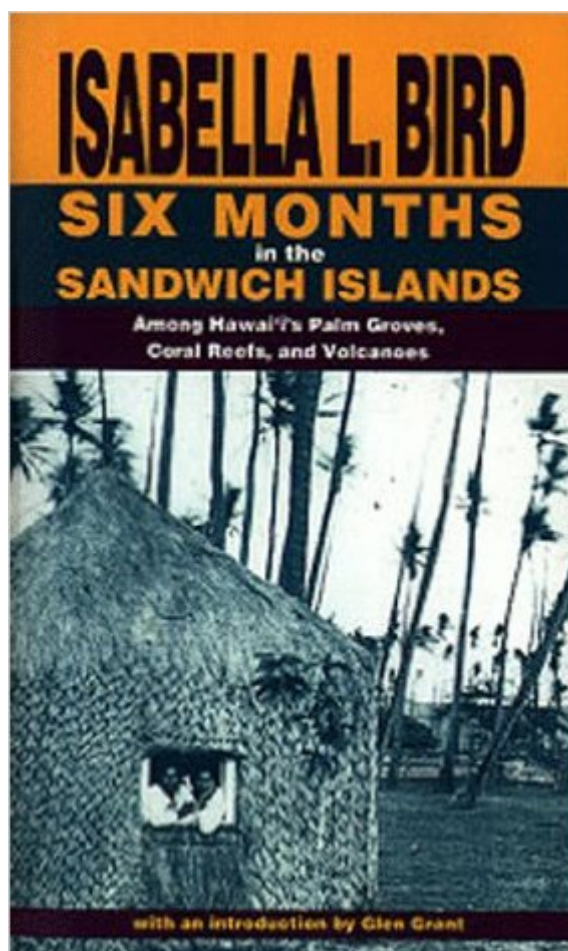


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Six Months In The Sandwich Islands: Among Hawaii's Palm Groves, Coral Reefs, And Volcanoes



Synopsis

Six Months in the Sandwich Islands: Among Hawaii's Palm Groves, Coral Reefs, and Volcanoes

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Customer Reviews

The steamer Nevada left Auckland New Zealand in January of 1873. Onboard are a number of travelers including Isabella Bird, who is traveling for her health. When another passenger takes ill, his Mother asks Isabella to disembark with them at Honolulu so they are not in a foreign land all alone. Thinking she will be there a short while, she actually begins a six-month journey, which she chronicles in a series of unabridged letters to her Sister back home. For those who have visited Hawaii or those who wonder what the islands were like before being annexed to the United States, these writings are pure joy. Isabella arrives as a foreigner, but in a short time learns of the beauty of the various islands and begins to understand the diverse culture of the people. She travels as an unescorted woman in a country, which has recently converted from aboriginal customs and inter-island wars, to the relatively peaceful paradise known in modern times. From simple observations of looking down at clouds on Maui at sunrise, to the unexpected earthquakes while standing next to a bubbling caldron of creation itself, you follow her adventures in well-written communications, which inform and entertain. As she stood in snow, gazing down at the crater 800 feet below her, she wrote "The mystery was solved, for at one end of the crater, in a deep gorge of its own, above the level of the rest of the area, there was the lonely fire, the reflection of which, for six weeks, has been seen for 100 miles." What she witnessed upon King Lunalilo's arrival in Hilo, brought tears to my eyes. Although they were beginning life under a form of government, the natives

treated their king to a touching procession unlike anywhere else in the world.

Among the Victorian aspidistra grew a sub-race of women who swooning with ill-health in their native land, took ship everywhere. Maintaining their British standards as to clothing & tea, they robustly travelled where few Victorian women & not too many men had gone before, scribbling long letters home. Freya Stark perhaps leads the way, but Isabella Bird is right beside her, reporting in from Tibet, Persia, Korea, Japan, and Colorado, among other places. In the 1870s, en route from Australia to San Francisco, she landed in the Hawaiian Islands. From Hawaii, staying longer than she had expected, Bird wrote long, lively letters to her sister, which form the core of this book. In "Six Months in the Sandwich Islands," Isabella Bird nails the scenery and does well in her De Toqueville-like social, economic, and political reporting. Readers who can cut her some slack in her language & judgments about Native Hawaiians are likely to find the book very good reading. Those who cannot, probably will not be admirers. For instance, "hideous" was among her comments with regard to traditional Hawaiian religious practices. Many, however, of her experiences led to deep appreciation of the courtesy, hospitality, generosity, talents, fine character and other admired qualities of her Native Hawaiian friends. She writes with love, with aloha, about this summer-land and its peoples. Bird is at her best writing with such detail and unrestrained adjectives that Hawaii stands before you, much of it still as it was 150 years ago, at least on the Big Island where I live. Even Mark Twain in his admirable "Roughing It" doesn't equal Bird's description of her experiences at the ferociously erupting firepit of Kiluaea or at the summit of Mauna Loa.

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