced (near death situations on several occasions). The book reminds of Krakauer's Into the Wild, about the young man who went off unprepared into the winter of Alaska to find himself, only to die of starvation within

a few miles of help. The author is indeed candid about his missteps and near misses, and about the unsolicited but essential assistance that is given to him by bemused observers with more knowledge and experience. The book also brings up the issue of freedom and responsibility. How much freedom can one person claim for himself after bringing 3 children into the world yet still indulge himself in the life of an explorer, without accumulating negative karma. Perhaps these issues are better addressed in the last third of the book. So far, it has the ring of 60' child who never grew up.

Wonderful book. This title is as much a journal of one man's self discovery as it is a chronicle of his adventures. You start out not liking this man very much (at least I did), but as you near the end your opinion will have changed and you feel like you have been privy to something special. I'm afraid that reviewer VanRoy missed the point. This is not a manual or chronicle of well planned, expertly executed high adventure, it's the story of one man's steps and mis-steps in life set against the back-drop of some of the world's wildest and most inhospitable places. If you are looking for just an adventure chronicle you may want to go buy something like *The Endurance* (Shackleton's adventure to Antarctica). If you want to experience a wonderful mix of adventure of body, mind, and spirit set against some of the most beautiful places on earth get this book.

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Jon Turk gives us insight into his life of obsessive wanderlust coupled with a dysfunctional personal life. The redeeming elements include a taste of the risk involved in his expeditions, his historical knowledge of the indigenous people/ former explorers and his awakening to the quality of his girlfriend, Chris. (She put up with a lot of his crap) Unfortunately, this is contrasted by his repetitive and eventually predictable impatience with which he approaches each expedition. His

relationship with his children and female companion (and eventual wife) reveal his "me first" affliction. I think the book would have been more interesting if he limited the comings and goings of all his children and focussed on more of the technical aspects of his expeditions. During one part of his dogsled journey, his expedition companion leaves him to return home. I think I would have been on that bandwagon, myself.

Chapters range from one to four pages, and each one is shaped by Turk's pen into a comic or thoughtful, dramatic or narrative whole. You can pick the book up and read any of these vignettes at random; a treat is there, whether you have read the previous ones or not. If, like me, you have a shelf in your bookcase where you keep those few books you can read again and again for the sheer pleasure of their words and images, books that can inspire you to write more cleanly and clearly, I think you will conclude that *Cold Oceans* belongs on that shelf. (Excerpt from review in *Open-Water Rowing* newsletter.)

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