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Kate McCahill

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Spanning four seasons, 10 countries, three teaching jobs, and countless buses, Patagonian Road chronicles Kate McCahill's solo journey from Guatemala to Argentina. In her struggles with language, romance, culture, service, and homesickness, she personifies a growing culture of women for whom travel is not a path to love but to meaningful work, rare inspiration, and profound self-discovery. Following Paul Theroux's route from his 1979 travelogue, McCahill transports the reader from a classroom in a Quito barrio to a dingy room in an El Salvadorian brothel, and from the neighborhoods of Buenos Aires to the heights of the Peruvian Andes. A testament to courage, solitude, and the rewards of taking risks, Patagonian Road proves that discovery, clarity, and simplicity remain possible in the 21st century, and that travel holds an enduring capacity to transform.

Patagonian Road: A Year Alone Through Latin America Details

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Author : Kate McCahill

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From Reader Review Patagonian Road: A Year Alone Through Latin America for online ebook

Peggy Gastner says

Lovely prose. The author really paints a picture of the places she goes and the people she meets.

Bill Taggart says

Great read, makes you want to follow in her footsteps.

I really liked this book. I only wish there was a little more detail of some of the locations. A few spots only received a few pages. Definitely makes you want to travel.

Colleen says

There is nothing more fulfilling than letting your imagination transport you to another world, or in the case of Patagonian Road - another continent. As a stay-at-home mom, my walls can feel like they are closing in on me, and that is why it is important to find books that let me feel like I'm flying. I felt like I was flying alongside Kate McCahill as I read her book. The smells of the food, the subtle way she described people's personalities with just one adjective, and the simplicity of her descriptions of the sights and sounds really transported me. Patagonian Road feels raw but refined, and it makes me want to know the author and spend a month traveling with her. I appreciate that she spent the time putting her thoughts on paper so I could share her journey with her. I hope she writes another book soon, so I can join her on another adventure and transport myself once again -- even with a crying baby in the background.

Judith Prest says

I haven't read a "travel" book for a long time. This popped up in Kindle and so I got it and read it. I loved Kate McCahill's story of her journey through South America. I admire her courage for setting out on her own, her willingness to let each day unfold as it will, and her reflections on how her connections to home and relationships shifted as she moved deeper into her travels.

Dave McCahill says

I read Kate's book while meandering through Europe this spring. Patagonian Road came with me to the rugged coast of the Baltic Sea, to little mountain huts in the French Alps, through the busy streets of Berlin and to the snowcapped peaks on the border of Italy and Austria. Every night I turned a page and stepped out

into the bustling markets of Beunos Aires, thick jungle in Ecuador, endless stretches of salt in Bolivia. Patagonian Road takes the reader along on a journey of self-discovery, while gently reminding them of the importance of home, family, the open road, and the profound pleasure to be found in simply getting lost. Blessed with a true gift for sharing the vivid smells, sights and sounds to be encountered in any foreign place, Kate reminded me that travel isn't about acquiring photos or visiting the right places, it's about fully embracing the journey and the lessons it can share.

Beautifully written, Kate.

Your brother Dave

Louise says

Kate McCahill takes a year to explore 10 countries in South America. She was inspired by Paul Theroux's The Old Patagonian Express (which she carried with her) and duplicates his route with modifications, traveling by bus and cab. She does this alone she feels her partner back home drifting away.

The first part of her trip seems to be somehow planned in advance. There are homestays, English lessons and volunteer jobs. It seems that after Nicaragua and a visit from the slipping away lover "E_" she is on her own emotionally as well as in travel.

McCahill's travelogue is like a movie of her trip. She recounts the transportation, how she finds it, how she waits, its cost and security and efficiency (mostly lack of). She similarly covers food, flora, streetscapes, landforms, markets, accommodations... This movie-view shows most in the people she meets. I can't remember the names but the woman with the teenage sons and the man running from his wife come to mind. We see them like scenes of a film with no backstory or context. Why are they there? How typical they? Any context regarding the border guards and the park attendant in these "scenes" would similarly be welcome too.

While the prose is good to excellent throughout, I appreciated the later shorter chapters. The ones on the Bolivia mine and the landlord sisters in Argentina stand out. Here, McCahill gets as close as she gets to going deep.

There are generational and gender differences between the trip and the text of McCahill and Theroux. McCahill tells the reader about her life outside the trip. With Theroux, if he mentions it, you don't really remember where he actually lives or if he has a family. Theroux may visit old friends, writing colleagues etc., but he doesn't travel with them. McCahill shares not only meals but rooms and road time with other women and flirting young men she meets along the way. Theroux is a master of context. He does not just meet people, he "interviews" them. If McCahill can develop this and refine her more personal approach, she might produce modern travel classics.

This is a good book for armchair travelers with an interest in South America.

Christina Flynn says

Writing was good and I liked how she ended it. However there was something that made it drag on. "Wild" was much better. I did not feel connected to the author and was looking for more about her actual experiences and less about her personal life prior to her year abroad. I have never been nor will I (probably) never travel to Central and South America. I was hoping for a book that would allow me to experience her trip vicariously through her words. Instead I felt abandoned.

I gave it 3 stars because her use of language was beautiful.

Elyssa says

This was a fascinating memoir about a woman traveling solo through Latin America. Her writing is highly descriptive, so I often felt like I was with her. I also appreciate that she was humble, grateful, open-minded, and eager to learn.

Suzanne Smith says

I've loved memoirs above all else since I was 13 or 14, always finding myself drawn to true story, to an intimate narrator-reader experience, to the places and people and experiences that populate the lives of others. Kate McCahill's book satisfied all of this, and more. I traveled with her, both wishing I were there and could sit for dinner and talk about all the things seen that day, and admiring that she did this all on her own. She reached into places in a way I sense she could not have if someone had scripted the trip with her, without letting herself be swallowed. She remained the best kind of literary participant observer. Her prose is so lovely too, not overwrought but not too spare, and her presence in the text is equally balanced. I so enjoyed this book and am so glad I added it to my lifelong list of memoirs!

Jenny says

3.5 stars. Kate McCahill is a beautiful writer and I'll look forward to seeing what she does next. The descriptions here were great. But, I felt like this book was missing something. It didn't feel like she was interacting with the places other than the last 100 pages and a few spots earlier on. I wanted to know more about her past and her reactions to the place. A lot of it was straight description, and I barely felt she was a character in her own memoir. Maybe this was intentional and I wanted something the book wasn't, but even the subtitle made me think I'd be getting more of the author here.

Henry Brock says

Inspired by the beautiful landscapes of ersatz Bolivia in Ubisoft's videogame Ghost Recon: Wildlands, I read the chapters on McCahill's time in Bolivia. It sounds like a quiet place.

Izzy says

While I enjoyed this book for its ability to show the reader cities of the world that they may have never seen, I couldn't get over the fact that the book was mainly focused on the author instead of the places. There were MANY chapters where I learned nothing, except that she was getting over her ex-girlfriend by fooling around with strangers. And honestly, I don't give a rats buttocks about her relationship. I much preferred the sections that provided history and information on the locations she was experiencing.

A shame, because the writing itself isn't half bad.

Jenny Tainsky says

I loved this book! With her incredible words, the author took me along on her year of traveling alone in South and Central America. She described with her 5 senses in such a way that I felt I was there, I was transported. I am sad it's over, but now I'm on a mission to read many more travel memoirs.

Samantha says

Kate McCahill is an extraordinary writer. And Patagonian Road is a book I just didn't want to end.

Kate's writing is observant, perceptive, thoughtful, empathetic. She's able to put things down on the page that most people don't even begin to know how to articulate.

If you love words and really good writing, if you love brilliant, strong, brave, adventurous women, if you love travel, and having your experiences and your perceptions challenged and stretched, if you're soul searching, trying to figure out what you want to do in life, and what matters to you, read this book.

Maddy says

Wow, I am in love with how this woman sees places and people. The prose is BEAUTIFUL and her observations are, too. I wish she wrote about her much-feared return to the States, but this is a gorgeous book and perfect reading while travelling Central America. I might even - god forbid - lug this one around in my pack for rereading in a few months! Now THAT'S a sign of a good book.
