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Patagonian Road: A Year Alone Through Latin America



Synopsis

Spanning four seasons, 10 countries, three teaching jobs, and countless buses, Patagonian Road chronicles Kate McCahill's solo journey from Guatemala to Argentina. In her struggles with language, romance, culture, service, and homesickness, she personifies a growing culture of women for whom travel is not a path to love but to meaningful work, rare inspiration, and profound self-discovery. Following Paul Theroux's route from his 1979 travelogue, McCahill transports the reader from a classroom in a Quito barrio to a dingy room in an El Salvadorian brothel, and from the neighborhoods of Buenos Aires to the heights of the Peruvian Andes. A testament to courage, solitude, and the rewards of taking risks, Patagonian Road proves that discovery, clarity, and simplicity remain possible in the 21st century, and that travel holds an enduring capacity to transform.

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Customer Reviews

"Patagonian Road" is in equal measure a travelogue for those who have traveled, and for those who

will only do so living vicariously through author Kate McCahill's reminiscences of her time in Central and South America. As someone who has lived abroad and traveled extensively to some of the world's most difficult places, McCahill's stories and the nuances that give them such richness brought to mind many aspects of the experience of being a Westerner abroad that I've experienced but never fully realized -- she gives them life by calling them to the surface, making them real and poignant in the retelling. The loneliness, the awe, the emptiness, and the fulfillment of discovery of the world and oneself are all aptly described. The book's anecdotes are equal parts accessible and foreign, simple but essential. An excellent read for those who want a catalyst to relive their own travel adventures and for those who simply wish to catch a glimpse of what it's like to leave life behind for a wander through the world.

There are times in my life that the need to venture into the unknown is overwhelming and unstoppable. This book came to me in one of those moments. Kate McCahill perfectly describes this route with beautiful and sometimes, haunting detail. The personal experiences and emotions that she weaves through her story kept me captivated through the last sentence. Her words quenched my thirst for adventure. Do yourself a favor and read this book.

Ms McCahill is able to describe her experiences in a way that make you feel like you are there...and that maybe it could even be you! A very exciting book! I really enjoyed Patagonian Road and can't wait to read more of her work in the future!!!

this book brought tears to my eyes...I have known Kate ,be it superficially ,since she was a child, I was so impressed as when I started I thought it was going to be a trail guide for South America ..only to find it was a beautifully written coming of age tale...of a courageous young woman...I am now reading it for a second time ...highly recommend to all

A beautifully written book. It is full of personal reactions to the people and places she encounters as well as great insight into life.

For anyone who enjoys traveling, this book is for you!

Kate McCahill is a woman with balls! Young, attractive, and very much alone, she takes off to follow the route of Paul Theroux's "The Old Patagonian Express," only by local buses, not passenger

trains, from Mexico to the bottom of South America -- Patagonia. Along the way, through Guatemala, El Salvador, Nicaragua, Ecuador, Peru, Bolivia, and finally to Argentina, she discovers herself reflected in the lives of people she would never have encountered had she stayed safe in upstate New York. McCahill, although well-educated (Wellesley undergrad and an MFA degree from the Vermont College of Fine Arts), she writes better than that, with a free-flowing, natural style that immerses the reader in the world she describes as if in the bus seat next to her, or hiking a hilly road through the jungle at her side, so you are tossing rocks to keep away scavenging dogs, you are hearing the life tales of the old villager in the straw hat, you are realizing you cannot trust those young men following you down the road, and you are sharing her occasional profound loneliness. Then she survives to reach Buenos Aires, the Paris of Latin America, where she meets a young man whom she does trust, and moves in for a while with two marvelously creative (and a bit batty) sisters, where she takes a teaching job in a barrio so dangerous she needs to be escorted from the bus stop to the classroom. As a reader, I am happy Kate McCahill made this treacherous journey and then wrote this marvelous book about it; she is a born storyteller. But it must come with the caveat I'd offer my own daughters -- Don't you dare try this!--Donigan Merritt, author of "Possessed by Shadows," "The Common Bond," and other novels

Kate McCahill is an extraordinary writer. She is observant and perceptive and thoughtful and empathetic, and she's able to put things down on the page that most people don't even begin to know how to articulate. I loved every single word of this book, and didn't want it to end. If you love words and really good writing, if you love brilliant, strong, brave, adventurous women, if you love travel, and having your experiences and your perceptions challenged and stretched, if you're soul searching, trying to figure out what you want to do in life, and what matters to you... read this book.

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