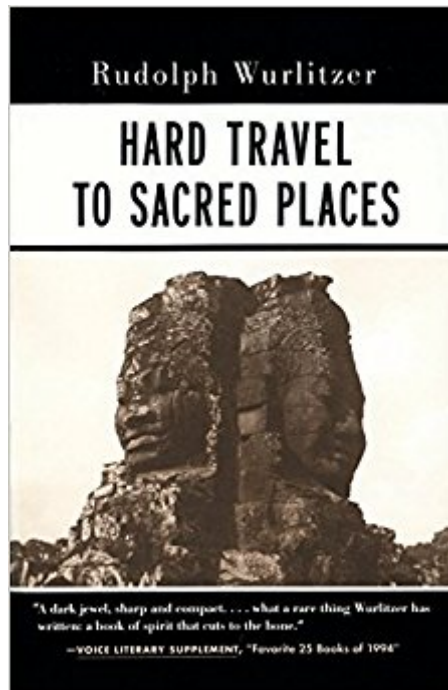




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Hard Travel To Sacred Places



Synopsis

Hard Travel to Sacred Places is the record of a personal odyssey through Southeast Asia, an external and internal journey through grief and the painful realities of a decadent age.

Wurlitzer—novelist, screenwriter, and Buddhist practitioner—travels with his wife, photographer Lynn Davis, on a photo assignment to the sacred sites of Thailand, Burma, and Cambodia. Heavy Westernization, sex clubs, aging hippies and expatriates, and political dissidents provide a vivid contrast to the peace that Wurlitzer and Davis seek, still reeling from the death of their son in a car accident. As Davis with her camera searches for a thread of meaning among the artifacts and relics of a more enlightened age, Wurlitzer grasps at the wisdom of the Buddhist teachings in an effort to assuage his grief. His journal chronicles the survival of age-old truths in a world gone mad.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

After the untimely death of their 21-year-old son, novelist/screenwriter Wurlitzer (Little Buddha) and his wife, photographer Lynn Davis, embarked on a spiritual journey through Thailand, Burma (now Myanmar) and Cambodia, seeking solace and enlightenment from Buddhist sacred places. They found instead a consumer culture in which material desire has displaced the spiritual center with disastrous consequences for the indigenous practice of Buddhism. By the end of their journey, Wurlitzer and Davis have failed to find the illumination and peace they had so desperately sought. Unfortunately, readers will gain as little from this book as the authors did from their trip, for Wurlitzer's style is pretentious, and his questions, for one who claims to have practiced Buddhism,

are sophomoric and self-conscious. Had he remembered that in Buddhism enlightenment comes only after one has forsaken all desire, he might have been able to transcend the physical and spiritual exhaustion that dominated his journey. Since he did not however, his readers are left likewise exhausted and without enlightenment. Copyright 1994 Reed Business Information, Inc. --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

Wurlitzer, the screenwriter for Bertolucci's *Little Buddha*, offers a fragmented narrative of a multipurpose fling through Thailand, Myanmar (Burma), and Cambodia. The author and his wife, a photographer on assignment, were mourning the death of his stepson (her son), exploring film projects, seeking spiritual soothing by visiting such sites as Tham Krabok and Angkor Wat, reporting on the sex shows of Bangkok, and apparently writing this book to pay for it all. The text is heavily larded with quotes on Buddhism and newspaper clippings of current events. Wurlitzer's contribution details the couple's fevers and aches-and inoperative hotel plumbing. The result is a superficial view of the area. Many good books are being published on this region and what its cultures can mean to us, for example, Sue Downie's *Down Highway One* (Allen & Unwin, 1993) and Stan Sesser's *The Lands of Charm and Cruelty* (LJ 5/1/93). This isn't one of them. Harold M. Otness, Southern Oregon State Coll. Lib., Ashland Copyright 1994 Reed Business Information, Inc. --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

For a long time, I've been influenced and fascinated by Buddhism, especially zen. This memoir is a very personal and revealing look at a couple's Buddhist faith in the context of the death of their son. The words are beautiful in their sparseness. The book gave me food for thought on my spiritual journey and did not have an ounce of schmaltz or self-indulgence. It is a very sharp and clear insight for anyone investigating Buddhism or simply reinvigorating their spiritual path, whatever shape or form.

I lost my copy (probably loaned it - never to be seen again) and wanted to read it again.

This book was a loaner and, when the owner requested it back, I finally sat to read it first - I am very glad I did. As a practicing Buddhist convert, it spoke to me personally, but it wd. be a worthy read for non-Buddhists attempting to make sense of crisis or loss in their lives. The author and his wife journey to Asia to attempt to find solace and peace from his wife's tragic loss of her 21-year-old son, but end up being confronted with more difficulty, both philosophical and physical, than either

imagined. The answers he was looking for must be gleaned, if at all, from a corrupt, hedonistic, often oppressive overlay that characterizes life in traditionally Buddhist areas they attempt to explore. In that sense, they tend to go from bad to worse in their attempt to find reward ... which, for those who appreciate such themes - as typified in Conrad's "Heart of Darkness ... makes finding the purpose of spiritual pilgrimages quite dicey, and not necessarily the peace-filled jaunt we hope for. In short, the author's journey forces him to look reality square in the face which, not surprisingly, is usually where profound healing can start. But it's a placed for the called and courageous (all of us, potentially). It is understandable why a few reviewers wd. dislike this book so much. It is dark - that's clearly the point - but, I believe, quite authentic and helpful. Not everyone's cup of tea ... in Pleasantville.

The author and his wife have been stunned by the accidental death of their 21 year-old son. They take an assignment to capture photographically the Buddhist images of the three countries toured in the book, Thailand, Myanmar (Burma) and Cambodia. It's very depressing, outwardly and inwardly. They cannot escape their grief, they encounter much more grief in this perverted war-ravaged part of the world. It becomes an existential malaise, no exit, quite moving. He quotes nicely different Rinpoche's, such as "All this doing has no more meaning than walking around a desert . . All this exertion produces no result." Touring the dilapidating temples of Anghor Wat the ennui becomes palpable. The book is a heroic fight against despair. Author and wife win, but at some cost. Good introduction to Buddhist scriptures that interlace and support narrative. I ended up admiring the author, thinking of buying his latest novel. He brings to life the old Buddhist story of the woman whose child died, beseeching Buddha for medicine to bring the son back to life, ending with, "Holy one, enough of this business of mustard seed. Only give me refuge."

Reads as a wrenchingly honest narrative of two people confronted with the deepest wound possible for a parent... the loss of a child. As a Buddhist/meditator he does a good job of looking at events through the eyes and heart of an honest man.

I couldn't differ more with the review by T. Gilbert! Sure this book is self-absorbed - but as the author journeys into himself he finds a universal suffrage. The author's courage to face off against death is remarkable in these times of flippancy and shallow know-it-all attitudes. The author is a wonderful guide through the darkness - and to be admired. There's nothing at all sophomoric that I could find in the book, nothing. It's as serious as it gets. The way that the author divides up the

journey into a lusting/ignoring/hating triad of suffering is as an intuitive an expression of Buddhism as I have ever come across in my studies. Perhaps "every one has experienced loss in their life

Not for the faint of heart (or the heartless). This compassionate and compelling little book packs a mighty wollop and takes you on a deep journey to the place inside of you that asks, "What's life all about anyway?"

I read this because I liked the title, and thought the idea of the book - travelnig to a powerful place during a difficult time in life - was promising. The book turned out to be darker than I expected - but it was still moving and memorable. I read this book years ago but still recall passages and ideas from it. I think if I went to Cambodia or other places mentioned, I'd reread this short book - just to help give me a deep emotional context to consider while I'm there. Good - easy to read - but it might stay with you.

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