



Walking on Water

Andrew Martin

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What did Captain James Cook, Elvis Presley and the author of this book have in common? They all went to Hawaii to live a dream or die there. The North Shore on the island of Oahu is only twelve miles long but it has the magic and myth of Troy or Never Never Land. In summer it is a sleepy, sun-soaked, palm-fringed strip of beaches. But in winter, with the coming of the biggest waves on the planet, it is transformed into a mecca for surfing pilgrims from all over the world. Sunset Beach, Banzai Pipeline and Waimea Bay are the legendary arena for a series of surfing showdowns where, for the first time, an Englishman, Martin Potter, was in contention for the world professional title. The author ostensibly in Hawaii to report on the Triple Crown contests, nurtured a secret plan: to launch his own personal assault on the foam-tipped mountains of the sea. Variousy helped and hindered by shapers, gurus and born-again Christians, distracted from his self-imposed task by assorted temptations, this born-again beachbum struggled to find the board, the skills and the guts that would enable him to conquer the man-eating waves of the Pacific. Surfing is less a sport than a state of mind, an adventure in mythology, a religion with its own high priests and ritual sacrifices. This book is about waves. It is the story of an obsession, a journey through heaven and hell, the clumsy initiation of an outsider into a cult and a culture. It is also an oblique history of the world, a human comedy on waves, that will find an echo in anyone who has fallen prey to the spell of the ocean.

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Brian Paige:

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