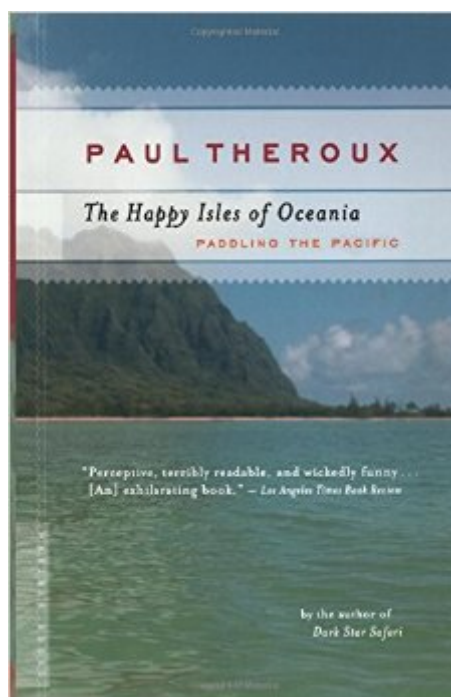


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The Happy Isles Of Oceania: Paddling The Pacific



Synopsis

In one of his most exotic and breathtaking journeys, the intrepid traveler Paul Theroux ventures to the South Pacific, exploring fifty-one islands by collapsible kayak. Beginning in New Zealand's rain forests and ultimately coming to shore thousands of miles away in Hawaii, Theroux paddles alone over isolated atolls, through dirty harbors and shark-filled waters, and along treacherous coastlines. This exhilarating tropical epic is full of disarming observations and high adventure.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

I'm a big fan of Paul Theroux, at least his travel literature (the only novel of his I've read is *Waldo*, his debut, which, despite moments of hilarity, doesn't quite come off). In the travel genre, I've read his *The Great Railway Bazaar*, *The Kingdom by the Sea*, *The Pillars of Hercules*, *Dark Star Safari*, *Riding the Iron Rooster*, and *Ghost Train to the Eastern Star*. *The Great Railway Bazaar* is a masterpiece, the others merely very good to outstanding. Time magazine called *The Happy Isles of Oceania* (1992) "possibly his best," and I wondered, as I took up the book, whether this were overstatement or requisite gushing, the deification of another American intellectual. But *Happy Isles* really is possibly his best - possibly. It's certainly his most unique. Theroux has become famous for being "that travel writer who travels by train," yet here he explores 51 Pacific islands mainly by foot and collapsible kayak. He could have rented cars (and he did, occasionally) and trudded around the more developed areas (he does, sometimes), but no, this author is prone to doing things the hard way - exploring the middles of myriad nowhere, and even setting up camp - and the reader is rewarded for it. *Happy Isles* is divided into four happy parts: *Meganesia* (New Zealand and

Australia), Melanesia (the Trobriands, the Solomons, Vanuatu, Fiji), Polynesia (Tonga, Western Samoa, American Samoa, Tahiti, the Cook Islands, the Marquesas, and Easter Island), and what Theroux calls Paradise (the Hawaiian Islands). The isles are diverse, yet similar. Words have travelled thousands of kilometers, and the writer talks about how most islanders have a sense of family, of connectedness.

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