

HOUSE INSIDE THE WAVES: Domesticity, Art and the Surfing Life

Reviewed by Mark Frutkin

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A year living on the surfer's paradise coast of Australia inspired this memoir in praise of all things romantic: family, writers addicted to adventure, and above all, the ten-story wave. Taylor, a long-distance swimmer and long-time surfer, offers us a collage of memories from the near and distant past. With his two daughters and his wife, who was on a teacher exchange from snowy Ottawa, the family dives with commendable passion into their new life in a land where summer never ends.

As well as offering his love of the ocean ("Bugga the shaks," an Aussie friend tells him), Taylor muses on his role as a dedicated househusband. He revisits the lives of numerous writers who have left home to find the world: Gauguin, Byron, Bruce Chatwin, Robert Louis Stevenson, Henry Miller, Kerouac and others. He also introduces us to ill-fated friends and family, exhibiting a sense of nostalgia for the sixties that is so unabashed and good-hearted that it's refreshing. We also meet the local Australians and the expats peopling the gorgeous east coast, many an eccentric among them. The writing is energetic and fluid - it rolls along like the swells and breakers of Australia's Byron Bay, at times capturing unforgettable scenes, such as the image of a sea eagle diving into the waves and coming out "gripping the fish in its talons, the fish still swimming fifty yards in the sky." Altogether as delightful and refreshing as a dip in the ocean, whether you own a surfboard or not.