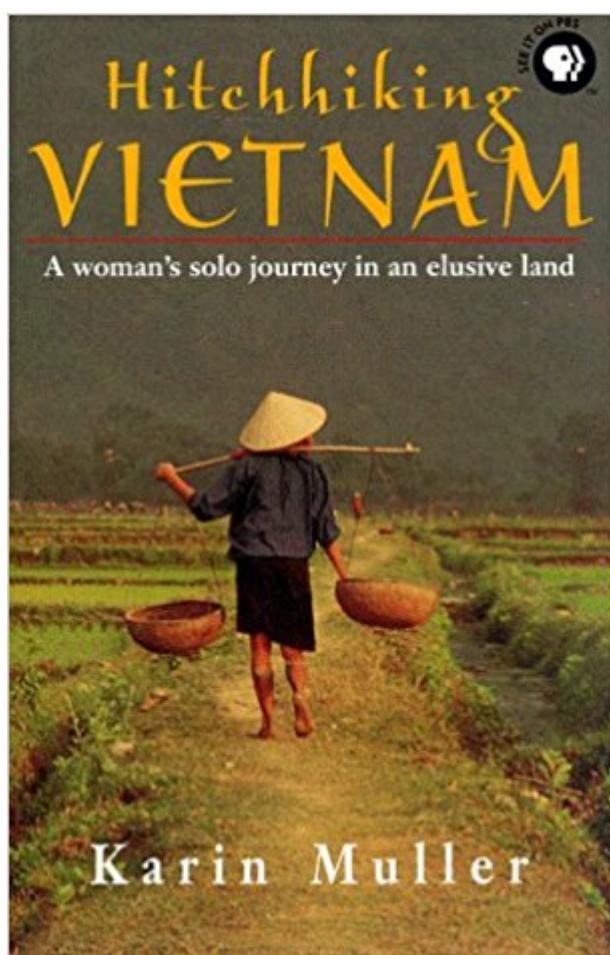


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# Hitchhiking Vietnam: A Woman's Solo Journey In An Elusive Land



## Synopsis

Imagine being a twenty-eight-year-old single woman, working your way up the management consulting ladder, with your own expense account a fancy gym membership and salary to spare. Now imagine throwing it all away to Hitchhike a country under the iron fist of communism with a dubious grip on the language, accompanied by a colorful and sometimes frightening menagerie of characters, human and otherwise, and carrying an illegal video camera in your backpack. That's exactly what Karin Muller did. At Globe Pequot, we specialize in travel guides, not travelogs. But every once in a while, we come across a tale so wonderful, we just can't walk away. It happened with *Size of the Worlds*. It's happened again with *Hitchhiking Vietnam*. What we love about this book is not just the adventure, the culture, the incredible vistas it opens up in our minds' eyes, but the grace, wit, and style with which Karin tells her story. Millions of PBS fans already agree! You will absolutely fall in love with Karin Muller. We did!

## Book Information

Paperback: 288 pages

Publisher: The Globe Pequot Press; 1st edition (March 1, 1998)

Language: English

ISBN-10: 0762702435

ISBN-13: 978-0762702435

Product Dimensions: 8.5 x 5.5 x 0.9 inches

Shipping Weight: 1.4 pounds (View shipping rates and policies)

Average Customer Review: 3.5 out of 5 stars 40 customer reviews

Best Sellers Rank: #543,302 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) #71 in Books > Travel > Specialty Travel > Solo Travel #84 in Books > Travel > Asia > Vietnam #334 in Books > Travel > Asia > Southeast

## Customer Reviews

For seven months Karin Muller traversed Vietnam--sometimes by motorbike, often by foot--covering 6,400 miles from the Mekong Delta to the Chinese border. Along the way she survives 52 motorbike breakdowns, 14 arrests, and one awful bout with scurvy. She plants rice with farmers, saves a few leopard cubs from the black market, learns to drive a passenger train, and gets to know a lot of people on her Ho Chi Minh Trail trek. Told honestly and humorously, the culture, pace, land, scents, problems, and beauties of Vietnam are evoked as Muller and Vietnam interact. Snippets of letters home (like "I traded some of my antihistamines for Tampax yesterday. What a relief" and "Am I

really blood type A? It's important") highlight the details, while the strong narrative holds them together. Her pictures are excellent, the story riveting, and the writing a pleasure--good reading for a flight to Asia or a day at the beach. --Stephanie Gold

Imagine being a twenty-eight-year-old single woman, working your way up the management consultant ladder, with your own expense account, a fancy gym membership, and salary to spare. Now imagine throwing it all away to hitchhike a country under the iron fist of communism, with a dubious grip on the language, accompanied by a colorful and sometimes frightening menagerie of characters, human and otherwise, and carrying an illegal video camera in your backpack. That's exactly what Karin Muller did. This title comes from the PBS documentary of the same name. PBS will be televising this film several times over the next three years and has an extensive site devoted to it at [www.pbs.org](http://www.pbs.org) which has developed a built-in audience. Karin has received thousands of e-mails asking, 'Where is the book?' Here it is at last!

Hitchhiking Vietnam - A woman's solo journey in an elusive land by Karin Muller has a few flaws. The first two are in the title. She was rarely solo and she was rarely hitchhiking. She wants to go to Vietnam to see the "real" Vietnam, the villages and people untouched by the encroaching West. In the last few pages she says she found the Vietnam she was looking for and, frankly, I doubt it. Nowhere in the book did I get a sense that she had found her goal. Half the time she was worried about being cheated by the people when not worried about being arrested or worrying about weird food. She complains so much about how she is treated and how bad things are in the hotels. Well, this is a Communist Third World nation which is finding out about tourism and how much money they bring in. Everybody is going to want a piece of the pie. In the end she even mistrusts one of the only real friends she made in Vietnam because of how paranoid she is. The other half of the time she lies to the government, fakes paperwork, and in general tries to beat the system by NOT following the rules. From what I can tell she did not bother to understand the rules at all or do any research before going. I am sure she left a great impression and that future visitors benefited from it. NOT. Half way through the book I realized this is the same author who wrote *Japanland: A Year in Search of Wa* and I was wondering if I should finish it. She runs all over Vietnam, barely staying in any one place long enough to learn anything yet she would make very broad statements of the culture and people of Vietnam. If you look at the other reviews, many from Vietnam-Americans, you understand that she may not have learned anything at all. Also, as this book was published in 1998, I think there has been a few changes. From what I can tell in my VERY limited knowledge of

Vietnam, mostly from news reports and websites, I think the tourist industry has improved greatly. In the end, while a interesting book, I can't help but feel it was a waste of my time. I have already ordered a few others about Vietnam and will no doubt get to see OTHER views on the Asian nation. We will see if they match up with her's.

I served in RVN in the delta with the US Navy's Helicopter, Attack, Light, Three squadron during the final days of ground combat. Our mission was to cover SEAL operations, Navy river patrol forces, local VN outposts and villages. We lived with and worked closely with local South Vietnamese in training them to defend themselves. I am always curious at to what happened when we left in Feb. of '72. Karin Muller reports her 1998 adventure in a some what non-political, humorous light as she explores some of the places as we operated in and around the Mekong Delta. She starts her journey there and goes north to Hanoi and places in between, finding parts of the elusive Ho Chi Minh Trail, all in search of the "real" Vietnam. Her work is a clear-sighted, refreshingly human account of her close encounter in a now forbidden land. This book, along with her video, "Hitchhiking Vietnam, Letters from the Trail", completes the story. A great addition to my historical collection, giving some closure to my time in our turbulent Vietnam era. I recommend her work to any Vietnam vet.

This book immediately reminds me of my own sentiments on travel and the appreciation of this world we share with more than just Americans. The perspective gained by experiencing other cultures is something I wish all Americans held dear. I am inspired by the way Muller writes and delivers the minute details, which would otherwise seem banal without her timing and creativity. Perfect for anyone wondering "what else is out there". Is the grass truly greener? What is a truly basic existence?

After reading this book, I would never consider a trip to Vietnam. Ms. Muller showed no redeeming features to the country and there has to be some! All authorities were corrupt, some people were thoughtful and friendly but most came across as mean and selfish and unhelpful. The author may have looked at her actions as adventurous but I looked at them as being unprepared and at times, even stupid. Can't recommend this book to anyone.

This adventure filled book a fast read. This woman's stories of her time in Vietnam are exciting and also makes the reader want to start on his/her own adventure in a foreign land.

With our renewed rapport with Vietnam it would be good to view or review that area if the world. This is a diary of sorts of a seven-month trip around Vietnam. Not one of those glossy government or fancy travelogues, but a personal trip that was documented with letters. As with any experience there will be differences of opinions as to the environment and people. My Vietnam of the 60's was vastly different from the war movies of the time. There are some parts that may be gory to some people during food preparation times. Others would be appalled at the wanton destruction of forests and wild life. I was reading the book after viewing the film with my wife to show her a little bit of what it was when I was there. She immediately said that the villages (especially the huts) seemed surprisingly like the dwellings in the Yucatan. Even though this was a well put together documentary, I was disappointed as my time there was mostly in the central highlands Peiku, An Khe, Kontum and there about. And when she went up the coast she missed all the high spots. The Montagnards she interviews were Mongol invaders; they were not the Montagnards I was aquatinted with. The Montagnards of the central highlands are approximately 14 to 16 separate people that were in the highlands before the people that call themselves Vietnamese invaded from China thousands of years ago. In essence they are to the Vietnamese the equivalent of our native Americans. The book is one of the rare descriptions of today's Vietnam and worth reading as I was able to be places that I missed on my tour and imagine the rundown state of the country today

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