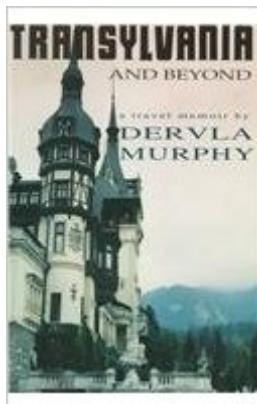


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Transylvania And Beyond: A Travel Memoir



Synopsis

The intrepid explorerâ™s journey to Romania. Dervla Murphy spent eight months in Transylvania - and beyond - sharing the everyday lives of ordinary Rumanians. Her book describes a journey on two levels - wandering through the remotest corners of the Carpathians, on foot or by bicycle, and into the often daunting mental terrain of a post-Communist society where nothing was quite what it seemed.

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Customer Reviews

While world attention was focused on Bucharest after the execution of Ceausescu, acclaimed travel writer Dervla Murphy spent eight months in Transylvania sharing the everyday lives of ordinary Romanians. Upon her arrival soon after the revolution, Murphy found a nation both exhilarated and bewildered; unlike other East Europeans, the Romanians had had no warning that they were about to be liberated. During a return visit in 1991, she noticed a profound change in the national mood. Candid and eye-opening, Transylvania and Beyond describes a journey on two levels - wandering through the remotest corners of the Carpathians, on foot or by bicycle, and into the often daunting mental terrain of a post-Communist society where nothing is quite as it seems. Murphy was overwhelmed by the warmth of the hospitality she received. In urban blocs, small towns and traditional villages she spent time with teachers, factory-workers, writers, farmers, professors, engineers, vets, army officers, shepherds, students and doctors. As they revealed their hopes, fears and prejudices to her, Dervla gained some unexpected insights into what she calls "one of Europe's least European countries".

Dervla Murphy has written more than twenty books recounting her adventures all over the world on foot, mule, bicycle, and just about every other conveyance imaginable. Her books Full Tilt, Eight Feet in the Andes, The Waiting Land, Muddling Through in Madagascar, On a Shoestring to Coorg, Cameroon with Egbert, Transylvania and Beyond, The Ukimwi Road, and South from the Limpopo are available from The Overlook Press.

insight on the region shortly after the split from Soviets

Love reading this book again and again. Each time I recognize scenes from new places I travel. Have purchased this book for friends who love Romania as much as I do.

I ordered and read this book in advance of a planned trip to Romania with a church group that is building orphanages and working to help abandoned kids there. Ms. Murphy's book was helpful in showing the deplorable state the Communist regime left Romania and one must marvel at the hospitality shown by people who are living, in many cases, in poverty unknown in the Western world. And I admired her ability to travel solo throughout the troubled nation (on foot and bicycle, no less!), and felt for her when she suffered physical injury and stolen possessions. However, I found it extremely disappointing that Ms. Murphy chooses to mock a couple of Romania's favorable cultural attributes -- she is baffled by people's "old fashion" views of limiting sexual relationships to marriage, and she sees liberalizing the country's strict abortion laws as a positive step. Finally, she is strident in her opposition to the first Gulf War, slams Margaret Thatcher, believes the United States is successfully peddling propaganda to not only a gullible Romania but gullible West as well, (I guess people in democracies with access to all sorts of information are too stupid to make up their own mind...at least if they tilt right), and late in the book she apparently fails to understand the views held by many Americans that our nation feels blessed by God and a responsibility to share that blessing as well as His message of Salvation. If you share Ms. Murphy's liberal views, you'll probably enjoy this book. If not, then they may cast a pall on the rest of her observations, which may be quite enlightening. It would have been nice if the reader would have been warned of the author's worldview up front.

Dervla Murphy travels by bicycle, mule, or foot, then comes back to tell all - warts and all. She has courage and integrity - and a disarmingly unmannered charm - and deploys these gifts in each of

her books to capture the immediacy and difficult beauty of landscapes and peoples often on the wrong side of "progress". From her first day - robbed of her belongings, save for a couple bottles of Irish whiskey - Ms Murphy takes the reader on a journey into the tormented soul of Transylvania, a beautiful land of forests and mountains, fought over by Hungarians, Germans, Szekelys, and Romanians for centuries. She shares her impressions of land and people, not with an air of authority, but rather with a sense of candour and compassion. Perhaps too abrupt, sometimes wrong-headedly opinionated, but a single cussed Murphy sentence as often as not trumps a bookshelf-load of expert opinions. If you do NOT enjoy unbridled enthusiasm, a thirst for adventure and local hooch, obstinate cussedness in the face of know-it-alls and tiresome do-gooders, then do NOT read these books. If you DO enjoy these traits, and wish to spend a very pleasant evening or two with an engaging woman, do read Dervla Murphy's books (by all means start with "Full Tilt", her classic first book).

A fairly descriptive diary of a journey to many interesting places in Transylvania, a very multicultural section of the world with an exciting history. The journey of the author itself is quite adventurous, and we get a pretty good glimpse of the daily lives of the people who live there. My only problem with the book was that the author often seemed to be prejudiced against Hungarians (or Magyars), in fact at some point she calls the Magyars (as a whole) arrogant psychopaths. There is quite a bit of ethnic tension in Transylvania even today, it would be helpful if someone was able to give an unbiased account of the situation.

I enjoyed some of Dervla Murphy's earlier books. However, this book revealed that Ms. Murphy is utterly and completely ignorant of the history, geography, culture, ethnicity, and historical place of Transylvania. She totally confuses it with the history of Romania. Moreover, she is totally biased and prejudiced against the Hungarians or Magyars/Szekelys to whom Transylvania belonged between 896 AD and 1920, the Versailles Peace Treaty. The Romanian State - Wallachia - was established many centuries after Saint Stephan, the first Roman Catholic king of the Kingdom of Hungary was crowned by Pope Sylvester in 1,000 AD. Transylvania is ancient Hungarian land lost to Romania in 1920. Do your own research!

Murphy's mobile diary captures Romania in all its splendor and squalor. Refreshingly opinionated, she rushes the reality of Romania into your face and beyond!

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