

Sula Sgeir was described in Robert Macfarlane's *The Old Ways* and some of the folk tales were familiar to me to a greater or lesser extent. Most important, though, are the locations visited, islands and inlets around the northwest of Scotland, the wildlife which looms much larger in this remote land and seascape, sometimes because it is much larger. The author had been a literature student and his turn of phrase comes across well.

For a sailing book from the far corner of the country from me I was struck by just how much was directly relevant to my own experiences, not least the revisiting of some of the best of our coastline. It is a part of the world where people have to be inclusive and this book has a similar feel to it, where you do not need to be one of the regulars, in reading or place, to be welcome.

Mediterranean



Huw Kingston
Whittles Publishing, Dunbeath,
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978 1 84995 274 3
240 x 170mm
209 pages, paperback
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£19.99

We have carried many stories about the north side of the Med and the islands, not so the south side or east end.

This was planned as a year long circuit of the Mediterranean by sea kayak, bike, ski and foot. Inevitably there were changes to the plans.

Huw Kingston was born in Sheffield, of Welsh extraction, but has since emigrated to Australia, where his activities have included a circuit of Aus by various forms of human powered transport and has paddled the Bass Strait as part of one of a series of city to city expeditions, frequently subjected to the aftermath of a teenage back injury 35 years ago.

He considered doing the whole trip by sea kayak but reckoned it would take 15 months, longer than he wished to be away from his wife and grandchildren.

Instead, he chose to leave from Gallipoli on the 99th anniversary of the Anzac landings and use various forms of human powered transport to return for the centenary in 2015.

The initial part was by sea kayak as far as Croatia, which was the best paddling country of the journey. Shipping was stopped so that he could go through the Corinth Canal but widespread generosity and help were encountered regularly at all levels, often by people who had moved on from their countries of birth.

From Slovenia to Spain the route was by bike with walking over the Alps and, for a while, along the Canal du Midi. Then from Almerimar along the Andalusian coast to Morocco was by sea kayak again, coming up against bureaucracy, partly explained when he found out, subsequently, that crossing the Strait of Gibraltar by sea kayak is now illegal.

The trip was planned during the Arab Spring but now there were various terrorist attacks, both along the north African coast and in France, with support being shown for the *Charlie Hebdo* attack. The 1,500km cycle ride across Algeria was accompanied by a convoy of police cars, motorcycles and blue flashing lights with accommodation in prebooked hotels, no camping in quiet corners and chatting to the locals.

With the poor situation from here and the increasingly desperate war in Syria it was clear that a change of plan was required while still trying to meet the Gallipoli deadline. Many people had contributed to the trip, particularly by ferrying kit around Europe, none more so than Marin Medak, unknown at the start of the trip. A former trans Atlantic rower, he located and bought a suitable craft, had it transported to Tunisia and then rowed it with Huw across the Mediterranean via Malta to Greece. The final sea kayak section was up the Turkish coast from Marmaris to Gallipoli.

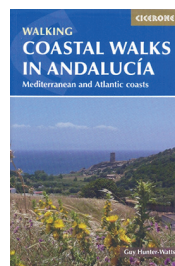
One recurring theme is the increase of plastic debris accumulating along shorelines. In his home town in Australia, Huw had instigated a refusal to buy bottled water, opposing the use of oil to make plastic bottles, filling them with water and then using more oil to ship them around the world where often there is perfectly adequate water in the tap, a campaign which has been picked up around the world.

The trip raised \$100,000 for Save the Children and Huw had firsthand evidence of attempts by refugees to cross to Europe, later returning to Kos to see how his funds were being spent.

The book is surprisingly well illustrated for a solo trip and will have you chuckling at the humour. Kit lists are included for each part of the trip, complicated where some had to be left at transition points, some carried forward and some new kit picked up.

This is very much a book for adventurers, avoiding the tourist hotspots, of which there are plenty, and, instead, meeting a wide range of people off the beaten track.

Coastal Walks in Andalucía

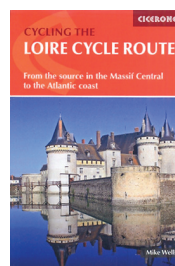


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170 x 120mm
265 pages, paperback
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£14.95

This book offers coastal walks in southwest Spain between Cabo de Trafalgar and Agua Amarga, including Gibraltar. They are usually circular walks. The shoreline is most likely to be met at the two ends, the Costa de la Luz and the Costa de Almería. In the centre, the Costa del Sol and the Costa Tropical, they tend to retreat into the mountains to avoid the holidaymaker developments, the sea being only visible in the distance. Thus, there are photos of the sea and coast conditions at each end but only a guide to the mountain ranges visible in the centre.

The walks are set in national parks and, as well as the rugged scenery, give information from the geology to the birdlife, this being an important migration route. Along the coastline there is valuable guidance on the cliffs, towers, lighthouses, where there is kite surfing, winds, accommodation, taxis and maps, the book including 1:50,000 maps where contours are shown and coloured but not numbered, although the walks do give the ascent and descent for each walk, which should offer a guide to river flow rates when not dry. A lot can be learned about sea and coastal conditions simply by looking at the pictures but there are exceptions. The last walk ends at Las Negras, where the author advises of the likelihood of encountering naked hippies smoking among the rocks.

The Loire Cycle Route



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978 1 85284 842 2
170 x 120mm
251 pages, paperback
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£16.95

The Loire is France's longest river, largely agricultural, passing numerous châteaux and famous vineyards. As such, it is a popular touring route, 1,052km long. Dams keep powered craft away from the upper wild reaches and commercial craft only use it below Angers, the last 160km.

Along the way a number of significant tributaries are crossed. Several canals are encountered and these may be described in more detail than the main river as the cycle route often uses towpaths whereas the route following the river is frequently on levées or back across floodplains. Altitudes are given, suggesting the rate of fall of the river, particularly in the upper reaches. For each village there is a list of facilities available, shown in brown to make them easier to spot. Canoeing facilities are mentioned in passing at Lac-d'Issarlès and Le Mignon.

The introduction gives practical logistics for anyone travelling to the river.

The book is offered as a replacement for *Cycling the River Loire* (Oct 03, p25) and is 60% longer despite omitting the 209km from Orange to the source of the river at Gerbier de Jonc in the Massif Central. Now it covers just what it says in the title, down to St Nazaire, with only brief description of how to get to and from the river's nearest major transport links. The sketch maps have been replaced by fully detailed maps at 1:150,000 with town centre enlargements.