

No Touch Monkey! And Other Travel Lessons Learned Too Late

Ayun Halliday

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So is it true, as jokester-man Stephen Colbert attests, that there is a laugh to be gotten on nearly every page of Ayun Halliday's book about her pre-internet world travel misadventures? A random test is called for. Open book. Page 89. There is this:

Our second night in Paris, we woke to the unmistakable sound of extended copulation. The acoustics of the airshaft were such that our neighbors' every gasp and groan reverberated with crystal clarity. We lay rigid in our beds, my mother and I, unable to ignore what was happening. ... I couldn't help observing that at least someone was getting her money's worth out of a Paris hotel room.

Nation, you're welcome. The book, a second edition after twelve years, takes its title from a sign Halliday saw in Ubud, Bali. It warned, "Do not touch or tease the monkey as the may react with unpredictable manners." Halliday says in a foreword that the book, more a memoir than a travel book, is a "record of what it was like to be young, foolish, curious, unfettered, stupid, hungry, untethered, amazed—and offline."

THOMAS BEVIER (Winter 2016)

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