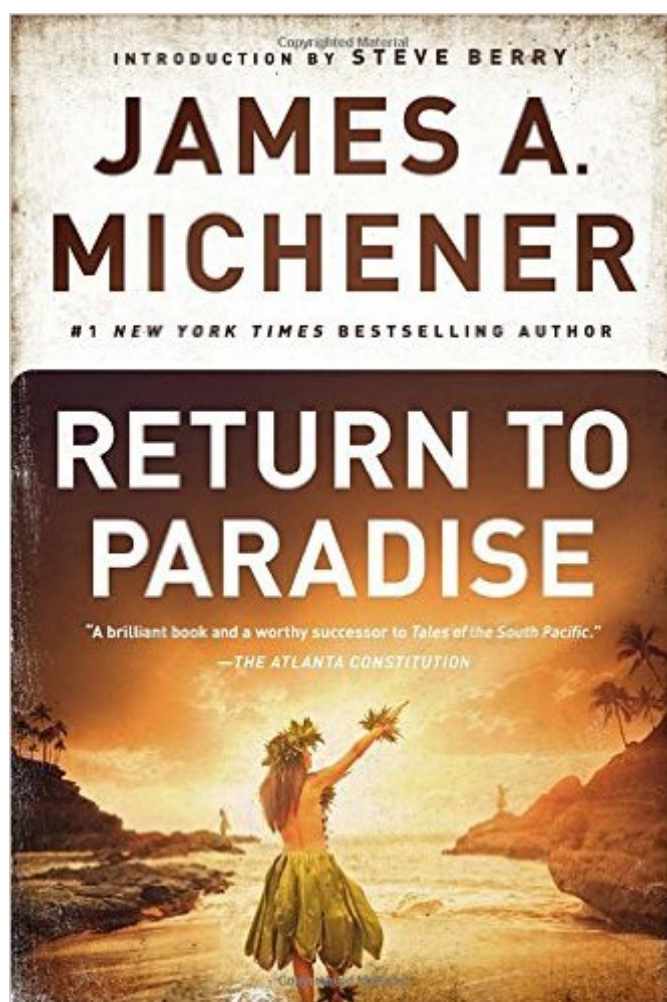


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Return To Paradise



Synopsis

James A. Michener, the master of historical fiction, revisits the scenes of his first great work, *Tales of the South Pacific*, the Pulitzer Prize winner that brought him international acclaim. In this sequel collection, Michener once again evokes the magic of the extraordinary isles in the Pacific—from Fiji and Gaudalcanal to New Zealand and Papua New Guinea—through stories that burst with adventure, charm, and local color. For Michener's many fans around the globe, *Return to Paradise* is a precious second look at a land of enchantment by one of the most gifted storytellers of the twentieth century.
Praise for *Return to Paradise*
"A brilliant book and a worthy successor to *Tales of the South Pacific*."
"The Atlanta Constitution"
"This is a book that should be read by everyone. . . . All who have seen the South Pacific will find on every page the odors of frangipani, copra, blood, and beer."
"The New York Times"
"There's drama and pathos and adventure and humanity . . . and a very high degree of excellence. Michener can write."
"Kirkus Reviews"

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

In this "sequel" to the more highly regarded *TALES OF THE SOUTH PACIFIC*, author Michener adopts a somewhat different format. For each of the South Pacific islands included, he first writes an essay about its history and culture. He follows the essay with fiction, an original story set on that island. He not only writes about such obvious choices as Tahiti and Fiji; he also includes both Australia and New Zealand. His story set in New Zealand, a World War II homefront piece entitled

UNTIL THEY SAIL, later became a film. That's the one part of this book that I remembered clearly, after a good 40 years, when I sat down to read RETURN TO PARADISE for the second time. Michener's essays describe the South Pacific as it was in the late 1940s, several years before this "tail end" baby boomer was born, so today's reader needs to approach them as history and treat them accordingly. As such, they're intriguing. Some of the accompanying stories are equally dated, but I was surprised to find others echoing with human dilemmas only too familiar in today's world. UNTIL THEY SAIL didn't disappoint me a bit when read from a mature (think "old enough to be a grandma") woman's viewpoint, even though I last read it as a girl not long into adolescence. It helped me understand my parents' generation, then. This time around it reminded me that what happens to men and women separated (or brought together) by war is universal, and its dynamics never change. Michener is always worth reading. 5 stars for sheer durability!

I purchased this book after seeing the 1953 movie based on one of the stories in "Return to Paradise". After reading the book, I discovered that Michener painted a picture of Polynesia and the South Pacific as being both a heaven and a hell. Unlike the "travelog" descriptions by the media and travel industry, Michener is brutally honest. He describes both the things that make the South Pacific a place of indescribable beauty and a place exactly the opposite by telling interweaving tales of events and people in various places. These stories are eye-opening giving a taste of reality in this blend of fact and fiction. I recommend this as a mandatory reading for any American who wishes to go beyond the typical tourist venues of any of these South Pacific Paradises, otherwise they may be in for a shock. Until I read this book, I wanted to retire to and live in one of the many places Michener writes about. I now realize, where I live is closer to my idea of Paradise than what I envisioned the places of the South Pacific.

I loved this book. While reading Tales of the South Pacific, I was interested in the island cultures which played behind the main stories. This book delves into those cultures, as they were when the book was written. Nice stories.

This is, in a way, a follow-up to Mitchner's Tales of the South Pacific. The time is five years after the end of World War II. It is more like Mitchner's later books with factual chapters about the South Pacific interspersed with anecdotal chapters giving life, flavor, and character to its inhabitants. From Australia and New Zealand to the New Hebrides and Polynesia, he describes each island's unique features; how some you may want to live in, why some you would want to avoid. The detail is

intense without being tedious, truly captivating, a great, fun-read as only Mitchner can provide.

Until reading *Return to Paradise*, I would not have thought Michener could write so poorly - or, if he didn't really write it as a cohesive book, a gaggle of editors could so badly slam together such a disjointed slapdash mess. Having lived in the islands long ago, I picked up a few historical points I was previously unaware of, and that, frankly, was the only positive feature of the book. The text wandered aimlessly, from brief re-visits to various atolls and islands, with some interesting observations, to SOMEONE'S (could it have actually been Michener?) repeated attempts at short romance stories, to pointless essays, veering back to yet another love story, and an ending like running out of gas. I've nothing against romances, by the way - if they're well told! These weren't. This just did not seem to be James Michener's work as I have known and appreciated it. My advice: If you hold Michener in fond regard, do NOT read this book. You will need an immediate concentrated dose of his far better works to get the foul taste out of your mouth.

Great detail, although a little dated, now. I read this just before a long cruise in the South Pacific, and many of the descriptions proved to be accurate enough to get much more out of our visits to some of the same islands that Michener describes in this book. The format is a nice combination of description and drama for each of the locations he covers. Easy and engaging read!

Having been enthralled by *Tales of the South Pacific*, I was more than a little disappointed by *Return to Paradise*. Still, I read it to the end and found some of the stories moderately interesting (though nothing compared with those in *Tales of the South Pacific*) and a lot of insight on what countries like Australia and New Zealand were like after WWII was over.

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