

Bowing to Elephants: Tales of a Travel Junkie

Mag Dimond

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*A memoir about finding oneself in the farthest corners of the world, **Bowing to Elephants** follows a path of exploration in vivid detail.*

Mag Dimond's memoir *Bowing for Elephants* is a search for self that looks outward, rather than inward. Her exploration is all about learning another culture and exploring unique places across the world to come closer to her own.

Eloquent and honest, Dimond opens herself up in her text, first discussing the childhood relationships that had the most impact on her and how they shaped her personality, curiosity, and spirituality. She comes across as eccentric and artistic and always ready for a party, juxtaposed to her alcoholic mother who was in constant search for her own idea of romance and who lacked the ability to provide structure and emotional support to her daughter.

Dimond's wealthy and generous grandmother helped her to be who she was, supporting her honesty and providing her with love. Still, Dimond shuffled from the US to Italy and back, and was never allowed much time to develop and nurture relationships. But living abroad also birthed Dimond's lifelong passion for traveling the world, and her memoir captures her affection for the foods, people, and differing cultures she encounters; the history and tragedy of countries; and places' religions, spiritual viewpoints, art, and music.

Each place is depicted in great visual detail, and all five senses are played upon, make the related experiences tangible. The text also illustrates a deeper sense of a place, recalling the emotions of particular moments and evoking how the visited locations are special. Such details make Dimond's travel writing deeper than most.

The text asks important questions and stays vulnerable and open. Discussions of romantic relationships come with the same candor, and Dimond's faith and path within Buddhism are touched upon as well. Spirituality becomes an intricate part of Dimond's being, but the book does not denounce other religions or seek to convince that Dimond's is the correct religion for anyone but herself.

Scattered throughout are flashbacks. Some of Dimond's first memories land alongside current discomforts and questions about how she is living, and her pain runs parallel to the histories she explores. These flashbacks are sometimes hard to follow, though, and make piecing together the book's chronology difficult. Instead of feeling plotted, the book's overarching themes—including the idea that one should never stop exploring, questioning, and traveling, knowing that the world will always teach seekers what they're searching for—direct the pages.

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KATIE ASHER (July 8, 2019)

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