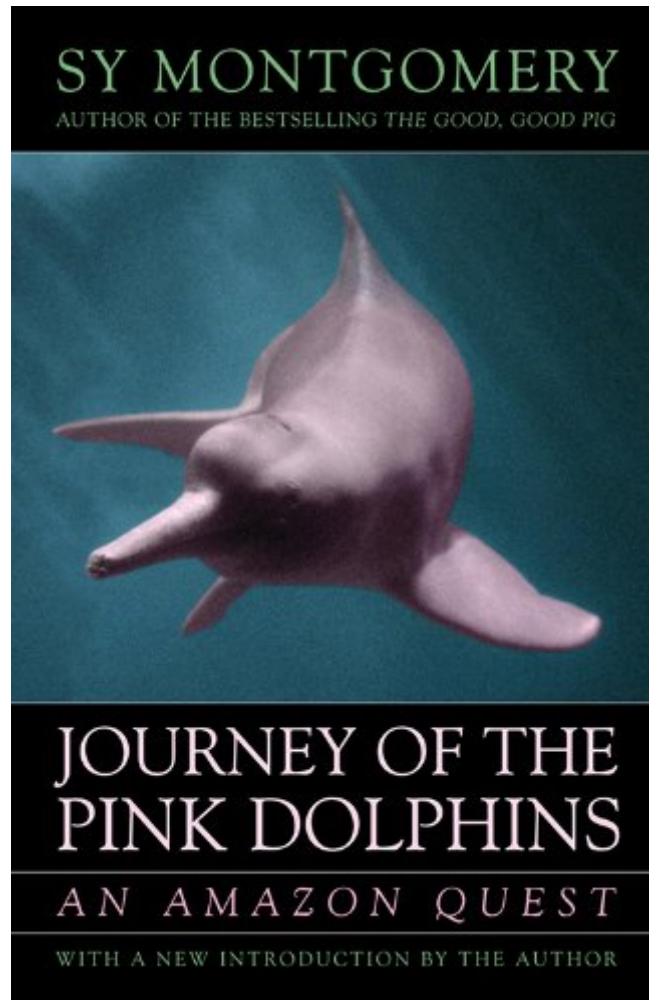




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Journey Of The Pink Dolphins: An Quest



Synopsis

By the acclaimed author of *The Soul of an Octopus* and the bestselling memoir *The Good Good Pig*. When Sy Montgomery ventured into the to unlock the mysteries of the littleknown pink dolphins, she found ancient whales that plied the River at dawn and dusk, swam through treetops in flooded forests, and performed underwater ballets with their flexible bodies. But she soon found out that to know the botos, as the dolphins are locally called, you must also know the people who live among them. And so in *Journey of the Pink Dolphins*, Montgomery—part naturalist, part poet, part Indiana Jones—winds her way through watery tributaries and riverside villages, searching for botos and hearing the tales of locals who believe these ethereal dolphins are shape-shifters—creatures that emerge from the water as splendidly dressed men or women only to enchant their human onlookers, capture their souls, and then carry them away to the Encante, an underwater world. Montgomery takes readers on four separate journeys, exploring the river-dwelling dolphins—natural history, chronicling their conservation pressures, unraveling their prehistoric roots, and visiting with shamans who delve into the Encante.

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Customer Reviews

I have read many, many books in my lifetime, but Sy Montgomery's *Journey of the Pink Dolphins* has taken my breath away. What a lovely tale, and how much the reader wants to send messages to Sy at the end of the book! This book is about the challenges life sends us, and what we can only reply to, more belief in what Montgomery has written, and a deep sympathy to the dolphins she embraced during her quest. A reader comes away with the sensation that dolphins are everywhere, we must have only used our eyes and live in the moment to understand her dolphins.

I thought that this was a supremely superb book regarding a magnificently spiritual creature that is elusive and undergoing a profound tragedy of population decline.

Beautiful writing. Courageous writer and researcher. All her books are inspiring, moving, and honest. Sy Montgomery has a true heart and an amazing intellect.

The author really opens up a new world of dolphins, his love for them, and the culture that surrounds them. A great read, one you won't ever want to let go of.

The book itself is fine for a used book, but they never indicated that it would come covered with library stickers which was disappointing.

I'm a big fan of well written adventure books and books on natural history. The best of them transcend their subject matter to arrive at bigger truths about human nature, the world, and mankind's place in it. Sy Montgomery tries mightily to link her experience up with *The Bigger Story*, but never manages to do it. Her attempts to be profound become almost embarrassing after a while. Sy writes a nature column for the *Boston Globe* and it shows. Everything of interest she has to say in this book could have been said in a column or two. In this book, she's taken that column and simply repeated it over and over and over. Thus we hear narrative after narrative from the locals about how the bufeo live in an enchanted underwater city and come up on land periodically to seduce women. We spend day after day in a boat with her exclaiming "There's one! And there's another one!" After a while I found myself thinking "Sy, you go out in the boat and look for the bufeo. I'll lounge here on the hotel veranda and have some refreshments until you get back. Have a nice time." Unlike some reviewers, I didn't find anything 'magical' or particularly poetic about her descriptions of the environment. It's not that she's a bad writer - clearly she isn't - but she describes things the way a travel columnist would describe an exotic locale for readers planning their next

vacation - the size of the trees, the depth of the water, the different kinds of plants and bugs and wildlife you may encounter, with some attempt to make it all sound beautiful. She does give some superficial history of the Basin, a little evolutionary history of dolphins, some "highlights" types of descriptions of a couple of towns and villages - everything you need to know to enhance your vacationing experience. She meets a lot of people along the way and dutifully describes the physical appearance of most of them. She tries to instill a little personality in each of them but can't pull it off, so even these encounters take on the quality of "And then I met this tanned woman wearing khaki shorts who was interested in manatees." In the end, we have gone on a trip with Sy and visited a local market or two, admired the opera house at Manaus, caught some glimpses of the pink dolphins, listened to various natives tell the same legend, gone to the funeral of a drowned child, dodged a snake or two, and gotten sweaty in the jungle. If you had any interest in pink dolphins before you started the book, you'll be over it by the time this trip ends.

I loved this book! Sy Montgomery is a talented writer, able to put you in exotic places with vivid descriptions, I almost felt I was in the . She really brought it to life, I look forward to reading another book of hers I have purchased, "Search for the Golden Moon Bear." The book focuses on the author's quest for the pink dolphin, but really it is a journey to find not one but two dolphins. I don't refer to the other species of dolphin that lives in the , the tucuxi (one which she also covers in the book), but for two sides of the same animal. On the one hand she searches for the pink dolphin, the buefo in Spanish or boto in Portuguese, a living animal of which little is known about in comparison with many other dolphin species. Living in the most massive river system on earth, one connected to innumerable lakes in the rainy season, in waters often black as coffee and infested with caimans, piranha, stingrays, and electric eels, in often very remote regions to which there is no reliable transportation to, it is a difficult subject to study. An example of cetaceans from an earlier geologic era, primitive when compared to modern oceanic dolphins, the pink dolphins preserve something from an earlier era, a holdover in the modern world. Montgomery and her various companions in the book struggle to get good observations of the dolphins, to try and track them, to identify individuals, to observe their behavior. The author finds that even experts who have studied the buefo for years are often perplexed by them. She has many successes, providing much interesting information on them and a fine series of color photographs of the often startlingly pink dolphins. Montgomery though is also questing for the Encante, the mystical shape-shifting dolphin that is very real to many of the peoples who live along the mighty . Believed to exist in fabulous cities beneath the surface of the river, the locals speak in conspiratorial tones about the dolphins' magic powers and often lust for

attractive humans. The natives often worry that their wives, husbands, sons, and daughters will be stolen about by the fabulous Encante, and speak with awe and reverence about the dolphins. Montgomery continually quests for the natives' views of the Encante, for their "true" tales, and for how they protect themselves against their fantastic attention. Montgomery doesn't exclusively focus on dolphins though. Her book in part is a vivid travelogue of *ia*, bringing us to many exotic locations. We visit Manaus, the impossible Paris of the , home to an opera house right out of a fairy tale. Built upon the backs of native jungle peoples by rubber barons, today it is a squalid city trying to embrace change. She takes us to amazing Meeting of the Waters, where for miles two tributies of the , the black River Negro and the white Solimoes, flow side by side before forming the true River. We are taken to two different nature reserves, both with differing strategies, Tamshiyacu-Tahuayo and Mamiraua, where some of the rich life and deadly beauty of *ia* is preserved against an uncertain future. Montgomery takes us to the impossibly clear waters and white sandy beaches of the Tapajos and Arapiuns Rivers, where she actually swims with the dolphins, something not possible elsewhere in the dark and piranha-infested rivers elsewhere. She undertakes a vision quest by taking the hallucigenic Ayahuasca or "Mother of the Vine," something few Westerners have done (and for good reason). Further, while the bufeo or boto is the star of the book, many other animals form a rich supporting cast. The odd hoatzin, a bird with claws, seemingly someting out of the Mesozoic. Electric eels, extremely common and suprisingly complex. Caimans, another seemingly prehistoric species. *ian* manatees, gentle vegetarians that are much more intelligent than often given credit for. The weird side-necked turtle. All manner of insects, including ants. And more are given space. Some have said that she rhapsodizes too much in the book, but I disagree. She has done her research, the book is filled with interviews with experts, and there is a nice bibliography at the end. She has skillfully combined hard science with poetry, and the effort is very worthwhile. I highly recommend it.

I'm usually quite disappointed in 'general' cetacean literature but this book surprised me. Very well done! Although I'm not an expert in freshwater dolphin biology, small North Pacific Odontocetes were the topic of my own MS thesis so I approach these works from a biased perspective. Loaded with marvelous black-and-white photos and sections of color photographs. I've already got this book out on loan to some of my fellow biologists down the hall at the National Marine Mammal Laboratory.

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