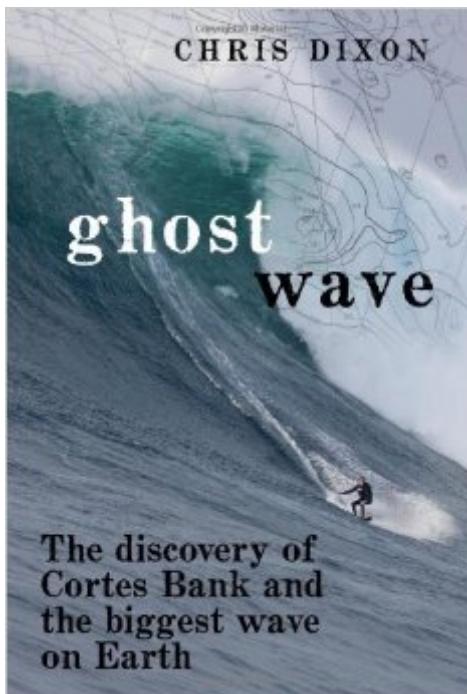


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Ghost Wave: The Discovery Of Cortes Bank And The Biggest Wave On Earth



Synopsis

Rising from the depths of the North Pacific lies a fabled island, now submerged just 15 feet below the surface of the ocean. Rumors and warnings about Cortes Bank abound, but among big wave surfers, this legendary rock is famous for one simple (and massive) reason: this is the home of the biggest rideable wave on the face of the earth. In this dramatic work of narrative non-fiction, journalist Chris Dixon unlocks the secrets of Cortes Bank and pulls readers into the harrowing world of big wave surfing and high seas adventure above the most enigmatic and dangerous rock in the sea. The true story of this Everest of the sea will thrill anyone with an abiding curiosity of and respect for mother ocean.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

I live in the middle of the U.S. and my balance is poor. In other words, I don't surf. But I love to watch and read about people who do. To me, surfing is the most beautiful sport on the planet. A well-executed ride is both a work of art and a wonder of nature. The book is subtitled, "The Discovery of Cortes Bank and the Biggest Wave on Earth." The book certainly presents about all that is known about the history of Cortes Bank and its unusual geography. But the book is also about big-wave surfing and the colorful cast of characters that it attracts. Cortes Bank is treacherous for passing ships because it is essentially an underwater island. The extremely deep ocean floor suddenly rises up, and that is why Cortes generates what are possibly the biggest waves on Earth. The waves are unpredictable. Worse yet, it is not close to land, so there is no reference point on the horizon. It is easy to get disoriented. One theme that runs through the book is the danger of

big-wave surfing, even for veteran surfers. The book is punctuated with stories about the deaths of superb surfers. The danger raises the question about the ethics of popularizing big-wave surfing. One constant of human nature is our tendency to overrate our abilities. And there are always cowboys drawn to danger like a moth to a flame. Surfers who overrate their own skills could easily die attempting to ride a monster wave. The larger the wave, the harder it is to paddle to it because big waves travel faster than small ones. The book addresses the use of jet-skis to tow surfers to the wave. Paddle-surfing is pristine and environmentally friendly. Tow-surfing introduces machines burning gas and oil and spewing noxious fumes. Do the machines fundamentally alter the sport?

If you spend any time sailing along the California coast, you may have heard about The Cortes Bank. It lies just past Catalina Island. Not a big patch of ocean, but one that boaters view with respect. It's where the giant waves live. Rogue waves are known to occur randomly, and certain coastal areas are known for impossibly high surf. But the Cortes Bank is different. In the middle of nowhere, in the open sea, huge waves, some reaching 90 feet high, are formed...and they're not an anomaly, they're a regular event. Listening to tales of the Cortes Bank while relaxing on deck is the sailing equivalent of sitting around the campfire and listening to stories of those two hitchhikers and the guy with the hook. Guaranteed to make the hair on your arms go all feathery. Chris Dixon takes us into the heart of the Cortes Bank and shows us what it's like not just to face the monster, but tweak its nose. All surfing is madness. Surfers sit on their boards, legs dangling in the water, looking just like dinner to every circling shark...and that's before they start doing the dangerous stuff. There are so many ways to injure, maim, cripple and kill yourself on a surfboard, it almost beggars the imagination to understand why some surfers seek to up the ante. But they do...in the form of giant waves. Waves so high you could hide an apartment building in one. The only sensible part is that, for the most part, giant wave surfing is done close to shore, where (in theory) help is close at hand. The surfers who choose Cortes Bank are surfing in the open ocean. They are tempting the pelagic sharks, giant ocean-going predators, as well as the little maneaters who cling to the shoreline, not to mention fate.

Chris Dixon's book, "Ghost Wave" leads off with an interesting maritime history of the Cortes Bank, a submerged island about 100 miles west of Baja, Mexico, and south of the Channel Islands of Southern California. This description accompanied by work done to try to detail its location, bottom topography and oceanographic significance - I found this information to be very interesting. I seemed to have heard someplace that the USN aircraft carrier "Enterprise" had some kind of grounding

incident, and that was at the Cortes Bank. Read all about it here...well, as much as there is to read about it anywhere in the public domain. Later on you read about a failed attempt to turn this submerged island into an artificial island via a hair-brained scheme of sinking a ship out there... At least the last half of the book, however, is devoted to the introduction of the main players in the world of big wave surfing, starting with paddle surfers and then later tow surfers. This introduction went well beyond an overview by getting into the politics of who is working for which surfing magazine and who gets to shoot which surfing outings, and which surfers are in and which are out when it comes to mounting big wave expeditions. About this time you are introduced to many of the premier big wave spots around the world (Jaws, Mavericks, etc.). And all of this is leading up to a blow-by-blow account of a, well, mostly insane decision to take an expedition out there in the middle of a major storm to see if they could surf the Cortes Bank in an effort to find and ride a 100' wave. Did they do it? You'll have to read the book to find out. This is an interesting addition to the recent literature being released about the history and future of surfing.

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