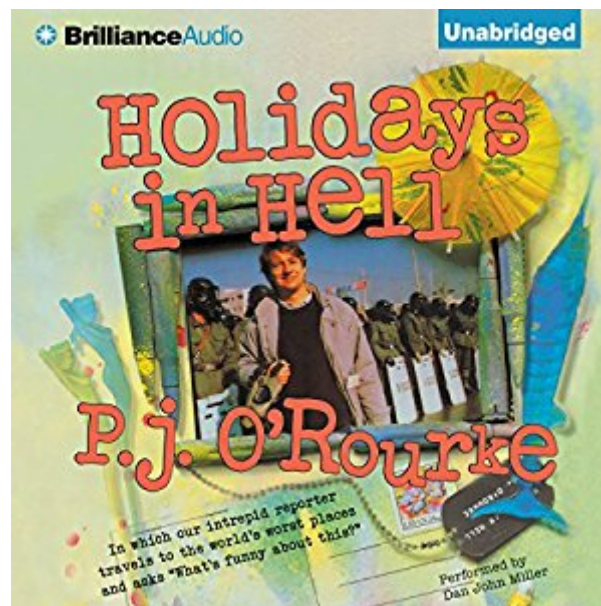


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Holidays In Hell: In Which Our Intrepid Reporter Travels To The World's Worst Places And Asks, 'What's Funny About This'



Synopsis

Holidays in Hell follows P. J. O'Rourke on a global fun-finding mission to the most desperate places on the planet, from the bombed-out streets of Beirut to the stultifying blandness of Heritage USA. P.J.'s unforgettable adventures abroad include storming student protesters' barricades in South Korea, interviewing Communist insurrectionists in the Philippines, and going undercover in Arab garb at Jerusalem's Dome of the Rock Mosque. Packed with P.J.'s classic riffs on everything from Polish nightlife under communism to Third World driving tips, Holidays in Hell is one of the best-loved books by one of today's most celebrated humorists - a full-tilt, no-holds-barred romp through politics, culture, and ideology.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

No, this man is too much. I have never read anyone funnier or smarter. From his exalted brilliance in Parliament of Whores to his latest Eat the Rich, P.J. O'Rourke manages to make me laugh out loud on nearly every page. My husband is trying to sleep and I'm pulling his arm saying, just one more, let me read you just one more thing, and then we laugh till we cry. I don't know. P.J. should not be allowed to be this funny. His former editor in Rolling Stone told me that in real life he is every bit as mirthful. I will say that the cynicism has just got to end at EPCOT. I draw the line at Disney World. Everything else is up for grabs, Beirut, Warsaw, go ahead, yuck it up. But leave WDW alone; have you not been on the Maelstrom Ride?

Wonder what it would be like to travel to dangerous places as an American tourist? Places like Lebanon, El Salvador, The Phillippines, and Palestine (all during times of active insurrection, of course)? No need... P. J. has done it for you. Reading this book you really get the feeling of having been to these places. It's a miracle P. J. survives even just the opening chapter, a casual ramble across Lebanon during their civil war. His sense of humor through all this is reminiscent of Dave Barry, full of flippant remarks and strange juxtapositions, yet on a deeper level his observations are also deadly serious. (They are occasionally quoted in decidedly serious policy magazines such as "The Economist", for example.) Reading this book may explain for you a lot about why the third world is at it is, but it's also a fun read and a good adventure at the same time.

"Holidays in Hell" was the first book to collect the travel writings of P.J. O'Rourke for Rolling Stone magazine. Though a bit dated today (these stories were from the mid 1980s) it is still quite funny and full of classic P.J. He establishes his mantra here, basically that if you really want to know what's going on in a country you should never interview its politicians who will never tell you the straight story. In this book, P.J. travels to Poland, Lebanon, Panama and Heritage U.S.A. among other places. But the best essay is called "Through Darkest America: Epcot Center" that is an absolutely dead on drubbing of the so-called Magic Kingdom. Through it all O'Rourke reminds me of a more political and funnier Bill Bryson. This book is well worth a read.

I read this in 1989, but I still like to go back to it. It's a classic and I believe, the best of P.J.'s books (I have almost all). Though, it seems dated now, going back to '80's history feels like yesterday and I have never forgotten certain lines, like when he was in bleak Warsaw, how "commies love cement." And if you think he encounters only the bizarre international world, his chapters on "Heritage USA (remember Jim & Tammy Bakker's Christian theme resort?) and Epcot Center remind us that the good 'ol USA has some wackiness of its own. His ramble through Lebanon (post Beirut war) where "the beaches, though shell-pocked...are not crowded and ruins of historical interest abound, in fact, block most streets" displays his intelligent humor for places lacking any humor at all. In fact, it reads like some Fodor's Travel Horror Guide, where in El Salvador "you pick [your hotel] according to the kind of fear you prefer." Whether it was because P.J. was young, fresh and writing for Rolling Stone and other mags at the time, I don't know, but he has never quite matched this level of writing he set up for himself. His "All The Trouble In The World" would be my second pick if you like this one and I just don't see how anyone can't love "Holidays In Hell."

Peege & I would probably never ever vote the same way, but he is one of the sharpest guys on the planet, and not afraid to toss barbs at his fellow conservatives when they deserve it. I own several of his books, but it's *Holidays In Hell* that I treasure. The majority of these essays were published in *Rolling Stone*, and *Revenge of the Euroweenies* was the first of his essays that I read. That essay was so funny and so ... true ... that I found myself calling friends long distance to read passages to them. Soon thereafter, *Holidays In Hell* was published and I read it cover to cover with lightening speed, howling all the way. The thing about Peege is that he's not only witty and clever, but many of the essays are thought-provoking and insightful when you look past the funny surface. The next summer I spent 3 months in Guatemala with an archaeological expedition, and found that Peege was right on the money about so many things. (The essay on driving should be handed out to all Americans upon arrival in any 3rd world country.) I've given this book as a birthday or Christmas present to everyone I know who's been to a trouble spot. Even though it's over 10 years old, and political situations change, it's still a hoot.

Whee! If I were inclined to travel to any of the places the author has gone to; I hope I would have his matchless sense of humor. Humor is the only thing that would get me to venture into Libya, Mali or any other turbulent country. Common sense keeps me home with this very funny and friendly book.

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