

The Antipodean Express: A Journey by Train from New Zealand to Spain

Gregory Hill

Exisle Publishing (May 14, 2024)

Softcover \$39.99 (296pp)

978-1-921497-15-5

The Antipodean Express is Gregory Hill's breezy, engaging memoir about a three-month couple's trip taken mostly by train, from New Zealand to Spain.

This is an entertaining daily account of the 13,000-kilometer trip that the couple took from their home in Wellington to its antipodes, a Spanish wheatfield “absolutely directly beneath the floorboards of our house.” Their meandering route across the Eastern Hemisphere introduced them to obscure and surprising sites, including a German pub near Adelaide, the blue onion domes of a thirteenth-century cathedral in a “grand, little backwater town” northeast of Moscow, and the surreal Dali House on the Costa Brava. The trains they took were both dingy and iconic, including the Lhasa Express and the Trans-Mongolian Express.

Hill reprises a trek to Lhasa and Everest, where villages and Buddhist temples are luminous, perplexing, eerie, and moving: “[B]eing here was a highlight of my life, but I’d had enough of the headache, the breathlessness and the bone-shattering cold.” The couple also visited the Borobudur temple in Java, a misty and sublime hillside garden of stupas and bas relief carvings—a 1200-year-old “island of Buddhist curiosity.” Also fascinating is a steam train ride along the shores of Lake Baikal, a dreamy, infinite blue lake in Central Russia, with its view of the last spike hammered in the Trans-Siberian Railway.

Hill's reports of meals, hotels, people, and landscapes across Vietnam, Thailand, and Mongolia are confiding and humorous, whether he's recounting sumptuous, buttery Hokkaido scallops or a repulsive plate of cold mackerel heads. And the ample illustrations include route maps and photographs—rich peeks at far-flung locations and contrasting cultures.

Inspiring and unexpected, *The Antipodean Express* is a delightful account of a New Zealand couple's extraordinary adventures to reach the other side of the globe.

KRISTEN RABE (May / June 2024)

Disclosure: This article is not an endorsement, but a review. The publisher of this book provided free copies of the book to have their book reviewed by a professional reviewer. No fee was paid by the publisher for this review. Foreword Reviews only recommends books that we love. Foreword Magazine, Inc. is disclosing this in accordance with the Federal Trade Commission's 16 CFR, Part 255.