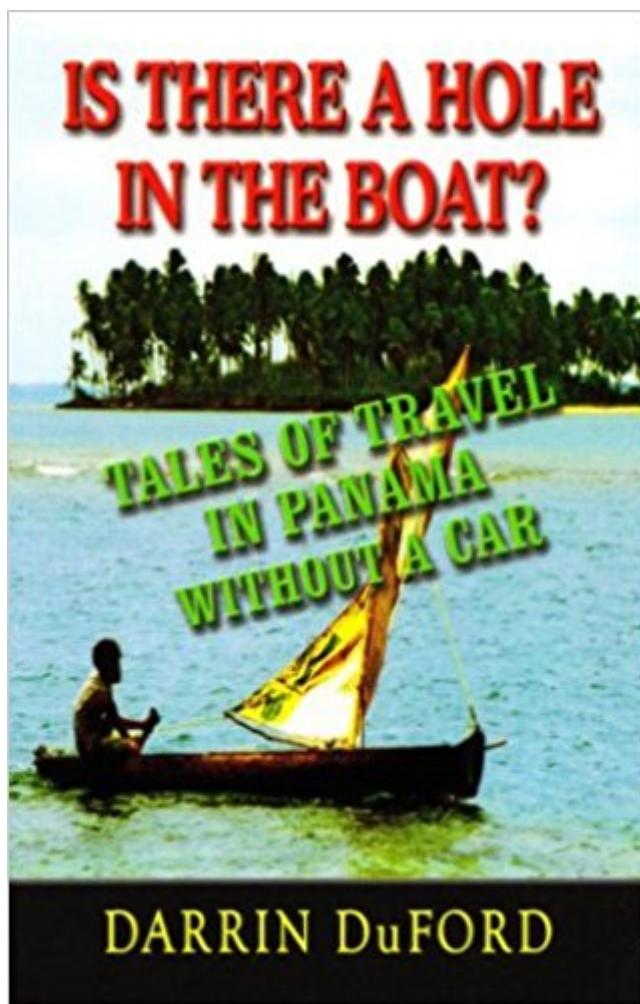


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Is There A Hole In The Boat?: Tales Of Travel In Panama Without A Car



Synopsis

Bring your appetite. Bring gifts for the king of the Naso tribe. Join Darrin DuFord as he hikes, bribes, and barters his way across Panama, a perennially overlooked filament of the tropics where DuFord encounters a startling richness of cultures between the nation's two coastlines. Sitting down with everyone from scientists to town barflies, DuFord samples such local delicacies as fermented corn homebrew and slow-barbecued jungle rodent while, at every turn, taking the more vernacular--and much more enriching--options of transportation. Whether jostling in the back of a pickup truck serving as the local bus or uncovering how the country is tackling its ecological quandaries, DuFord opens a window into the little-known day to day struggles and pleasures of the Panamanian people. *Is There a Hole in the Boat?* reveals a Panama that is not simply a place to watch bloated cruise ships edge along the walls of the Canal. It's a land where the machete can slash through just about anything--except the nation's spirit. *Is There a Hole in the Boat?* won a silver medal in the 2007 Lowell Thomas Travel Journalism Awards.

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Customer Reviews

"...a true, up close and personal picture of another world -- one full of vivacious human spirit, mouth-watering odors and vibrant color." -- Sue Vogan, BookPleasures DuFord introduces us to the people of Panama, and he does it hilariously and most perceptively. -- The Panama News, August 20 - September 2, 2006

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and barters his way across Panama, a perennially overlooked filament of the tropics where DuFord encounters a startling richness of cultures between the nation's two coastlines. Sitting down with everyone from scientists to town barflies, DuFord samples such local delicacies as fermented corn homebrew and slow-barbecued jungle rodent while, at every turn, taking the more vernacular--and much more enriching--options of transportation. Whether jostling in the back of a pickup truck serving as the local bus or uncovering how the country is tackling its ecological quandaries, DuFord opens a window into the little-known day to day struggles and pleasures of the Panamanian people. *Is There a Hole in the Boat?* reveals a Panama that is not simply a place to watch bloated cruise ships edge along the walls of the Canal. It's a land where the machete can slash through just about anything--except the nation's spirit.

Good read. Aspects of Panama you don't get from the tourist books.

Whatever the genre, I enjoy books that intrigue my mind and engage my emotions in unexpected ways. This ForeWord Magazine Book of the Year Finalist managed to intrigue and engage in the first page and didn't let up until the last word. Darrin DuFord shares a charming account of his Panamanian travels, through vivid descriptions of the country's topography, humorous details of his attempts to accept each new experience, and respectful acceptance of the cultural differences. As indicated by the title, this is NOT a dry how-to, where-to travelogue. DuFord deliberately set out to travel Panama as the natives do. By land, he hikes, bribes and barters his way from place to place in colorfully painted buses, dilapidated taxis and pick ups. By river and sea he crams his American frame into dugouts made for natives half his size, forced to bail water from leaky boats. Other times, he experiences the unique flora and fauna on foot with native guides who take delight in pointing out poisonous snakes and spiders and rats as big as cats. DuFord meets all the biting wildlife you can imagine close up. For nourishment, he bravely eats and drinks whatever the natives offer, delicacies not found in the North American diet. Except for the Canal Zone, most of Panama is a land without Western amenities. Potable running water is a luxury. Public transportation is a raucous adventure. Areas of clear cut rainforest deplete native food sources at an alarming rate. Still, Panama's people are hopeful and adaptable, cheerful, warm and welcoming. From native kings to sly guides to scientists, the stars of DuFord's travels are the people he meets along the way. This author's writing style is personable, his book delightful. Readers will learn a lot about Panama and its people, and enjoy themselves immensely in the process.

I'm not sure exactly what it is I was expecting when I started reading this book, but whatever it was, it wasn't what I got. I'm not saying I hated the book, because there were parts of it that I did enjoy. Other parts of it though, I found to be..well..boring. The book is about the author's travel through Panama, and is filled with tales of politics, food, and day to day life in a tropical no man's land. Parts of the book made me laugh out loud, and there were times when the world around me seemed to disappear and I was there in Panama with the author, up to my knees in mud. Other times I found my mind wandering, completely uninterested in the story before me. If you enjoy travel narratives, or are just interested in Panama, you should definitely check out this book. True, parts of it may have bored me, but just because it doesn't fall within my realm of interests doesn't mean you won't enjoy it. This book is full of information and description; those of you interested in Panama will LOVE it. The author also includes a pretty extensive bibliography at the end, for further reading pleasure.

Is There a Hole in the Boat? is the authors account of traveling through Panama using the same transportation methods that are used by the locals. Those methods of transportation include bus, by foot, riding in the back of trucks through paved and unpaved roads. The author introduces us to Panama's history, ecology and the indigenous people of the country as well. This book is about his experiences and discoveries made while traveling Panama on three separate occasions. DuFord mixes with the locals, samples everything, the food, drink and experiences their cultures, observes the peoples everyday lives and participates in their traditional celebrations. Darrin DuFord writes his accounts with vivid descriptive detail, making this a engaging read. This is not to be confused with your normal travel guide of rating places to stay and eat. DuFord takes us on a journey into the lives and cultures of the Panama people and makes this both an enjoyable as well as an educational reading selection.

Darrin DuFord's tales of wanderlust provide an invigorating read as he explores untamed lands and weaves in historical details to give context. Curiosity leads him to new discoveries in this travelogue filled with stories of hunting and fishing in a wild terrain. As he paints a vivid picture of life in Panama, his writing reveals an exotic tour of culinary feasts. He drinks a lemongrass tea, quenches his thirst with sea grapes and samples exotic fruit shakes. The villagers' love of music gives him opportunity to exchange his band's CD for a boat ride and he learns how to barter and survive through creative means. The stories of fishing tilapia made me hungry as he describes everything from the boat ride to the final preparation and delicious feast. Many of the most intriguing stories include details of the lives of the villagers and how they survive, even in places where they must find

creative means to obtain water. A journey to find a fresh palm heart from a tree becomes as much an adventure as stories of medicine men, ancient curses, celebrations and trips to a famous hermit's beach hideout. Villagers must travel to the city to check their email and they seem to face their life challenges with a sense of humor and patience. Darrin DuFord's powers of description glow with a precision that creates flashes of images in the mind's eye making this as visually stunning and creatively intoxicating. As an extremely talented travel writer, his articles have also appeared in The Panama News and Transitions Abroad. His latest recipes and articles can also be found on his website "Omnivorous Traveler." I can highly recommend this to you if you enjoy culinary adventures and vivid descriptions of exotic locales.~The Rebecca Review

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