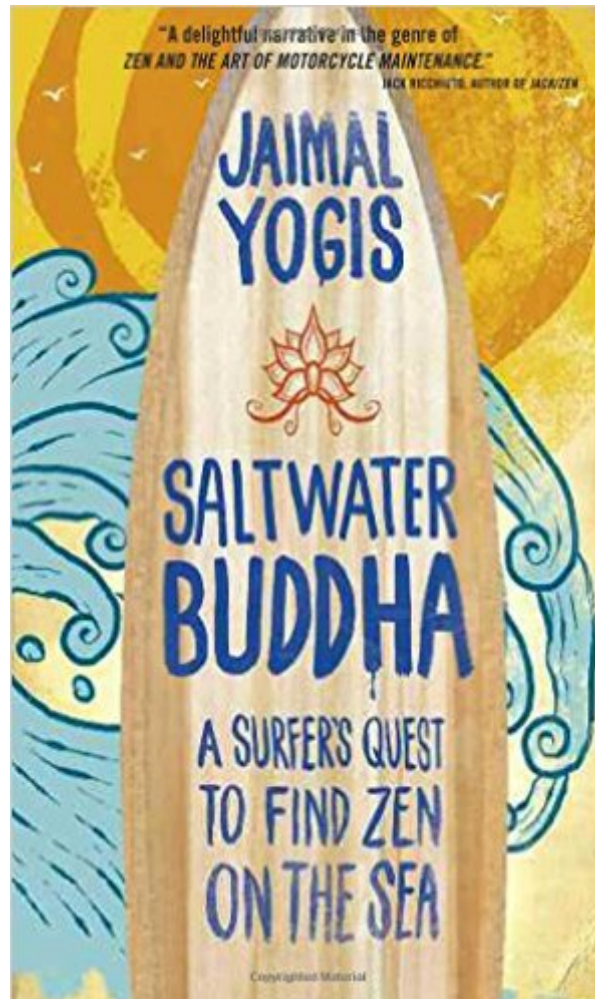


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# Saltwater Buddha: A Surfer's Quest To Find Zen On The Sea



## Synopsis

Fed up with teenage life in the suburbs, Jaimal Yogis ran off to Hawaii with little more than a copy of Hermann Hesse's Siddhartha and enough cash for a surfboard. His journey is a coming-of-age saga that takes him from communes to monasteries, from the warm Pacific to the icy New York shore. Equal parts spiritual memoir and surfer's tale, this is a chronicle of finding meditative focus in the barrel of a wave and eternal truth in the great salty blue.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

I started surfing about 3 months ago. That was also around the same time I started seriously looking at Buddhism. It is amazing that I discovered Jamail Yogis's book while going through a vaguely parallel experience. Coming from this perspective, Saltwater Buddha is an amazing book that blends personal memoir with spiritual insight. It is thoughtful, well-written, and an entertaining read. The last point is worth emphasizing - a spiritual journey may be very interesting to the person going through it, but it will not necessarily resonate with others. Yogis has accomplished the task of translating his inner journey into a narrative that holds the reader's attention and can speak to people from varied spiritual backgrounds. From a purely descriptive perspective, the book is about a man's intellectual, emotional, and spiritual maturation. Yogis lived a life that many of us dream of. Several times during his life he followed his impulses and went to Hawai'i to pursue his passion for surfing. However, these excursions to Hawai'i were bracketed by emotional growth and learning to take responsibility. As easy as it would be to lose oneself in a tropical paradise, Yogis realized that he needed to balance his passion with the more mundane aspects of life. The book traces his journey back and

forth between these twin forces. At the same time, Yogis is going through significant spiritual growth. Whether it is through private meditation or a stint in a monastery, his spiritual education moved through both formal and informal channels. More significantly, much of his spiritual growth came out of his movement between passion and responsibility. Life is often the greatest spiritual guide. For him, it was surfing that had one of the largest impacts on his journey. Not only did it serve as a metaphor for many of the formal principles in Buddhism, but it also served as spiritual practice. Most of the surfers that I know acknowledge the spiritual impact surfing has. While they may not recognize it inside a specific dogmatic framework, they are certainly aware of the connection between surfing and some larger cosmic mystery. One reason that Yogis's book is so fascinating is that he looks at surfing through the lens of a particular spirituality. This helps to give structure to thoughts about how surfing impacts people. Looking at surfing through the lens of Buddhism is not, obviously, just a literary device used by Yogis. However, this particular perspective is what makes *Saltwater Buddha* unique and engaging. Buddhism is capable of embracing so many different paths of spirituality and surfing was one of the paths for Yogis. The structure of the book reflects this interconnection - spiritual insight is interwoven with the narrative of his life. Each piece serves to illuminate the other. This is, of course, how life is actually experienced. We do not experience inner and outer experience as separate things. Instead, our spiritual/emotional/intellectual life is completely intertwined with our experiences in the world. We find meaning in the events of our lives and those same events give validation (or challenge) our worldview. It is difficult to capture this in an effective way and even more difficult to convey this to another person in a structured and coherent way. Again, this is a task that Yogis has admirably accomplished. I have purchased several copies of the book because I plan to give them to friends; to both surfers and nonsurfers. I have found that *Saltwater Buddha* gives expression to many of the experiences I am having myself. I have found it so difficult to explain my experiences to people that don't surf - which makes *Saltwater Buddha* even more impressive. Yogis has found an effective way to give voice to the deeply emotional and spiritual aspects of an activity that many dismiss as idle fancy. We should all be thankful for this gift. I am confident that this book will open your eyes to a different world; even if you have no interest in surfing or Buddhism.

If you are a new surfer, read this book. If you are a master surfer, read this book. Read it like you were a kid again and like you are discovering all this for the first time. Give it to your non-surfer friends. Give it to your buddies who have yet to realize the real gift of surfing despite their pro status on the waves. Give it to your comrades who could have written it themselves. Give it to your

landlocked nephew in Montana. Translating the wisdom of water and of Zen in his own life, Jaimal Yogis shares lessons that reach far beyond surfing. Romantic and real, simple and deep, *Saltwater Buddha* reminds each of us that living with compassion and zeal each moment is what makes a meaningful life.

My copy of the book has already had a taste of *Saltwater* itself... a couple of days ago, some strong island winds blew it into the Caribbean ocean when I put the book down for a second, and I saw it floating away. I was about halfway through the book and was just at the point where the author was wrestling with his fear about the big wave at Third Bay. Rom had already taken a wave. I tried scooping up the book but couldn't reach it, and every second it just got farther and farther away. As I quickly went through my options I realized if I didn't get the book now, there was a good chance I wouldn't be able to finish the book this week. I'm in Jamaica right now for the week, so I'm guessing it would be hard to get the book through or Kindle. And my fiancée is already excited about reading the book, too. So I stripped down into my underwear and dove into the ocean to get it. Granted, I wasn't in deep water or anything, but it's not like jumping into a swimming pool. I swam back with the book, both of us wet and salty. After some hair dryer action and half a day of island sun, the book was almost dried out and the pages didn't stick together. Fortunately, I was able to finish reading the book. Considering this is the first time I've ever dropped a book into the ocean, I think it's funny and fitting that it happened to be *Saltwater Buddha*. I'm not a surfer, and a lot of times philosophy feels like mental masturbation to me. However, I finished this book in two days and plan on reading it again (that's amazing for me). I find it impressive that the author is able to interject thousands of years of philosophy into a humorous, reflective, and honest narrative without being heavy-handed or dogmatic about it. The author will apply a philosophical point to an event and present it as his contemplation as if the story were no more than a coffee conversation, and leave it for the reader to agree, disagree, or ignore it. He is able to connect a deep, profound Buddhist teaching to ordinary events that could happen to any of us in modern life. I can relate to many of the events in the author's life, and I suspect many our generation can. Since reading the book, I am already starting to see things a bit differently, and that's a really neat thing. This is definitely a book worth reading.

I read this book on a flight recently and enjoyed it, but it could have been a bit better. It's a super-quick read and, I'm guessing, will be interesting to folks interested in surfing or Buddhism. As other reviewers have noted, it is well written and filled with introspection and quotes, most of which hit the mark. For me the main problem with the book - and maybe any memoir meets religion kind of

book - was the ending. I was really into it for the majority of the book, but the last 10 pages or so, it was as if the author felt compelled to provide more meaning - or more of a neat ending - than he was able to pull off. To his credit, he did not present himself as some kind of bodhisattva or something, but it still felt forced - particularly when you consider how young the author seems to be. For most of the book though, the transitions between Buddhism & everyday life / surfing seemed well done and will likely only annoy academic types or people committed to specific points of view with regards to Buddhism. For my part, I enjoyed it.

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