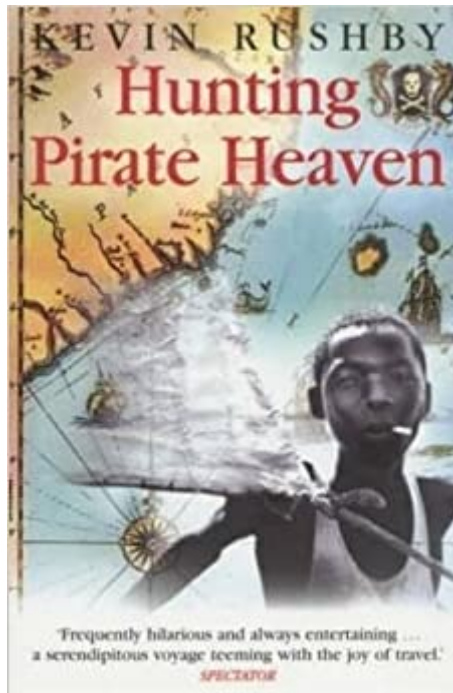


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Hunting Pirate Heaven



Synopsis

This acclaimed book is travel writing at its entertaining and hair-raising best. Kevin Rushby set out to find the lost pirate settlements that once existed on the islands and atolls of the Indian Ocean. Hitching rides on a motley assortment of vessels, he sails up the African coast, then east, to locate the descendants of the legendary sixteenth-century pirates who carved out kingdoms in the jungles of Madagascar. Along the way, Rushby meets up with the crackpot dreamers, tough settlers, the fighters and the failures who live on the islands now. This is a romantic story in the old-fashioned sense, full of adventure and colour.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

As difficult as it is to make a good pirate movie, it's almost as hard to write a good nonfiction book about pirates. Rushby (Children of Kali; Eating the Flowers of Paradise; etc.) has overcome the obstacle most writers on the subject come up against (i.e., the impossible task of separating a few hard grains of truth from the clouds of fantasy and wish-fulfillment that have always surrounded the subject) by simply venturing to the places pirates used to call home and looking around. A rough-and-tumble adventurer who's more than willing to poke fun at his naivety and inexperience (despite the long list of adventure travel books to his credit), Rushby journeys to the islands around East Africa and Madagascar in search of the old pirate redoubts once hidden there. He follows pirate legends via a mix-and-match collection of hitched rides and lucky encounters, reveling in the loopy nature of the area's Arab, Indian, French and African cultural cross-pollination. Rushby is affable even in the worst circumstances, which serves him well when he's going clubbing

in a dangerous part of Mozambique with a former gunrunner, almost getting marooned by a vengeful Scandinavian or losing his passport on the war-torn isle of Anjouan. The journey is more interesting than the destination, as Rushby doesn't find many pirate remains at all: rumors, some ruins and lots of stories. However, Rushby does present an enthralling guide to a little-visited corner of the world, haunted by the ghosts of its pirate past. Copyright 2003 Reed Business Information, Inc. --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

Anyone who thought *Pirates of the Caribbean* was exciting will love this real-life adventure. Traveling on an assortment of vessels, from freighters to fishing boats, the author embarked on a quest of almost epic proportions: to find the old pirate settlements of the Indian Ocean and to track down the descendants of some of the celebrated sixteenth-century pirates (including the possibly fictional Captain Misson, of whom Daniel Defoe wrote). Like Michael Palin's modern-day odysseys, this one boasts lively characters, plenty of local color, and just a hint of danger. The book is a lot of fun, and readers will learn some things, too: the skull and crossbones, the traditional pirate flag according to the movies, wasn't used until about 1700 (most pirates had their own flags, anyway; they didn't all fly the same one). Rushby's account is perfect for armchair travelers, history buffs, and lovers of the kind of excitement that doesn't require one actually to leave the house. David Pitt

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This is a modern day adventure account by Rushby of his search for the remnants of 18th century pirate settlements on Madagascar and nearby islands. Who were these people who "drank the Devil's health and damned the King?" What did they seek and where did they end up? That was his quest. The most fascinating aspect of the book is Rushby's own adventure. It's a journey into the strange and dangerous world of the southeastern coast and sea of Africa where he encountered real pirates, the remnants of colonial cities slowly decaying under the fierce sun, and a host of unlikely and sometimes frightening characters. He had to create his quest every step of the way since there is no regular transportation in this region. It's a fantastic, modern adventure in search of the adventurers and outcasts of a bygone age. I loved it!

Unless you are a lot more adventurous than I am, the closest you will ever get to most of the places and people described in this book is reading the book. Mr. Kevin Rushby deserves great credit for taking on a very dangerous and unpleasant journey in search of what utopian life in the tropics really

provides. His talent for taking situations seriously and letting his imagination run wild provides the book with a fiction-like quality that makes the writing more vivid and interesting than in most non-fiction books. What little we know about pirates mostly comes to us through fiction . . . often built on bits and pieces of what people have claimed to be true about pirates. Mr. Rushby did his homework before starting by locating the regions on the Indian Ocean on or adjacent to Mozambique where pirates were supposed to have been active. From these stories, he heard tales of "edens" where pirates went to rest up . . . or even retire. "What were these edens like?" he wondered. Starting from the area where the British East India Company launched its first voyages 400 years ago, he quickly moved to a freighter leaving South Africa so he could hedge-hop the coast of Mozambique. From there, his accommodations and creature comforts went mostly downhill. As he visited each area, he asked about pirates . . . but usually didn't learn very much until almost the end of the trip. But he did meet modern equivalents of people living in tropical "paradises" and he often reflects on what he finds. He often finds "trouble in paradise" as well as paradise. Along the way, he suddenly discovers that not everyone is as friendly as they might be. Nature can be dangerous, too! Be sure to stick with the book until the end. It just gets better and better. I did grade the book down one star though. Why? I found that this would have been a better book if it had focused simply on what life is like in that part of the world . . . and either mentioned the pirates in passing or skipped them. I found the pirates to be more of a distraction than an appeal in my reading. But if you are a great fan of books about pirates (no matter how remote the connection is), you will probably enjoy learning about the current reality and the ironies these facts reveal about the legends.

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