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A Breeze In Bulgaria



Synopsis

Bulgaria. A country with beautiful mountains, fertile fields, dusty roads and old Soviet-era apartment bloks. Ancient ruins, tired cities, intricate music and folk dances. Scattered remnants of the old industry struggle for survival, glimmers of hope among rusty abandoned factories. School hallways ring with the laughter and shrieks of bright-eyed, eager children, and young people go to discos and wear fashionable clothes, discussing ideas and drinking coffee in sidewalk cafÃ©s for hours. Bruce McDonald and his wife Stormy worked in Bulgaria as Peace Corps Volunteers, and fell in love with it all. In this Peace Corps memoir they tell of meeting people who loved their country and its proud heritage, people who knew how to live very well with very little. The hardy and resilient way of life came down through the centuries from the warlike Slavs who swept in from the north and east, pushing aside the powerful Thracians and the Romans and the Greeks. Then there was the civilizing influence of literature and learning brought by holy monks. Five hundred years "Under the Turkish Yoke" were ended by Heroes of the Revolution, reverently remembered. In modern times, tumult, change. Entrepreneurs in a newly free society with apples and cabbages for sale at a table by the sidewalk. Democracy too, with whatever that will bring. Determination and hard work define what is needed in everyday life. The volunteers' own story had a turn of events too, one that took determination and hard work to overcome. The heroes of this story are many, and courage is proved in adversity.

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Customer Reviews

This is a MUST read for anyone who wants to know what the Peace Corps experience is like. Bruce blends his descriptions of Bulgarian daily life, teaching school there, love of the children, friendships with the people, participating in the customs of the country, travel, and creating projects to improve everyone's life. It takes special people like Bruce and his wife Stormy to be able to make this kind of a contribution to a country and make it sound like they are the ones benefiting. Actually, the book would be useful to anyone traveling anywhere, because he gives tips on what to expect and how to communicate on a level that gets you what you need to get somewhere, like purchasing tickets. I love Bruce's sense of humor because while being a kind person, he still tells it like it is. Including the frustrating times. At the same time, the sentences themselves are so beautifully written that it wouldn't make much difference to me if the book were about nothing. His vocabulary is so evocative of the scenery and the interactions between people that it is just a pleasure to keep reading. I love the book.

I hope this book would be as interesting to a general reader as it is to people with Peace Corps experience/relation (such as most of the reviewers to date) or a Bulgarian, such as myself. It is neither a novel nor a travel guide nor anything else I had read before. As the author intended, it is just a fresh breeze... in the memoir genre. If you are interested in precise, deep and consistent encyclopedic information about Bulgaria, this is not the book for you (the few "misspelled" Bulgarian words, for example, are a rather charming inaccuracy). The uniqueness of the book is in the telling of a simple human love story which would be in many ways different if it did not happen in Bulgaria! Bruce and Stormy seem to be really amazing people. No wonder they made so many friends in Bulgaria in such a short time. I have come to appreciate more the free and open American spirit (Yes, to me this wasn't a book about Bulgaria only). Words like charity, volunteering, patience, objectiveness and tolerance were redefined for me by an American ex-pilot teaching Bulgarian kids. Thank you, Bruce for your service and your memories - people should really read them! Did you bring a 2-liter plastic Coca Cola bottle full of home made rakia to the States? :)

The first Peace Corps volunteers arrived in Bulgaria in 1991, shortly after the country changed its political system. When Bruce McDonald arrived eleven years later, he said, "We felt this was such a good place to be because of the big changes that were in process here in the transition to a democratic society and a new market system." Bruce and his wife Stormy arrived in Bulgaria, were assigned a host family in the village of Panagyurishte, and taught English in the town of Pazardjik. In order to fulfill their duties they needed to master conversational Bulgarian. They adapted to their challenges quickly, making friends, shopping in the markets, drinking rakia, and dancing the horo, the traditional Bulgarian folk dance. A Breeze in Bulgaria is the McDonalds' memoir of their Peace Corps experience in Bulgaria. "This Peace Corps memoir is about people," Bruce writes on his website. "Strange customs, unfamiliar assumptions and ways of thinking, austerity and living close to the earth, sure, but really about people. The book reads almost like a conversation with the author, as he describes his daily routine and the many adventures and new experiences he encounters along the way. Travel around Bulgaria, volunteering in an orphanage, slaughtering a pig, canning preserves for the winter, and preparing lesson plans are all explained in detail. Readers will enjoy this colorful introduction to Bulgaria, a beautiful country with a long history and a proud heritage. The Bulgarians who played roles in the McDonalds' story are warm and eager to welcome foreigners into their homes. Bruce and Stormy McDonald provide us with so many memorable stories, anecdotes and adventures that we can't help but want to make a visit to Bulgaria.

A Book that takes you on a magical journey of two Peace Corp volunteers, assigned to Bulgaria. You began, in this book, not only to love Bulgaria, but also love the man and woman having the experience. IT is rich in examples of the culture, and you can understand in a beautiful way why the two loved their experience there. The book is very well written and a pleasure to read. I would recommend this book to any one interested in world travels and different cultures, Or to anyone for that matter that loves to read and understand what the Peace Corp is all about. In short I highly recommend it!

I enjoyed reading "A Breeze In Bulgaria". The adventures of Bruce and Stormy as they tackle the challenges of the Peace Corps, the Bulgarian language, the Bulgarian culture, and teaching fascinated me. I learned of the book from Bruce who is a classmate of mine from the Air Force Academy. I admire the courage it takes to take on challenges after 60 when many of our contemporaries have given up on life. I'm afraid I'd never have the patience that Bruce and Stormy

showed dealing with the Bulgarian culture. As a flying and music teacher, I've always been interested in the challenges of teaching and I enjoyed Bruce's experiences teaching English. This is a great book for anyone contemplating career choices after retirement. Les Jensen

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