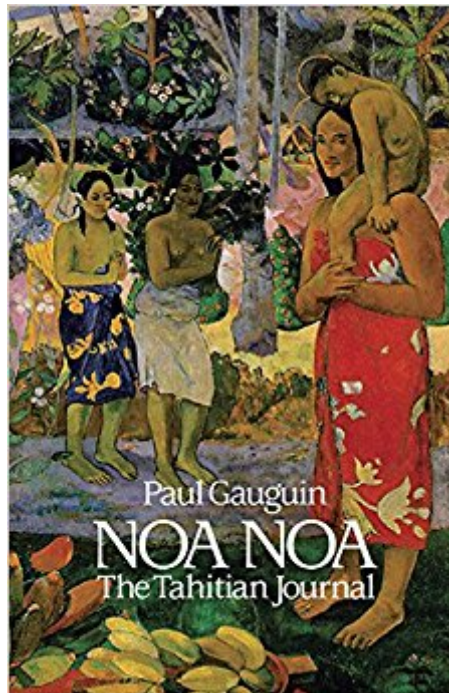


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# Noa Noa: The Tahitian Journal (Dover Fine Art, History Of Art)



## Synopsis

Paul Gauguin fled what he called "filthy Europe" in 1891 to what he hoped would be an unspoiled paradise, Tahiti. He painted 66 magnificent can vases during the first two years he spent there and kept notes from which he later wrote *Noa Noa* – a journal recording his thoughts and impressions of that time. *Noa Noa* – the most widely known of Gauguin's writings – is reproduced here from a rare early edition (1919), in a lucid translation capturing the artist's unpretentious style. Page after page reveals Gauguin's keen observations of Tahiti and its people, and his passionate struggle to achieve the inner harmony he expressed so profoundly on canvas. Gauguin's prose is as seductive as his paintings, filled with descriptions of warm seas, hidden lagoons, lush green forests, and beautiful Maori women. The journal is captivating reading, offering a compelling autobiographical fragment of the soul of a genius and a rare glimpse of Oceanian culture. The brief periods of happiness Gauguin found among the Tahitians are eloquently expressed in his narrative. We understand the motives that drove him and gain a deeper appreciation of his art. Today the manuscript provides unparalleled insight into Gauguin's thoughts as he strove to achieve spiritual peace, and into the wellsprings of a singular artistic style which changed the course of modern art. This wonderfully affordable edition – enhanced by 24 of Gauguin's South Seas drawings – makes a unique and passionate testament accessible to all art lovers.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

Text: English, French (translation)

Paul Gauguin fled what he called "filthy Europe" in 1891 to what he hoped would be an unspoiled paradise, Tahiti. He painted 66 magnificent can vases during the first two years he spent there and kept notes from which he later wrote *Noa Noa* – a journal recording his thoughts and impressions of that time. *Noa Noa* – the most widely known of Gauguin's writings – is reproduced here from a rare early edition (1919), in a lucid translation capturing the artist's unpretentious style. Page after page reveals Gauguin's keen observations of Tahiti and its people, and his passionate struggle to achieve the inner harmony he expressed so profoundly on canvas. Gauguin's prose is as seductive as his paintings, filled with descriptions of warm seas, hidden lagoons, lush green forests, and beautiful Maori women. The journal is captivating reading, offering a compelling autobiographical fragment of the soul of a genius and a rare glimpse of Oceanian culture. The brief periods of happiness Gauguin found among the Tahitians are eloquently expressed in his narrative. We understand the motives that drove him and gain a deeper appreciation of his art. Today the manuscript provides unparalleled insight into Gauguin's thoughts as he strove to achieve spiritual peace, and into the wellsprings of a singular artistic style which changed the course of modern art. This wonderfully affordable edition – enhanced by 24 of Gauguin's South Seas drawings – makes a unique and passionate testament accessible to all art lovers.

One struggles to understand the complete and utter disregard of Gauguin's morality and compassion for the people whom he knew only love from. His selfish and ultimately his more 'civilized' priggishness only allowed him to disabuse his hosts, violate a young girl(s), and ultimately just confuse them about their complex feelings of hurt and rejection when they trusted him so completely. After reading his own words I feel today we would dismiss him as a brilliant painter who was also a predator.

An interesting narrative of Gaugin's time in Tahiti. Much introspection and detail.

A little slow to read, but overall interesting and worthwhile.

Very readable translation. This is not the best edition if you want good reproductions of drawings.

But in terms of getting a good text for a good price it's great. I'm not really going to review the book itself as I assume most people who are here know that this was Gauguin's attempt to put together a what he hoped would be a best selling travelogue that would promote his art. He was hoping to cash in on the success of Pierre Loti's best seller the Marriage of Loti which was set in exotic Tahiti. It never made any money, but this is mostly because of its idiosyncratic style. But for anyone interested in Gauguin's Tahitian experience it's great. Also check out his intimate journals which came out posthumously and cover also his life before Tahiti.

I love the Tahitian (and the Breton) paintings of Paul Gauguin (1848-1902), but despise his *Ōaiahi* (actually a memoir after his first two-year stay with considerable plagiarism from books by Jacques-Antoine Moerenhout and Edmond de Bovis). The distaste for the Europeanized capital, Papeete, where he stayed the first three months seems authentic, if not particularly original. After a trek to obtain rosewood to carve with a young Tahitian male he calls Totea, "with the suppleness of an animal and the graceful liness of an androgyne". Was it really a human being walking there ahead of me? the 42-year-old Gauguin acquired a thirteen-year-old wife he called Tehura (short for Teha'amana) to serve/service him. He claimed a 13-year-old Polynesian was equivalent to an 18-year-old Frenchwoman, suggesting some unease about taking a child bride, though also regularly referring to her as a "child" (and Tahitians as "savages"). He also claimed to have elicited some folklore that he seemed to have gotten from earlier books. The text in the Dover edition of a 1919 translation is 65 pages, of which 24 are drawings and woodblocks that were not in the original "Noa Noa". Since it is the colors that make Gauguin paintings striking, the crude woodblocks add little to the delusional, self-romanticizing text (as "going native" IMO. (e.g., "All the joys -- animal and human -- of a free life are mine. I have escaped everything that is artificial, conventional, customary. I am entering into the truth, into nature. Having the certitude of a succession of days like this present one, equally free and beautiful, peace descends on me. I develop normally and no longer occupy myself with useless vanities.") BTW, there is nothing at all about painting in (or

Noa Noa, Gauguin's two-year journal of living in Tahiti, is a fine read that touches on the colonial impacts of the expanding French control of Tahiti. Although Gauguin noted the bureaucratic excesses, he does not dwell on it and instead spends the bulk of his journal noting his engagement

and involvement with the native population. Noa Noa deals briefly with his artistic endeavors and tends to focus on his daily discoveries of Polynesian culture. One of the highlights of the journal is his re-telling of Tahitian creation-myths and how it influenced contemporary behavior such as "tunny" fishing. Gauguin is well known for his artistry, and Noa Noa expands his repertoire to include a near-journalistic view of his sojourn in Tahiti.

Gauguin's journal reflects the attempts of a Western person to transform himself into a savage and live close to the primeval nature. While living among the island's inhabitants, he engages in a relationship with a Tahitian girl. After two years, he leaves Tahiti and returns to Europe. I started reading the journal with enthusiasm. However, reading was a bit tiresome and the fact that he returned to Europe was somewhat disappointing. Still, it had some interesting facts about the inhabitants' beliefs and about the deterioration of their values once the island was conquered; colonialism resumed.

Contemplations visual, intellectual and spiritual. In 1891, French painter Paul Gauguin fled to the island of Tahiti - "a sixty-three days' voyage, sixty-three days of feverish expectancy;" begun as an unofficial visit regarding the imminent death of the island's king Pomare -- and resulting in a profoundly moving sea-change (spirit, observation, happiness). The Tahitian theology, natural history, and especially the progress of his relationships - a gift. This is a good book to read BEFORE embarking on your "desert island" voyage, but beware! Hard to top once you're there on some other island. An exceptional journal, with a graceful translation (it seems) by O. F. Theis from the French. Rated 9 (needs more color plates of paintings! but a lovely, portable paper edition) Other recommended travel/discovery books: Off the Map: Bicycling Across Siberia, by Mark Jenkins. 1993 HarperPerennial pb. Letters from Iceland, by W. H. Auden & Louis MacNeice. 1990 Paragon House pb. Why Come To Slaka? by Malcolm Bradbury. 1991 Penguin Books pb. Travels With Lizbeth (writing/homelessness), by Lars Eighner. The Starship & the Canoe (Freeman Dyson & son George) Bird of Jove (falconry), by David Bruce. 1994 Texas A&M pb. The Earthsea Trilogy, by Ursula K. Le Guin Ishi (anthropology/Native American history), by Theodora Kroeber

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