



# The Beach: The History of Paradise on Earth

By Lena Lencek, Gideon Bosker

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## The Beach: The History of Paradise on Earth By Lena Lencek, Gideon Bosker

An absorbing, original account of the beach--its history, customs, spectacles, and how it became the undisputed Nirvana for pleasure seekers.

Turquoise water, pillowy sand, and a warm, salty breeze--today the beach is regarded as the best possible place to restore body and soul. However, this has not always been the case. In other centuries the beach was considered a remote, terrifying wasteland on the margins of civilization. In their entertaining, elegant, and illuminating account, Lena Lencek and Gideon Bosker trace the four-billion-year evolution of the place where land, water, and humans meet.

Embedded in the narrative are the histories of sexuality, health, fashion, sport, the rise of the great resorts--St. Tropez, Catalina, Newport, Miami Beach--and the beach tales of Columbus, D-Day troops, and castaways Cook, Melville, and Swinburne. Including a marvelous selection of images evoking the beach's hypnotic appeal--Impressionist paintings, archival photographs, advertising art, and postcards--and an Appendix of the world's most beautiful, unspoiled beaches, *The Beach* will fascinate any reader from Coney Island to Bora Bora.

"Engagingly eccentric [and] briskly good-humored ... [an] entertaining, handsomely illustrated book." --*The New York Times Book Review* (front page)

"The perfect beach book, any time of the year." --*Chicago Tribune*

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### Editorial Review

#### Amazon.com Review

In *The Beach: The History of Paradise on Earth*, Lena Lencek and Gideon Bosker chart the history of beaches from the time of their formation to the present, examining the shifting significance of beaches to Western cultures through the centuries. Lencek and Bosker are capable historians whose love of beaches shines through in their writing. They assert that the way people approach the beach reflects their culture's current beliefs about sexuality, class divisions, aesthetics, and leisure. At times, the authors go a bit overboard in proving how important beaches are to society, but it is easy to forgive them because this book is crammed with interesting tidbits and choice sentences, such as, "The sands of Oregon's Florence Beach squeak with the high-pitched bark of distant chihuahuas." Great old movie posters, photographs, and odd tourist brochures are sprinkled throughout the book, enlivening the text.

After a chapter on the geological makeup of sand and beaches, the authors chronicle the waxing and waning popularity of beaches through the ages. It seems that people did not always think of the beach as a good place to kick back, get a tan, and leaf through a book with lots of pictures. During the Middle Ages, many Europeans avoided the ocean in part because they believed water was connected to the horrible plagues that occasionally devastated the region. Later, an entrepreneur convinced the British upper class that drinking saltwater was a good way to cure "windiness of the spirit" and other ailments. Gradually, the rich figured out that the beach is not only healthful, it's fun! Technological innovations made it easier to get to the beach, and so more people of all classes went there. Swimsuit styles changed as textiles, sexual mores, and ideals of beauty evolved. This book should appeal to many readers because it is packed with good tidbits to ponder between naps on the beach, things such as the origins of suntan lotion, the development of the Australian crawl, and the singing dunes of Kauai, Hawaii. --*Jill Marquis*

#### From Publishers Weekly

Lencek and Bosker (*Making Waves*) have turned out a thorough but often leaden chronicle of what "the beach" has meant to humankind from Roman nobles to WWII assault troops to modern eco-tourists. Their scholarly approach seems tedious in service of a normally lively subject. Details noting coastal zoning laws enacted by the ancient Greeks and England's priggish turn-of-the-century approach to public bathing are interesting, but the story gathers momentum only in contemporary days. Accounts of America's iconographical retreats are noteworthy: Aconey Island, Miami Beach, Southern California, Hawaii. Aare covered, as is the evolution of swimwear: "The swimsuit on the beach tells the square-inch-by-square-inch history of how skin went public in modern times." But the authors become highhanded, bemoaning the fallen status of the modern beach vacation; ecotourists are part of a "highly contrived ritual," while luxury travelers are "entirely divorced from nature." Still, the authors see fit to include such resorts as Cancun's Ritz-Carlton in their appendix of recommended beach stays. Waves, sand, bikini babes, surfer boys, sun-worshipping hedonists. There is enough material here for a bit of fun in "the history of paradise on Earth," but this treatment turns out to be disappointingly dry. Illustrated.

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#### From Library Journal

Lencek and Bosker are professional academics (of Russian history and clinical medicine, respectively) who write informative books on popular culture for a mass audience. Their latest contribution to cultural studies focuses on the different roles that the beach experience has played in shaping, and sometimes defining, the consumption of leisure. "The sensations of the beach are as primary as life itself," they argue. "We are drawn

to the beach to return to our conscious mind the sensation of the body?not in the private, compartmentalized world of bath or boudoir...but at the infinitely creative junction of elements where habit and convention dissipate and imagination once again takes over." Their coverage of beach consumption is nothing if not exhaustive?their survey of "paradise" ranges from the geological formation of beaches and the function of beaches in the ancient world to the differential status of beaches in the 20th century and the use of beach imagery in the youth movies of the 1960s. This would be an obvious choice for anyone who wants to take a serious book to the beach; it is also a valuable addition to the literature on the cultural politics of leisure-time activities.?Kent Worcester, Marymount Manhattan Coll., New York  
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### **From reader reviews:**

#### **Charlotte Hawley:**

As people who live in the modest era should be revise about what going on or information even knowledge to make these keep up with the era which is always change and make progress. Some of you maybe can update themselves by examining books. It is a good choice for you personally but the problems coming to anyone is you don't know what kind you should start with. This *The Beach: The History of Paradise on Earth* is our recommendation so you keep up with the world. Why, because book serves what you want and need in this era.

#### **David Barthel:**

The ability that you get from *The Beach: The History of Paradise on Earth* will be the more deep you rooting the information that hide inside the words the more you get thinking about reading it. It does not mean that this book is hard to be aware of but *The Beach: The History of Paradise on Earth* giving you buzz feeling of reading. The author conveys their point in a number of way that can be understood by simply anyone who read this because the author of this reserve is well-known enough. This specific book also makes your current vocabulary increase well. Making it easy to understand then can go to you, both in printed or e-book style are available. We suggest you for having this particular *The Beach: The History of Paradise on Earth* instantly.

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