

Title: *A Winter's Paddle*

Subtitle: *A Kayak Journey Around the South Island of New Zealand*

Author: Tara Mulvany

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Review: Karen Grant

In her book *A Winter's Paddle* Tara Mulvany tells the story of her winter circumnavigation of the South Island of New Zealand. She is the first woman to complete this journey and the only person to have done it in winter.

Tara sets out on this epic five month journey with her boyfriend Sim. What do they have to look forward to? After paddling each day, they must land on an unfamiliar beach, at times battling through hair-raising, dumping surf in darkness, before they can set up camp in total exhaustion. When each morning comes, they then have to scrape themselves out of bed to set off again, and possibly battle out through more dumping waves. This is a story with adventure, danger, mishaps and the tension of the changing relationship between the Tara and Sim.

I found Tara's style of telling her story most engaging. She draws you quickly into her tale in the opening pages when she vividly recounts the excitement and frustrations of an earlier storm-ravaged excursion to Fiordland. It was this experience that sparked Tara's plan to circumnavigate the South Island, and the winter timing was to fit in with her summer guiding work.

Through Tara's descriptive writing you can almost feel the bite of the cold winter wind, hear the crunch of ice under foot on a cold clear morning, and should I mention the urgency to pee? Even the potential for destruction by 'dumpers' is palpable, as is the sense of relief at making it safely to shore for the evening, or safely back through big waves for the next stretch of paddling. Through her story you enter her world. This plucky young woman battled through storms, glandular fever and persistent sea-sickness to pursue and achieve her goal; to give up would be unthinkable. Tara chronicles the story of her journey, its hardships and beauty with great skill and it is a good read.

Sporting an attractive cover with a selfie of Tara, I was disappointed that a low quality paper had been used for the content. The silky cover is a delight to feel in the hands but turning the page is not so appealing. I would also have preferred to see the text neatly justified to both left and right margins.

This is Tara's first book. Since writing this enjoyable account of her South Island journey, she has completed circumnavigations of the North Island and of Stewart Island. I now look forward to reading her future books.

