



Golden Earth: Travels in Burma

Norman Lewis

Download now

Read Online [➔](#)

Golden Earth: Travels in Burma

Norman Lewis

Golden Earth: Travels in Burma Norman Lewis

Despite communist incursions and tribal insurrection, Norman Lewis describes a land of breath-taking natural beauty peopled by the gentle Burmese. This is a country where Buddhist beliefs spare even the rats, where the Director of Prisons quotes Chaucer and where three-day theatrical shows are staged to celebrate a monk taking orders. Hitching lifts with the army and with travelling merchants, Lewis is treated to hospitality wherever he stops in this war-torn land, and reveals a country where 'the condition of the soul replaces that of the stock markets as a topic for polite conversation'.

Golden Earth: Travels in Burma Details

Date : Published December 19th 2003 by Eland (first published 1952)

ISBN : 9780907871385

Author : Norman Lewis

Format : Paperback 290 pages

Genre : Travel, Nonfiction, Cultural, Asia

 [Download Golden Earth: Travels in Burma ...pdf](#)

 [Read Online Golden Earth: Travels in Burma ...pdf](#)

Download and Read Free Online Golden Earth: Travels in Burma Norman Lewis

From Reader Review Golden Earth: Travels in Burma for online ebook

Kate says

Ev

Peter Clark says

Casually picked up this book as I came across it after motorcycling around Thailand, Laos and Vietnam with plans to go back and continue explorations when Burma has opened up properly.

This is the best travel book I have ever read, and I like travel books.

His use of language is scintillating, stunning, gorgeous, expansive, precise and fabulous beyond almost anything I have ever read.

If Bill Bryson were Noel Coward with a splash of Oscar Wilde, he might have the temerity to dream of one day writing a book of this quality, filled with extraordinary insight and wit.

Before setting foot in the country, I now have a sense of near certainty that I will grasp the character and nature of the people of Burma as soon as I arrive.

No wonder Graham Greene wrote "I have no hesitation in calling Norman Lewis one of our best writers, not of any particular decade but of our century."

Flora says

Terrific. If you read this before you go to Burma. it might not make sense--the scenes are so strange. But I read it after returning and it was exactly right in feeling, atmosphere and observations. Lewis is my favorite travel writer.

Mark Walker says

Lewis is determined to discover the parts of Burma off the main thoroughfares. Some interesting observations on Burmese life and Buddhism. He has a good eye for a surreal story and draws out a number of amusing incidents, such as the Rangoon express which doesn't go to Rangoon. Given the potential for opening up of Burma and loosening of the junta, this is a timely explanation of some of the ethnic groups and discussion of the Burmese approach to politics.

Charles Yee says

The vividly descriptive book filled my mind with the scenic pictures and interesting characteristics of the Burmese people. Every inch a page turner, it gives us an insight into the history of Burma, its state of affairs and the relationships among its government, people and nature during the time before it was ruled by the

military junta.

Tom Bentley says

Richly eccentric and fascinating work. Lewis insinuates himself into a 1950s Burma that is elusive, overrun with combative tribal and foreign forces, bureaucratic in the most head-scratching of ways, culturally distinct, layered, at times hysterically amusing and at other times incoherent and threatening. His language is as intrepid as his willingness to toss himself into a boiling pot of oddity. I just spent a week in Myanmar in much more refined circumstances—I wish I had Lewis's impulses to seek the uncommon.

Patricia says

There are so many very good reviews of this book I'll just second the statements that this is an extremely well-written book by someone who could write (he passed away in 2003), with a sense of dry humour that found just the right phrase to describe the scary mongrel dogs that are still as common as gnats in Burma, and nights fighting off cockroaches encroaching on his turf. I read a library copy so couldn't tick my favourite expressions, but one was described the unappealing, gaudy local crafts on sale in a pagoda arcade perfectly in one word—"misguided". I've been to Burma 10+ times over the past 25 years and the products for sale and the observation hasn't changed one iota. Another truism, "apart from occasional articles of silver jewellery, woven cloth is the only article of artistic interest produced in the mountains of the Indo-Chinese peninsula [and that is disappearing as factory-made textiles become more available]." He summarizes, "Art is sometimes protected by poverty, and civilisation can be the destroyer of taste." That line I copied into my iPhone.

Other reviews have compared him with Theroux for such comments, but as that reader commented, he seems a less emotional Theroux, and the negative is balanced by descriptions of a nature so beautiful in parts, and people so gracious and giving that if the recipient feels (s)he has been given undeserved money or a gift, it is immediately marked to be given to the first available charity.

This is a lovely, albeit dated book of Lewis' backpacking, hitchhiking travels in a very rustic Burma of the 1950s, peppered with bits of history and useful information about the country, much of which remains true today although Myanmar in many ways is a very different country today. I only wish Lewis could return to update this wonderful book; it would be a page-turner.

Sarah says

Gentle travels in Burma.

Ex colonial world - so different. Lovely to get a perspective from those days.

Dave Reid says

An enjoyable read, written long before the country began to suffer under the military rule. While this is my first venture into the writings of Lewis, he has a more detached style of observation than Theroux,

particularly concerning those who he meets. The only real character in the book is Mr Pereira who he shares a railway carriage with and it is this close contact that probably gave more subject matter to play with. Others drift in and out of the book but seem to be confined to policeman, local officials and village leaders. There are aspects of the book that remind me of Theroux's Great Railway Bazaar which is why I enjoyed reading it. Would recommend to those who have read the above.

Sarah Gregory says

A good travel book by a brave man. Like Colin Thubron, he likes to meet and talk to people gaining insights that way.

Jeff Clay says

Never mind that this book was written over 60 years ago. Nor, that it was written about a very different Burma (now, Myanmar) than now exists. *Golden Earth* still reigns as a superlative travel book, filled with dry humor, trenchant observations, clear writing, a patient and patient willingness to subordinate comfort and expectations to achieve his goals, and a love for the places and people that are the Burma of the '50's.

Good travel writing is unique in that with a modicum passage of time, it becomes history writing. Myanmar now may be a very different place than Burma was mid-20th century, but having just returned from the country, I can say that Lewis provides a clearer lens for understanding the land and its peoples. The perceived differences that time has wrought are in many cases less than what might be expected. Yes, travel is now infinitely safer and less arduous than it was when Lewis documented it. Yes, the vast majority of the various tribes are now finally settling down in a peaceful co-existence. Yes, the Generals derailed the country for a half century and robbed the people of the optimistic future that Lewis projected -- and hoped for. But, Mandalay is still a ramshackle, dusty city. The Irrawaddy River is still a major arterial route connecting the forested north with the semi-arid center and the tropical south. And, the people -- despite poverty and depredations -- remain friendly, open, and welcoming.

Traveling to Myanmar? This, along with Orwell's *Burmese Days* and *The River of Lost Footsteps* by Thant Myint-U should be in your kit. All will provide a historical and cultural context for the change that is rapidly overcoming the land. Will likely never travel to SE Asia but still enjoy travel books such as Newby's *A Short Walk in the Hindu Kush* or Thesiger's *Arabian Sands*? *Golden Earth* should fit snugly next to those classics as well.

Ryan says

Liked the parts where he went upcountry through the wilder, less populated minorities areas, and also the slow river boat journey back down the Irrawady, reminiscent of Heart of Darkness, complete with mock attacks from indigenous natives (in this case rebels). Descriptions of cultural life and festivals of endless variety as well, though of less personal interest. Last 2 pages summarizes his positive view of the country's prospects, sadly things went badly in the decades after as the military junta rose to power.
