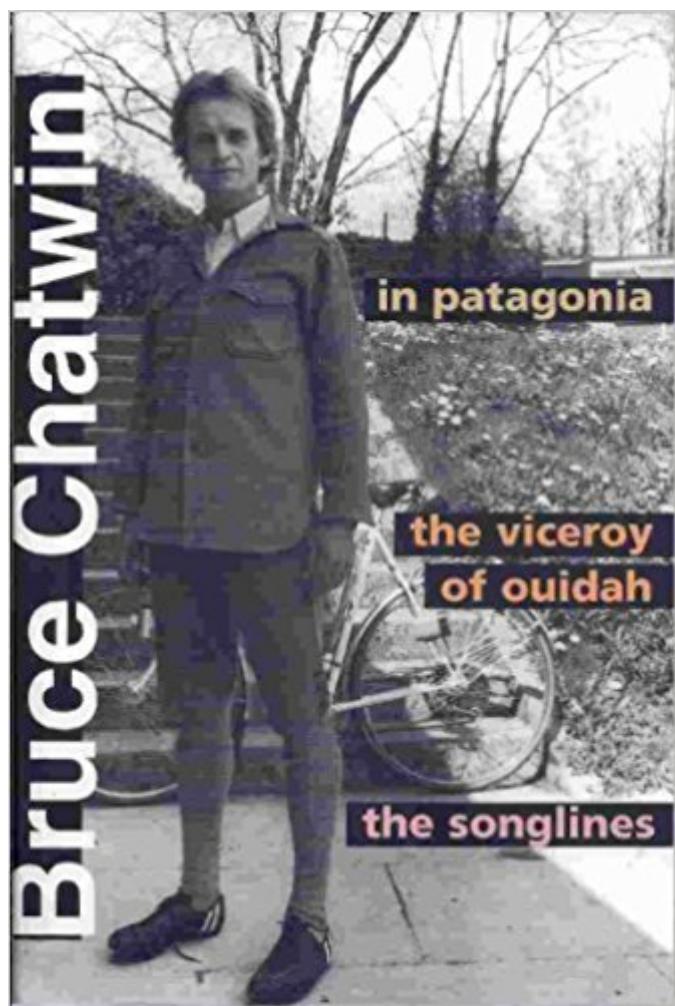


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In Patagonia: The Viceroy Of Ouidah : The Songlines



Synopsis

In Patagonia: The viceroy of Ouidah : the songlines [Jan 01, 1997] Chatwin, Bruce ...

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

In Patagonia: The viceroy of Ouidah : the songlines [Jan 01, 1997] Chatwin, Bruce

One of the greatest travel books of all time. While not specifically a 'Rick Steves' guide to Patagonia, it is more like "On the Road." Meant to be a very personal account of his travels, and his knowledge of this strange part of the world. It has been proven since its publication to be full of fictional or not properly recreated stories, but regardless, you will never forget this book. Still a classic after nearly forty years. Chatwin's writing is almost dreamlike at times, and others, when he slides back into a story of Darwin, or rounding the Cape in a square rigger a hundred years before, is incredible. If you are a writer or wanting to be one, you could do worse than read this book simply for the astonishingly beautiful passages. It is on my bookshelf next to Herodotus and the diaries of Marco Polo.

Extraordinary account of the Bruce Chatwin's travels through the Patagonian steppe to Tierra del Fuego. Infused with historical stories that provide a backdrop for the lands he visits, the story here is remarkable. An artifact belonging to his family provides the gravity that pulls him to the southern reaches of South America. He realizes from the beginning the artifact is likely apocryphal, but that becomes an essential element to the story as it lends a fantastical air to the voyage, as if he's

visiting some storybook land. You have to remind yourself as you're reading this that it is a very real, but very exotic, place. During the course of reading this, it struck me that Chatwin spends little time describing the physical surroundings, which is odd considering this is known to be a region of breathtaking, albeit stark, beauty. When contrasted with his careful depictions of the people, it dawned on me the essence of Patagonia that he conveys here is the hardscrabble people who have come here looking for a better life and found backbreaking toil and harsh conditions. A couple of generations of that produces a distinctive populace and you then realize, for all it's beauty, Patagonia is less a place than a mentality. Fiercely independent, weathered and cragged could be used interchangeably to describe the place or the people.

I read this as we were touting Patagonia and was happy I had witnessed some of the landscapes Chatwin had described. Also, we had the opportunity to meet some rugged individualists who hearken to some of the characters Chatwin encounters. What was amazing is that Chatwin was traveling more than forty years ago when the wilds of Patagonia were even wilder. Loved how he wove the tale of Butch Cassidy throughout. The author was himself quite the adventurer. Fascinating tales.

This is a delightful book for its characters and vivid imagery. Some of the many tales are disturbing, but they tell of life and death at the end of the world in Patagonia. It is worth reading, even if you do not plan to go there.

Chatwin's book is a classic for a reason; it's a terrific read, whether you've been to Patagonia or not--and if you have, or are anticipating going there, it will add depth to your experience of the place and the people.

Written from Chatwin's perspective, he departs completely from all other "travel" books. If you're looking for restaurant and shopping tips, forget it. But if you want a glimpse into the thorny history and complicated soul of Patagonia, and enjoy craft in writing, this book's for you. I read it after being back from Patagonia for a few months, and it was like a different land altogether. I thoroughly enjoyed Chatwin's book.

If I don't give this book away to friends who like to travel, they "borrow" it from my shelves. I have purchased it at least five times. The late Bruce Chatwin is an amazing writer -- honest and

perceptive, without all the academic highbrow that gets passed off as I-have-been-there-you-haven't travel writing. His words want to make you go wherever it is he is describing. This one belongs on your bookshelf.

Bruce Chatwin loved to read and walk. His travels throughout the world are patient and thoughtful. Oftentimes writers delve into the detail of a place without actually catching its "sense of place." Chatwin weaves a tale while walking hundreds of miles through the wilds of Patagonia. From early settlers through Butch Cassidy and up to the near-present, you will find a welcome companion in these pages.

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