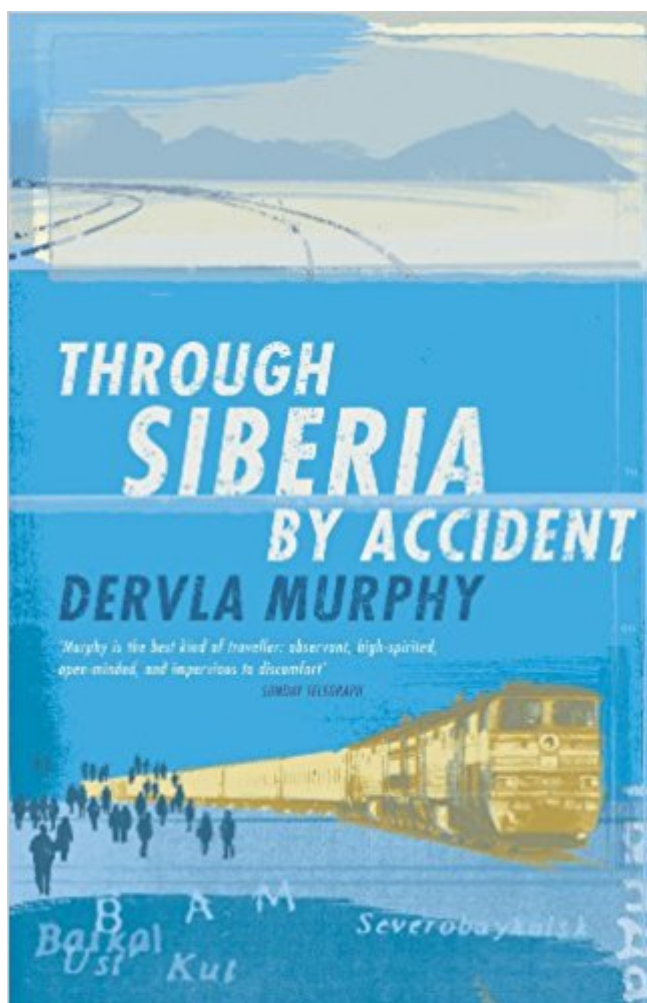


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Through Siberia By Accident: A Small Slice Of Autobiography



Synopsis

Through Siberia by Accident is a book about a journey that didn't happen -- and what happened instead. Dervla Murphy never had any intention of spending three months in the vast territories of Siberia. Instead she had planned to go to Ussuriland, because it appealed to her as a place free from tourism. But by accident, or rather because she had an accident - a painful leg injury -, she found herself stymied in Eastern Siberia, a place she knew very little about. Although hardly able to walk, her subsequent experiences, in an unexpected place, and in an incapacitated state, provided many pleasant surprises. Above all she was struck by the extraordinary hospitality, generosity and helpfulness of the Siberians who made this strange phenomenon -- a maimed Irish babushka -- so welcome in their towns and homes. This book is an extraordinary story of fortitude and resourcefulness as Dervla Murphy finds friendship and culture in a seemingly monotonous, bleak and inhospitable place far from what we know as 'civilised'. Through Siberia by Accident is a voyage of Siberian self-discovery.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

'People half her age would balk at the marathon journeys undertaken, largely by foot and bike, by the formidable Dervla Murphy.' -- Belfast Telegraph 20050223 EIGHT FEET IN THE ANDES: 'One of the most joyous, positive and poetic voyages - physical, spiritual and environmental' -- Irish Independent 20050223 'Relaxed, comfortable and personal ... this is an entertaining insight into a little travelled part of the world.' -- Adventure Travel 20050101 'One of Dervla Murphy's most considerable gifts is the ability to choose, get into, live in - and take us back to - places where the

world is as it was and probably ever shall be. She is a connoisseur of lost Arcadias.' -- Times Literary Supplement 20050101 'A magical revelation of the hidden corner of the world that is post-communist Russia' -- Irish Times 20051203 'A great read, full of Dervla's usual verve and determination despite a very sore leg which stymied her onward journey.' -- Sunday Independent 'Her 20th travel book, but reads as freshly as if it were her first. Told with characteristic spirit, this is the story of the land, the people and the cheer' -- Wanderlust 20050201 Murphy's accidents give rise to a fascinating account ... her interest in everyone she meets seems to bring us into their cramped living rooms.' -- Sunday Times 20050201 'An excellent work from the indefatigable, indomitable, incredible Irishwoman who's still traipsing around the weird and wonderful parts of the world at the age of 73.' -- Daily Mail 20050201 'What emerges is a travelogue that questions our perception of what Siberia really is, and draws an intimate portrait of its people ... her warmth, fortitude and strength of character make for a compelling read.' -- Sunday Tribune 20050201 'A moreish collection of postcards from a rather eccentric and supremely talented aunt.' -- Sunday Times 20050201 'A valuable contribution to understanding the world's bleakest inhabited region' -- TLS 20050204 'She is a bewitchingly good writer who does not need to make anything up' -- Mail on Sunday 20050213 'Fascinating. She makes the far-off seem approachable, and the adventurous possible.' -- Sunday Business Post, Dublin 20050213 'An accessible portrait of a land of extremes, written in a learned but chatty style' -- Ireland on Sunday 20050223

Dervla Murphy is one of the very best loved of travel writers. She was born in County Waterford and since 1964 has been regularly publishing accounts of her journeys - by bicycle and on foot -- in the remoter areas of four continents. She has also written about the problems of Northern Ireland, the hazards of nuclear power, and race relations in Britain. The Times Literary Supplement called her 'an admirable woman -- she has a romantic soul and a keen eye'.

Dervla Murphy has spent her adulthood traveling the Third World the hard way--on foot or bicycle--and writing books about her experiences. Over time, her narratives have grown increasingly political: anti-globalization, pretty much uniformly anti-American and clearly not fond of modern technologies. (Twice, she proudly declares that she owns neither a television nor a washing machine to the astonishment of Siberian acquaintances.) This is not meant to be a criticism, but readers may find that her strongly-held and frankly stated opinions obstruct their enjoyment of the good stuff: her encounters with the territory and local folk; her gutsy traveler's stamina in the face of wretched lodgings, bad food and weather, and the occasional hostile, or reckless, citizen. In

'Siberia', Dervla intends to bicycle from Vladivostok to remotest Ussuriland but an injury on the train from Moscow forces a change in plan. Instead of walking or cycling, she takes the slow Baikal-Amur Mainline (BAM) train to Lake Baikal, a river boat up the Lena to Yakutsk and a 30-hour bus trip, with multiple breakdowns in a snowstorm, from Yakutsk to Tynda. Hobbling along, she meets a colorful palette of Siberians, inspects their family photo albums, sleeps in their generally humble homes, shares their food (lots of it) and delves into the sort of local history that's rarely written into the official record. The reader learns how cities in Siberia are heated and why Lake Baikal is such a special ecological jewel. Her history is occasionally suspect. Impressed by the bus driver's ability to repair its engine with spit and baling wire, she writes "Perhaps Russians have a special flair for this sort of thing; they did, after all, win the space race." (If you're a Dervla Murphy fan this book is a must, if only because she provides a listing of all her injuries and mishaps in 40 years of travels, along with a startling revelation.) Dervla Murphy is the original 'warts and all' travel writer. You can count on her to be unfailingly direct and honest. I have read nearly all of her published work and keep coming back for more. She's had an unusual life and we have been privileged to share parts of it with her.

I am a newcomer to Dervla Murphy's no doubt legion fan club. *THROUGH SIBERIA BY ACCIDENT* is the first of her books that I've read-but that one book has convinced me that I now want read all of her other nineteen travel accounts from places as "off the beaten path" as Laos and Ethiopia, Madagascar and Tibet. Traveling in parts of the world seldom visited by standard tourists, Ms. Murphy blazes her own trails through geographic, bureaucratic, linguistic, cultural, and sometimes personal obstacles. She prefers to travel alone-on foot, by bicycle, by mule, by boat, and on public transportation-meeting local people and avoiding tourist traps along the way. And her pithy observations about the people and places she encounters provide a no-nonsense, realistic glimpse of a wider world that many readers will never see in person. *THROUGH SIBERIA BY ACCIDENT* is the author's aptly titled account of her first trip to the Asian side of Russia-Siberia and the Russian Far East-in 2002. I was particularly interested in reading her story, having lived in that part of Russia myself during the early period after the collapse of the Soviet Union. Murphy covered some of the same territory that I did in southern Siberia, especially around Lake Baikal, but her travels also took her farther north by boat on the Lena River and by bus in a snowstorm from Yakutsk several hundred miles to the nearest train line. The author had originally set out to ride the Trans-Siberian Railroad from Moscow to the point where it connects with its more northern parallel line, the Baikal-Amur Mainline (BAM), which traverses the Russian Far East to the Pacific Coast. Then she

planned to bicycle through the wilds of the Ussuri region north of Vladivostok, the largest city in eastern Russia. But two personal accidents—one on the train and another near Lake Baikal—left her unable to complete her journey to Russia's east coast. But injuries that would have sent other travelers home were just another challenge to the 71-year-old Murphy, who revised her itinerary for another "go with the flow" adventure that is apparently characteristic of her attitude toward life itself. I won't spoil the story for you by revealing what she did and how she did it—but I will disclose that this intrepid Irishwoman is just the sort of person with whom I'd be happy to share a crowded compartment on a Russian train. If you're curious about the realities of life and travel in remote areas of Siberia, this book is for you. And if you're planning a trip to the Asian side of Russia, *THROUGH SIBERIA BY ACCIDENT* will prepare you for the unexpected, so you'll be less surprised when you arrive there yourself. Highly recommended! ---Sharon Hudgins, author of *THE OTHER SIDE OF RUSSIA: A SLICE OF LIFE IN SIBERIA AND THE RUSSIAN FAR EAST*

Very, very long-winded to the point of being boring. I couldn't get through this book, may be through 1/4 of it at most. It did not paint colorful picture of Siberia, just going too much into small details meticulously, while missing on a bigger picture. See the trees, don't see the forest.

I am jealous of the strength this woman has. Love her books.

For someone looking to take the trains through Russia, this was a fun biography to read about an older woman who did it by herself. She has a great sense of humor, and she mixes a good bunch of history or the towns she goes to and her actual experience.

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