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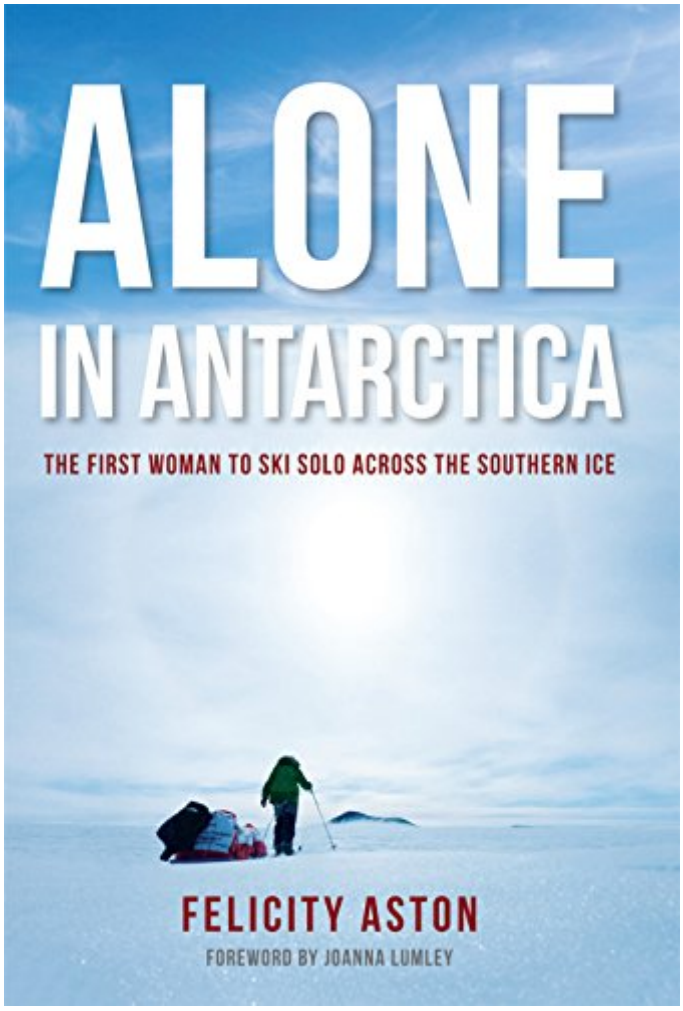
Alone In Antarctica: The First Woman To Ski Solo Across The Southern Ice



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Synopsis

In the whirling noise of our advancing technological age, we are seemingly never alone, never out-of-touch with the barrage of electronic data and information.Felicity Aston, physicist and meteorologist, took two months off from all human contact as she became the first woman -- and only the third person in history – to ski across the entire continent of Antarctica alone. She did it, too, with the simple apparatus of cross-country, without the aids used by her prededecessors – two Norwegian men – each of whom employed either parasails or kites.Astonâ ™s journey across the ice at the bottom of the world asked of her the extremes in terms of mental and physical bravery, as she faced the risks of unseen cracks buried in the snow so large they might engulf her and hypothermia due to brutalizing weather. She had to deal, too, with her emotional vulnerability in face of the constant bombardment of hallucinations brought on by the vast sea of whiteness, the lack of stimulation to her senses as she faced what is tantamount to a form of solitary confinement.Like Cheryl Strayedâ ™s Wild, Felicity Astonâ ™s Alone in Antarctica becomes an inspirational saga of one womanâ ™s battle through fear and loneliness as she honestly confronts both the physical challenges of her adventure, as well as her own human vulnerabilities.

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Customer Reviews

I finished this book while staying at a 5-star hotel in Seoul, Korea. My comfortable surroundings only served to emphasize the enormous distance between what I was doing then and what Felicity Aston did for 59 days in 2011 and 2012. Wearing skis, hauling two sledges loaded with gear and supplies, and using muscle power alone, Aston became the first (and, so far, the only) woman to make a solo crossing of Antarctica. The lure of the white continent for explorers, scientists, and adventurers is unmistakable, and it seems there is always another â œfirstâ • to attempt. Aston actually accomplished two firsts in one trip: she was not just the first woman to cross solo, she was also the first person to cross alone using only her own muscle-generated power. She covered nearly 1100 miles with only the briefest of direct human contact. To give some perspective, this would be something like walking from Los Angeles to Seattle, but instead of paved roads and pleasant weather, youâ ™d have to contend with mountains, blizzards, whiteouts, potentially-deadly crevasses, hallucinations, freezing temperatures, and utter solitude. Oh, and no flush toilets. Did I mention that you have to pack it all out with you in little bags? And so on. No potato chips. No home-delivery pizza. No internet (she did have a satellite phone for daily position reports). Nobody to help pitch the tent in a blizzard. Nobody to find you if you wandered away from your tent and got lost. But then, there would also be no one to look at you like you are a loony when you shouted at the top of your lungs in either frustration or exultation. Aston did plenty of both.So why did she do it? It hadnâ ™t been done before. She wanted to prove, to herself and skeptics, that she could do it.

After reading several books about dead white male explorers in Antarctica, this account was a refreshing change. I found myself rooting for this woman, sometimes wanting to give her a kick in the snowpants to tell her to get a move on and at points being moved to tears about a necklace her sister gave to her and some cookies in the bottom of her bag. I think her book truly made me understand how terribly difficult such a journey is mentally, from battling her loneliness and strange behaviors and thoughts brought on by fatigue to some quirky moments that made the reader realize just how alone she really was to some dangerous behavior that had me seriously concerned about whether she was going to make it alive. She seemed to me to be very candid in this account, sharing her vulnerabilities and mistakes so that you really are rooting for her once she leaves the South Pole.I gave the book four stars because I wanted more. This had a movie-like ending, not a book ending. She seems to gloss over the physical effort too much in my opinion. She has a hilarious anecdote about her training with a tire, but I wanted more details about her training for this adventure. Because I was rooting for her at the end, I wanted to be there for her reunion with her family and to see the reaction of her friends and followers. She speaks in the beginning about how

such a journey changes someone and she does touch on how she's changed, but I was curious whether she was changed in the years that followed. Did her personality change? Did she change the way she chose to live her life? I also was interested in the messages she sent out on her sat phone. She and the reader don't know how her real-time accounts played online, but it would have been interesting to learn what the response was from those following her.

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