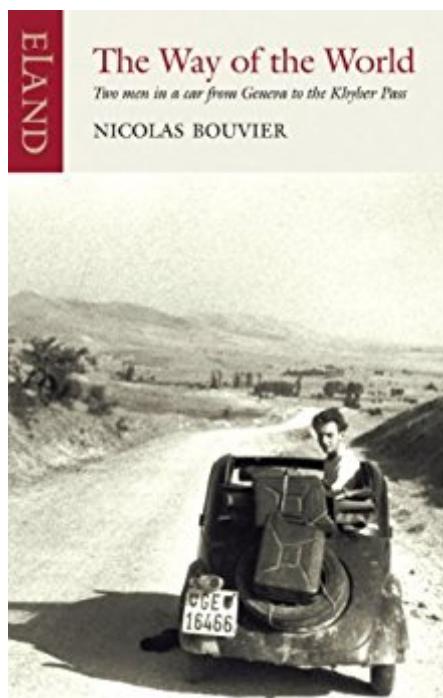


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The Way Of The World: Two Men In A Car From Geneva To The Khyber Pass



Synopsis

The Way of the World, a cult classic, is the beguiling tale of an impecunious and life-enhancing journey from Geneva to the Khyber Pass in the '50s. When Nicolas Bouvier and the artist Thierry Vernet set out, they had money for four months and a sturdy Fiat Topolino. They broke their journey when money ran low, to teach and sell paintings and articles in Istanbul, Tabriz and eventually in Quetta. Gravitating towards the poorer neighbourhoods, they spent intoxicating nights listening to gypsy musicians, trading poetry with Iranian tramps and entertaining their fellow drinkers with songs and an accordion. The Way of the World is also a journey towards the self. 'You think you are making a trip,' writes Bouvier, 'but soon it is making you - or unmaking you.'

Book Information

File Size: 6203 KB

Print Length: 339 pages

Page Numbers Source ISBN: 1590173228

Publisher: Eland Publishing (October 18, 2011)

Publication Date: October 18, 2011

Language: English

ASIN: B0070D3U4S

Text-to-Speech: Enabled

X-Ray: Not Enabled

Word Wise: Enabled

Lending: Not Enabled

Enhanced Typesetting: Enabled

Best Sellers Rank: #268,673 Paid in Kindle Store (See Top 100 Paid in Kindle Store) #14 in Books > Travel > Asia > Afghanistan #27 in Books > Travel > Europe > Serbia & Slovenia #77 in Kindle Store > Kindle eBooks > Nonfiction > Travel > Middle East

Customer Reviews

The setting for the book is this lengthy road trip from Europe to the Khyber Pass back in the 50s. I did a similar trip in 1970. The strength of the writing is all in the understanding and insightful nature of the descriptions of the daily doings. It's not exciting or hair-raising, though certainly it held my interest throughout. Quite a few times I read a paragraph where I stopped and commented to my sister or wife, "Listen to this". And then just read aloud that snippet. The author and his buddy were a journalist and an artist taking a year long journey in a small and problem prone Fiat auto of the time.

And stopping in towns where they would stay for a night or a couple weeks or even longer. They were trying to raise money from their work as they went along. Everybody understands that need, so they were on a more level footing with those who they encountered. This is certainly a fine book, and I'd recommend it to any thoughtful person.

Nicolas Bouvier is an enjoyable travel companion. He is observant, clever and writes well. His insights are excellent and he is absolutely fearless in relating ALL of the travel experience, whether good or bad. Bouvier's style is relaxed and very comfortable. One of his best aspects in relating his trip across the Middle East to India is his lack of judgmental cultural imperialism. Bouvier remains open to people, and because of this, he is welcomed and accepted. He comes in contact with a great cast of characters. It is most enlightening to look at the people and countryside through his 1953 eyes and see the area in an earlier time. I would highly recommend this book and author to anyone interested in the Middle East in specific and travel in general. Read it and take away some excellent lessons in how to be a good traveler and a welcome guest in another country.

A remarkable little book that doesn't fit any category. It is hardly a travel essay. Bouvier gives no overview of the cultures he visits. His descriptions of sites and scenes are often minimal. Nor is it a chronicle of a personal journey. Bouvier provides little internal monologue. Although he occasionally makes philosophical pronouncements, his tone is distanced and impersonal, curious and objective. He looks outward, not inward. It reads more like a series of impressionistic short stories. I enjoyed most the literary snapshots of people in the 1950s in Yugoslavia, Turkey, Iran and Afghanistan. Against a remote backdrop of religious extremism, bribe-taking officials, and tyranny in one form or another, Bouvier finds individuals who love life, seek pleasure, chase irrational dreams, and give unselfishly to needy travelers. More than anything else, it is a book about hospitality in an inhospitable world.

2 Swiss/French guys jump in to small fiat and travel in 1953 from Serbia to Afghanistan. this is 20 years after Patrick Fermor walks his way thru the eastern Europe to the black sea. what a difference 20 years make! whole nations have disappeared. whole peoples have been swept away. the survivors are left and you can see how life after WW II was like. you can also read how the Persians felt after the royalist coup swept the shah of iran back in - still life goes on. the 2 guys appreciate the sounds and smells and life all around even in the winter in Tabriz. excellent prose. well written and thoughtful from a non-USA perspective.

Not a review. Just a brief comment. Like travel stories from long ago and far away? Buy and read this book. A nice change of pace from Bill Bryson (:

This travel book has an introduction by Patrick Leigh Fermor, which attracted me to it. In no way does it compare with Fermor's writing about his own adventures, however. Too much of Bouvier's narrative describes the mechanical failures of his vehicle and the attempts to get it repaired. There is too much detail about engine failure and not enough description of his hosts' viewpoint, the cultural differences he encounters, and the general atmosphere surrounding the Balkans, Turkey, Iran and Afghanistan. Still, it is an enjoyable treatment of an unusual journey that contrasts greatly with the present situation in that part of the world.

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