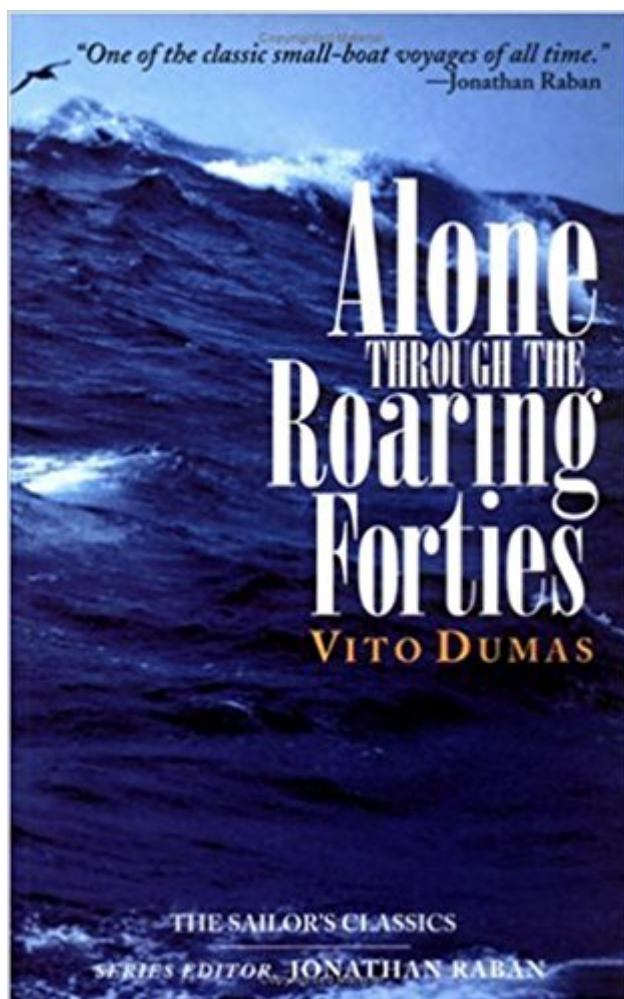


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# Alone Through The Roaring Forties



## Synopsis

The Sailor's Classics library introduces a new generation of readers to the best books ever written about small boats under sail. Below the Cape of Good Hope and south of Australia lie the feared latitudes of the "Roaring Forties," where nonstop westerly gales push huge seas, unimpeded, around and around the bottom of the world. It was into this watery hell that, in 1942, Vito Dumas set sail in a 31-foot ketch.

## Book Information

Series: Sailor's Classics

Paperback: 208 pages

Publisher: International Marine/Ragged Mountain Press; 1 edition (April 30, 2003)

Language: English

ISBN-10: 0071414304

ISBN-13: 978-0071414302

Product Dimensions: 5.3 x 0.6 x 8.2 inches

Shipping Weight: 8 ounces

Average Customer Review: 4.6 out of 5 stars 13 customer reviews

Best Sellers Rank: #1,913,312 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) #104 in [Books > Sports & Outdoors > Outdoor Recreation > Sailing > Narratives](#) #1601 in [Books > Science & Math > Earth Sciences > Geography > Regional](#) #1730 in [Books > Sports & Outdoors > Outdoor Recreation > Boating](#)

## Customer Reviews

What Are 'The Sailor's Classics'? No one meets the ocean on quite such intimate terms as the sailor in a small boat. No one experiences a solitude more absolute than that encountered by long-distance single-handed sailors like Joshua Slocum or Bernard Moitessier. Since the early nineteenth century, when Byron and Shelley put to sea in their own boats in order to set themselves adrift in nature at its most turbulent and unruly, writing and sailing have gone hand in hand. There have been writers who sailed; Wilkie Collins, Joseph Conrad, Robert Louis Stevenson, Hilaire Belloc, Jack London, E.B. White, William Golding, John Barth, Thomas McGuane, Geoffrey Wolff; along with a multitude of sailors who wrote, from Slocum and John Voss to Tristan Jones and the father-son team of Daniel and David Hays. After nearly two hundred years, the literature of small-boat voyaging under sail is enormous, and every publishing season sees more additions to the list. It is the function of The Sailor's Classics to recognize and

celebrate the relatively small number of truly important books in this library. Some have been chosen because the voyages they describe are themselves of unignorable merit; some because the sheer brilliance of their writing demands their inclusion. Most combine in equal parts serious nautical interest with literary excellence. As general editor of the series, I am always trying to keep in mind the bookshelves on my own 35-foot ketch. A proper ship's library isn't restricted to books with boats in them, of course; I wouldn't happily set sail for more than a day or two without novels by Dickens, Trollope, Evelyn Waugh, and Saul Bellow, and poetry by Pope, Keats, Tennyson, Hardy, Philip Larkin, and Robert Lowell. The big question is which small-boat voyages can stand up in such exalted literary company? Not very many is the honest answer, and half the function of an editor is to know what he must reject. The books that won't figure in the series are as important as those that will. We won't be publishing quaint curiosities. Period charm does not make a classic, and though I have a soft spot for, say, Nathaniel Bishop's *Four Months in a Sneak Box* (1879), and an even softer one for Maurice Griffiths's *The Magic of the Swathways* (1932), they won't be found in *The Sailor's Classics*. Nor will the many salty "yarns" full of the faded yo-ho-ho of generations past. Whimsical accounts of family vacations afloat (the obligatory adventure with the dog and the dinghy...) will be left to gather dust in peace. So will all those melancholy solo voyages in which the writers go to sea in order to discover themselves. There remain the books whose vigor has not dimmed with the passage of time, whose voice is as alive and meaningful now as it was on their first publication; the books that should be essential reading for every literate sailor. No. 2 in the series is Richard Maury's *The Saga of Cimba*, first published in 1939; No. 4 is *The Strange Last Voyage of Donald Crowhurst* by Nicholas Tomalin and Ron Hall, first published in 1971. They are perfect examples of what I mean: one a loving close-up portrait of the sea in all its moods, written by a master mariner with an astonishing literary gift; the other a study, by two journalists, of a man who lost touch with reality during the course of the first singlehanded round-the-world yacht race. Each, in its very different way, is an indispensable book. Each contributes an important thread to the larger pattern in the carpet, which is the great, various, and intricate design of the literature of small-boat sailing. *The Sailor's Classics* will surprise our readers with its richness and complexity. Since Homer's *Odyssey*, the voyage has supplied one of the classic forms in literature; both as a grand metaphor for life itself in the long passage from birth to death, and as a sequence of tests and adventures. Equally, the boat (and especially the small boat) has long stood as a symbol of selfhood; a fragile ark bearing the journeying soul to its destination. Hilaire Belloc put the matter beautifully in *The Cruise of the Nona*: "The cruising of a boat here and there is very much

what happens to the soul of a man in a larger way... We are granted great visions, we suffer intolerable tediums, we come to no end of the business, we are lonely out of sight of England, we make astonishing landfalls; and the whole rigmarole leads us along no whither, and yet is alive with discovery, emotion, adventure, peril and repose." Those five nouns should be emblazoned above The Sailor's Classics: it is from the interweaving of discovery, emotion, adventure, peril, and repose that the pattern of sailing literature is made, and we shall do our best to honor each and every one in our selection of the best books ever written about life aboard small boats at sea. Jonathan Raban Series Editor March 2001 --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

"One of the classic small-boat voyages of all time."--Jonathan Raban In June 1942, Vito Dumas set off from Buenos Aires for a trip around the world unlike any previous circumnavigation--eastward over the "impossible route," the Roaring Forties of the Southern Ocean: south of the Cape of Good Hope, south of Australia, and south of Cape Horn. His craft, the *Lehg II*, a 31-foot ketch named for his mistress, carried only the most makeshift gear and provisions. He refused to carry a sea anchor, a bilge pump, or more than one screwdriver, and he had so few clothes that he had to stuff them with newspaper to keep warm. He also sailed without a radio, since carrying one during wartime might have labeled him a spy. He was the first to complete the 20,000-mile voyage singlehanded, the first solo sailor to round Cape Horn and survive, and the first to sail around the world with only three landfalls (in South Africa, New Zealand, and Chile). But what sets this story apart is Dumas's powerful prose, recording elation and depression, hardship and relaxation, and, above all, his unrelenting determination in the face of adversity. The terror of sailing through massive storms without respite from the helm alternates with periods of relative calm when he reflects on the enchanting nature of the sea. His trio of landfalls--sojourns he called "calm waters where my spirit could rest"--add yet another distinction to this beautiful tale. *Alone Through the Roaring Forties* is also a tribute to *Lehg II*, Dumas's beloved boat. He calls her his "shipmate," and "faithful companion," "an ideal floating house of extraordinary strength and endurance," and had complete faith in her abilities and performance. First published in 1960, *Alone Through the Roaring Forties* is a classic tale of skilled navigation, seamanship, and great adventure, but it also demonstrates, as Dumas intended, the possibilities of global peace and friendship in a world at war. As Jonathan Raban writes in his introduction, "Dumas chose to see his circumnavigation as a test of his ordinary humanity. There are hurricane-force winds here, and hazardous waves, but . . . it is his reverence for the small things that gives *Alone Through the Roaring Forties* its distinction as a classic." "One of

the greatest voyages ever made by a solo sailor. Dumas's three-stop solo circumnavigation of the world, at latitudes infamous for their extended gales and appallingly high seas, was accomplished in a cruising ketch, less than 32 feet in length, without self-steering gear, in the middle of a major war. . . . It is his reverence for the small things that gives *Alone Through the Roaring Forties* its distinction as a classic. This most harrowing of voyages is presented by its author as a story of Everyman on a modest sea pilgrimage. . . . Other solo circumnavigators have made the world seem dauntingly larger by their harrowing exploits; Dumas makes it seem smaller."--from the introduction by Jonathan Raban

You have to read it to believe it. A wonderfully brave adventure.

Vito Dumas circumnavigated the world with only three stops in the 1940's. However, the "Forties" in the title is not about years - it's about sailing at forty degrees latitude. "The "roaring winds" were making their weight felt. The English have given them this name because, apart from their violence, they have a peculiar sound not unlike that of a saw cutting wood. They rule the waves in 40 degrees South, accompanied by low cloud, rain and squalls." The understated style Dumas has in describing harrowing, life-threatening moments at sea can be tedious. "On the 6th of July my arm was worse. The sea had gone a little, the wind remained very fresh. At 10 o'clock I set down the storm trysail, a sail for foul weather, smaller than the mainsail under which I had set out. This task, hard enough at any time on a moving deck, was doubly awkward with my right arm useless; I was beginning to get worried about the septic condition." Yikes. A useless septic arm in the middle of a stormy ocean? with fresh wind ?? (or as Bob Dylan might put it, 'wild ripping hail'.) The modern reader may get bored with the passive voice and lack of imagery. However, if you can read between the lines his humbling understated account is heroic.

This is a must read for all who yearn for a simpler time when man and boat could head over the horizon without government red tape and technology anchors.

There is an earlier translation that is more detailed and longer. Still a very inspiring work.

A book for ocean sailors. Pure classic

Have long been waiting to order this book and add it to our library! We are thrilled to own it.

Dumas joins the shortlist of epic circumnavigators. In a concise yet honest recall of the journey, he takes you along on his voyage, at the time, a feat, and despite the lack of funds and proper preparation by most sailors standards, he makes it a voyage worth setting out on.

This is one of the classic reads of sailing. Very exciting journey and one of incredible skill and ability, particularly from a solo voyager. I was very excited to find a copy of my own to add to my library!

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