

**Title:** *A Voyage Beyond Reason*

**Subtitle:** *An Epic Survival based on the original journals of Benjamin Wade*

**Author:** Tom Gauthier

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**Cover:** softcover

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**Review:** Val Burns

This is a novel written by Tom Gauthier. Even though it is a novel, it uses true personal experiences and reflections written by a young man who set out to kayak 6,000 kilometers from California to South America in 1996.

The young man (Benjamin Wade) kept a written journal of his epic journey and this journal was found buried in a plastic bag in the sand in 1998. Because of the way the story is introduced, you are never really quite sure whether Benjamin reached his destination.

You learn as you read it that it was the journey that became so important to Benjamin, not the destination. I was not disappointed.

There is not a lot of detail about his kayak or the items he took with him, so this is not a book for those who like all that kind of detail. Neither are there any maps. When I read an account of someone's kayaking trip, I like to look at maps of the area to get a feel for coastlines and distances. I referred to Google Maps and my trusty old atlas several times whilst reading it as the emphasis was not often on the distances he was paddling to achieve his ultimate goal.

The book is more about this man's thoughts and feelings and his spiritual connection with the elements of sea, land and sky, and the creatures he encountered on his journey. There is a religious element to his story, which quite clearly helped him get through some of the really frightening experiences he had. (I am not a religious person at all but his journals make it easy to fully understand his strong belief). Each chapter has actual journal entries (in italics) written by Benjamin, with more detailed descriptions written by Tom who is "reading between the lines" of Benjamin's journals.

It is easy to read, very engrossing yet sometimes quite disturbing. It was unusual to read the journals of such a spiritual young man – it was like you were eavesdropping into his very thoughts and emotions at times. His state of mind, particularly towards the end, clearly showed the effects of isolation from society and people.

Both writers describe the sea (both calm and scarily huge and rough), landscapes and skylines very well – I was pleased I was comfortable and dry while I was reading it.

When the end of the book is drawing near, you finally get to find out whether he satisfies his huge ambition. (I was so glad I had not sneaked a look at the last few pages of the book before I started reading it, as all is revealed.)

And then, of course, you find out something else about Benjamin Wade, and it all fits into place. I was right there with him (although thankfully not as I doubt I could survive such a journey). I purchased this book second hand on TradeMe to add to my collection of kayak expedition books.

