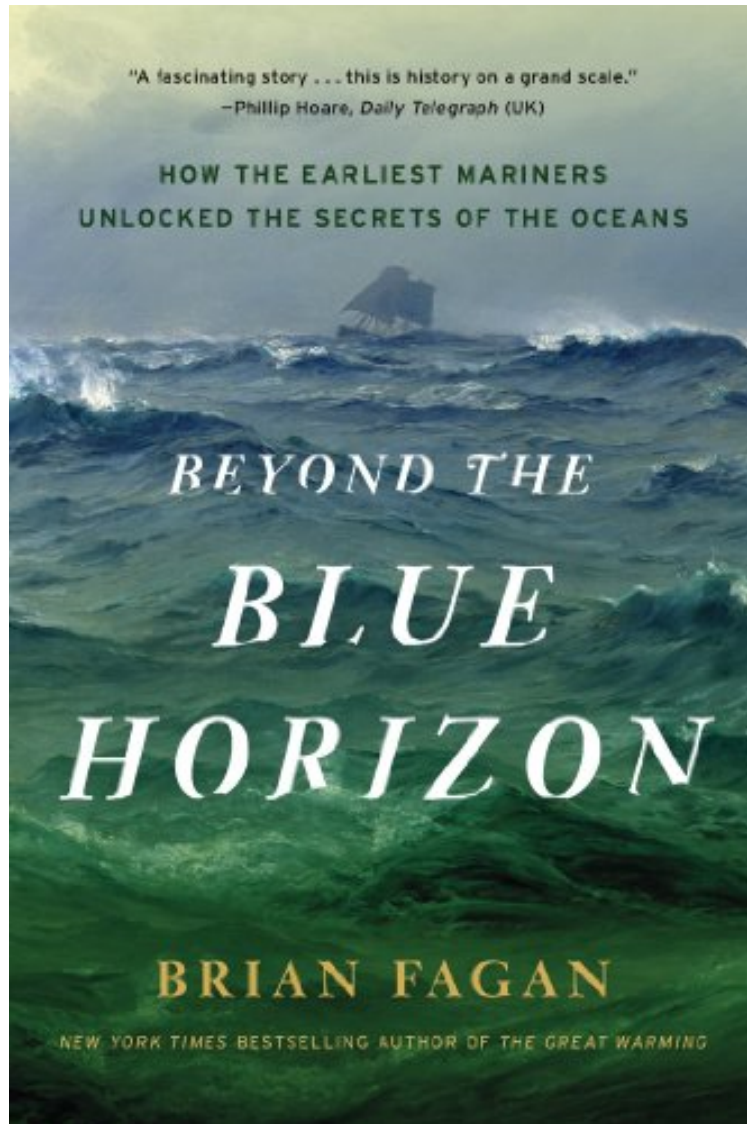


# Beyond the Blue Horizon: How the Earliest Mariners Unlocked the Secrets of the Oceans

*Brian Fagan*

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**Brian Fagan : Beyond the Blue Horizon: How the Earliest Mariners Unlocked the Secrets of the Oceans** before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Beyond the Blue Horizon: How the Earliest Mariners Unlocked the Secrets of the Oceans:

57 of 61 people found the following review helpful. More Questions Than AnswersBy Andy in WashingtonI have always been fascinated by stories of the sea. My main interest is in the technology and commercial applications of

boats. How did people build boats, where did they go, why did they go there and how did they figure out where to go? Based on the title and description, I had high hopes for this book.==== The Good Stuff ====\*The book is quite readable, and covers a fair chunk of maritime history from the very early journeys in the Pacific Islands (20,000BCE) to relatively modern 19th century transportation in Europe. Brian Fagan makes a nice attempt at capturing the types of journeys taken, and some of the reasons why ancient mariners felt the need to strike out past the horizon.\*In some cases, Fagan tries to capture some of the technology of the journey. How was the boat built? Where did they get the materials? How did they navigate? How many men were on the boat? What goods were traded? Why did some cultures immediately become "global" travelers, while others never strayed beyond the near horizon? Some of these efforts at explanation were more successful than others.==== The Not-So-Good Stuff====\* I found the book to come up short in many of the areas I was interested in. As an example, I know the early Pacific Islanders managed to navigate by watching the tidal waveforms which were caused by distant land masses. Fagan mentions these briefly, but does nothing to describe how this worked. He tells us it was difficult, and the knowledge was passed down from father to son. I sort of knew that, but still didn't understand how they did it. I had much the same complaint with the technology of boat building. Some boats were better explained than others, but I never really developed an appreciation for how each culture built boats, and how the technology progressed with time. For example, Fagan describes some boats as having square sails, while others had more complex arrangements of multiple sails. The technology of the latter is quite different, and requires at least some understanding of aerodynamics. Fagan mentions none of this.\* Fagan also gets a bit sloppy with his descriptions. He casually tosses around statements such as "a dhow changes direction by turning in front of the wind rather than tacking through it". He states this as having importance, but quite honestly I barely understand the difference, and have no concept of why it matters all that much.\* The rise in trade drives much of the ocean-going traffic of civilization, and it would have been nice to have more of the business side of this included. Fagan indicates the need for "relationships" between buyers and sellers, but makes no mention of how a Chinese silk seller and a gold merchant on the coast of Africa get to know each other, or more importantly build a "credit" mechanism to allow trade. And while I realize that much of this can be lost to history, Fagan has no problems making educated guesses about many other areas in this book, so I believe it would be equally valid to speculate in this, and other areas.==== Summary ====I enjoyed the book, but found that there was so much more I would have like to have seen included, and in a more structured format. Fagan spends quite a bit of time describing the ritual and "shamanism" side of sea-faring, but not nearly enough on the nuts and bolts of boatbuilding and navigation. The book was enjoyable, and I'd recommend it to anyone having an interest in ships and sailing. My complaint is that there was so much more that could have been included.4 of 4 people found the following review helpful. Expand your mind and your knowledge!By BSquaredI love reading about things I don't know presented in an interesting fashion. The book is a good overview of the evolution of sea trading. It starts out very early in civilization and presents logical evidence of how humankind expanded to new and different locations and eventually conquered the seas globally. The author says you can read this book in any order and while that may interest some people I found that some information is repeated in nearly every chapter. Other than that, I found the references to other information in the book, the addition of the author's real sailing experiences in some of these waters and the way the book is organized geographically. The tables and pictures really add to the story being told. I enjoyed learning a bit about sailing, refreshing my geography of the different areas covered and an end to end look at the evolution of how we went from rafts to canoes to open ocean canoes and the different sails and how early navigators were able to sail compared to modern sailing craft today. The facts and figures are easily understood the material presented in an engaging fashion. Good non-fiction that I've been waiting to read for awhile and enjoyed.1 of 1 people found the following review helpful. Explains how Critical Seafaring was to the Spread of Early HumansBy James B. BryantMany Academics want to discount how important boats were to the peopling of the world. Archaeologists can not find evidence of the boats that took us to Australia and the Americas, so they tend to ignore the fact that it happened. The Dr. Fagan has made an excellent argument that this in fact happened and provides a fascinating explanation of ancient seafaring that is in the historical record. He shows how and why these prehistoric trips could have been done with interesting insight from his own experience as a sailor. I spent 14 years on nuclear submarines operating from the Gulf of Aden above the Arctic Circle in the North Atlantic, including command of USS GUARDFISH (SSN 612) during the Cold War. I can relate to the experiences described in the book.

In *Beyond the Blue Horizon*, archaeologist and historian Brian Fagan tackles his richest topic yet: the enduring quest to master the oceans, the planet's most mysterious terrain. We know the tales of Columbus and Captain Cook, yet much earlier mariners made equally bold and world-changing voyages. From the moment when ancient Polynesians first dared to sail beyond the horizon, Fagan vividly explains how our mastery of the oceans changed the course of human history. What drove humans to risk their lives on open water? How did early sailors unlock the secrets of winds, tides, and the stars they steered by? What were the earliest ocean crossings like? With compelling detail, Fagan reveals how seafaring evolved so that the forbidding realms of the sea gods were transformed from barriers into a nexus of commerce and cultural exchange. From bamboo rafts in the Java Sea to triremes in the Aegean, from Norse

longboats to sealskin kayaks in Alaska, Fagan crafts a captivating narrative of humanity's urge to challenge the unknown and seek out distant shores. Beyond the Blue Horizon will enthrall readers who enjoyed Dava Sobel's Longitude, Simon Winchester's Atlantic, and Jared Diamond's Guns, Germs, and Steel.

A fascinating story this is history on a grand scale Philip Hoare, Daily Telegraph (UK) In taking a view of human history from the sea-goer, rather than from the more common viewpoint of the landlubber, Fagan reminds us of the vital role played by water in not only our socio-economic and political evolution but also our spiritual evolution. Literary (UK) Scholarly yet lyrical quietly epic. Sunday Times Magazine (UK) Hugely impressive and wideranging book Mail on Sunday (UK) Combining his talents as a navigator, archaeologist and historian, Brian Fagan takes us on an enthralling tour of the world as its shores were being opened up by the first seamen to cross the oceans and the major seas. One could not hope for a more engaging skipper. David Abulafia, Cambridge University, author of The Great Sea Tacking between first-person anecdotes, archeological explanations, and fictionalized scenes from the distant past, this salty work of historical imagination travels with the Micronesian outriggers that ferried moai carvers to Easter Island, the Egyptian timber barges that carried the cedars of Lebanon to the pharaohs, and the black ships that brought the Greek heroes to the gates of Troy Fagan has produced a loving tribute to their achievement. Publishers Weekly Fagan's newest archaeological work benefits from his own seafaring experiences sure to pique the interest of maritime readers A thoughtful presenter, Fagan accords a suitable awe to the intrepid sailors of prehistory and ancient history. Booklist Enthralling Fagan effectively intersperses observations from his own extensive sailing experience as he ponders how ancient mariners might have responded to various sea conditions and what may have initially caused them to take to the sea. VERDICT: Fagan paints a thoroughly fascinating portrait of the intricate interaction among ocean, climate, and humanity in the many parts of the world where seafaring cultures developed. This excellent book is sure to appeal to readers with some background and interest in world archaeology and history. Library Journal (starred review) About the Author Brian Fagan is emeritus professor of anthropology at the University of California, Santa Barbara. He is the author of Elixir, the Los Angeles Times bestseller Cro-Magnon, and the New York Times bestseller The Great Warming, and many other books, including Fish on Friday, The Long Summer, and The Little Ice Age. He has decades of experience at sea and is the author of several titles for sailors, including the widely praised Cruising Guide to Central and Southern California.