



## Floreana

*Margret Wittmer*

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## Floreana Margret Wittmer

A Woman's Pilgrimage to the Galapagos. A breath-taking firsthand account of Wittmer's successful attempt to settle the island of Floreana. In 1932, Margaret Wittmer leaves Germany with her husband and step-son and travels to Floreana, a small, almost unpopulated island in the Galapagos chain, where they settle, clear land, and, after five months of living in old pirates' caves, move into the house they finish just in time for Margaret to have a baby. Over time, the Wittmers acquire a number of remarkable neighbors, including convicts, military personnel and a mysterious baroness who aspires to build a hotel for millionaires. They receive visits from people as diverse as Franklin D. Roosevelt and Thor Heyerdahl, who comes to investigate a reported "head" much like the ones on Easter Island, only to find it was carved by Margaret's husband. There are wild bulls and boars, a dog named Lump that serves as a babysitter, a distant war, a daughter who would rather have a machete or a hoe than a doll, years of settled life, and finally grandchildren. At times the entire situation borders on the unbelievable, but Margaret Wittmer provides equal measures of intrigue, fantasy, and common sense as she writes in her down-to-earth and often very humorous fashion about her years on Floreana.

## Floreana Details

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Author : Margret Wittmer

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## From Reader Review Floreana for online ebook

### Staci says

I started reading this book after watching the documentary, "The Galapagos Affair - Satan Came to Eden". It is a crazy story about conflicts between people who left civilization to get away from it all, and it includes murder, intrigue, and mummies.

As it turns out, that story is just a blip in this book. This book is written by Margaret Wittmer, who with her husband and stepson, left Germany and moved to Floreana, a nearly uninhabited island in the Galapagos. I wasn't sure what to expect from this book after watching the documentary, but I can say now that they are very different.

This book reads like Little House on the Prairie - no kidding! Taken from Margaret's diaries, it is about how Margaret and her husband, determined to make a happy life for themselves and their children, live off the land removed from civilization. I was pleasantly surprised.

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### Jack Boerner says

The history of the Wittmer family, the first permanent inhabitants of Floreana who moved there from Germany in 1932, and continue there today. A surprisingly delightfully written book, especially as I just returned from the Galapagos. I wish that I had read it prior to meeting Ingrid, the daughter of Heinz and Margaret, at her guesthouse. I would have loved to talk to her with more depth of background. A fascinating story of survival and success earned through love and hard work.

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### Teri says

I enjoyed Margaret's account of her family's 1932 relocation to Floreana of the Galapagos islands very much although the subtitle "a woman's pilgrimage" proved to be misleading. While we see interesting events in gardening, hunting, and are treated to see the love she feels for her husband and boys, I was taken aback that so much of her focus was on infrequent visitors and the oddity of her original neighbors on the island. I would have enjoyed feeling the emotion and struggle in making the land into a flourishing home.

The last chapters were very disappointing as the family focused on bringing modern convenience into their homes. It felt they lost the focus that made the move to Floreana a grand adventure that enriched their lives and sold out the dream ensuring modern sprawl and love of money would become the new norm.

Overall, Margaret Wittmer's account is very interesting and well worth the read.

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### Lorna says

Getting to know Greta Wittmer was a pleasure (in spite of her ignorance when she said, "I stood in a lake. I

had been working like a black for four hours".....)

The history of the Galapagos islands was interesting and the characters were really good people!

I have always wanted to visit the Galapagos islands but I always had the naive impression that they were in their original wild state. After this read I realize that, by now, they are probably completely stripped of Darwin's version of the islands.

Read this if you have an interest in the Galapagos and want to hear the story of a very brave family.

P.S. I was very amused by the author's use of the exclamation mark....you'll see. (smile)

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### **Nancy Oakes says**

Floreana by Margret Wittmer is another book which along with *Satan Came to Eden: A Survivor's Account of the "Galapagos Affair"* by Dore Strauch, discusses the strange disappearance of an even stranger woman who called herself "the Baroness" from the small island of Floreana in the Galapagos archipelago in the mid 1930s. I've written about both books here, as well as a later account written by someone who set out to solve the mystery in the 1980s.

Wittmer arrived at Floreana with her husband and young son in the early thirties, and the family decided that the island was definitely suitable for living. They had one set of neighbors, Doctor Friedrich Ritter and his lover Dore Strauch, whose decision to leave civilization for a remote island inspired the Wittmers to also leave Germany and settle in a remote location away from other people. For a while things moved along swimmingly. Soon, though, an interloper in the form of a self-styled "Baroness" shows up, two lovers in tow, totally changing the dynamics of life on Floreana and not in a good way. Wittmer's memoir details how the family came there, how they adjusted to living there, and then of course, the strange events leading up to the disappearance of the Baroness; it also goes on to explore the Wittmer's life on Floreana after everyone else went away, covering a fifty-six year period.

I didn't enjoy this one as much as I did Strauch's account, mostly because Strauch and Ritter were such strange but colorful people, much unlike the Wittmers. However, it's still quite good and very much worth the read.

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### **Carol says**

I enjoyed reading of the family's adventures and how they survived and thrived in the face of many challenges. However, as a biologist and environmentalist living in the next century from this story, I squirmed uncomfortably through much of it. They took pride in doing things that could not, would not, be condoned now, and I had to force myself not to dwell on this reading. I also had the nagging feeling that there was a whole left out between the lines...and that the author quite deliberately glossed over many things she wished left unsaid. The one bright side - more than ever I would love to visit the Galapagos in my lifetime.

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### **Melody says**

When I describe this book to my friends they assume I am recounting a work of fiction. And a pretty far-fetched and unbelievable work of fiction which includes: A dentist who pulls all his teeth to insure he will become a vegetarian;

a baroness who carries a gun and a whip and lives with her two lovers;

a family who begins their life on this almost deserted magical kingdom of a remote island living in a pirate's cave.

Plus at least one murder.

Each of the inhabitants on this small island far off the coast of Ecuador is there to escape civilization.

And this is not fiction - it's fact.

I understand there is a documentary about the whole crazy set-up called "The Galapagos Affair: When Satan came to Eden."

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### **La Mala 🌸 says**

Bien, acabo de ver el documental "The Galapagos Affair" sobre los hechos que se cuentan en este libro y no creo que vaya a pegar un ojo hoy...ni mañana, ni pasado, ni nunca.

Si les gustan los documentales sobre misterios sin resolver, *Ya se me van a mirarlo!! Ya!* (Esta en Netflix)

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### **Jeanne says**

This is an amazing memoir detailing the life of a couple who chose to homestead on the Galapagos island of Floreana. You may imagine life on a tropical island to be one of leisure, warm days on the beach and plentiful fruit. You would be wrong. It was as much hard work as any pioneer family in the American West. The beauty of this book was how happy they were in their isolation and how successful they were in their endeavors.

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### **Beth says**

I bought this book way back in 1984, perhaps my first used book purchase. I have read it over and over. This is a fascinating record of a German (or Austrian -- I forget) family's settlement of one of the Galapagos Islands. Sort of a real-life Swiss Family Robinson adventure. If I remember correctly, there are even pirates...

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### **Romina says**

Really interesting story about one of the first pioneers of Floreana, Galápagos, whose descendants actually still live there and in Santacruz today. The description of all she and her family went through is very touching, although perhaps a bit distant from the writer's thoughts, which is basically why I didn't give her 4 stars. When different tragedies seized the family, it was narrated in a simplistic way, almost a bit cold or like I already said, distant. However, the information she transmits makes up for this and keeps the reader's interest.

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### **Laura says**

Everything about Galápagos is just magic and catches my attention instantly. This real story is unbelievable and reading it has been a great journey, if only because I have been to Floreana and I could picture exactly where all these adventures took place. I envy their courage of living such a terrific life in such a desolate and magnificent island!

Despite the wonderful contents, I give this book 3 stars because it lacks of literary charm. Simple sentences, few emotions, long chains of chronicles. Something is missing...

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### **Karen B says**

An interesting story / memoir, but somewhat shallow...

I read this in several hours last night. It's certainly interesting, especially given how little I knew of the Galapagos Islands or their history. It's amazing what Margaret Wittmer and her family endured.

It's good as far as it goes, but at the end of the book, I found myself somewhat unsatisfied. The book would be so much better with more reflection or inclusion of Wittmer's thoughts and emotions (or those of her family). It read as if it was written quite a long time after the events happened. The narrative lacks immediacy and emotional depth. Perhaps the inclusion of diary excerpts, or excerpts from letters would have made it easier to engage more deeply with the story and better appreciate the true hardships, struggles and triumphs of this pioneering family on more than just a physical level.

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### **Cori says**

This is a great example of a Living Book about a family who moves to the Galapagos Island of Floreana in 1932. The story is about the family, how they survived, and the interesting people who tried to live on the island or sailed in to see them. Nothing about Darwin but you get a sense of the flora and fauna on the island.

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### **Suzanne says**

What a fascinating memoir! In 1932 Margaret Wittmer, her husband and son settle on the remote island of Floreana in the Galapagos chain, making their first homestead in an old pirate's cave. They must literally start from scratch, with few supplies making their way to them from the mainland. In addition, there are only a few inhabitants as neighbors: a doctor and his wife, and a strange woman who claims to be a baroness who lives with her two lovers.

From Wittmer's own dangerous and complicated childbirth experience, to murder, the loss of a loved one, World War II and visits from such prestigious persons as Franklin Delano Roosevelt, Wittmer's memoir is packed with interesting stories and harrowing events. Definitely a worthwhile read.

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