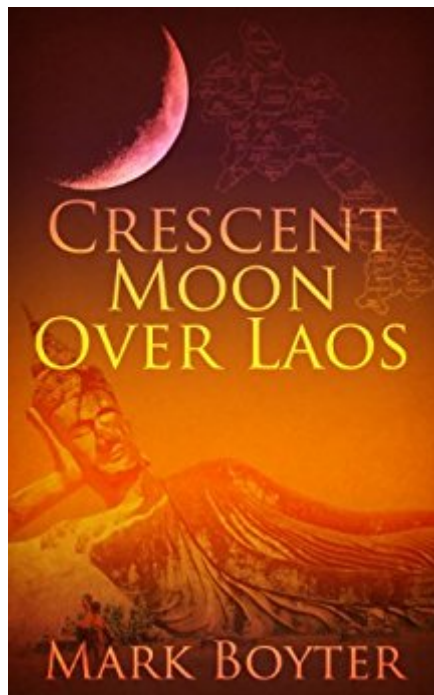


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Crescent Moon Over Laos



Synopsis

Who would want to shoot me? And so begins Mark Boyter's *Crescent Moon Over Laos*. It is the search for answers to this and other questions, internal and external, individual and universal, that drives the narrative of this travel memoir of Laos. It is 1990, and Laos has just re-opened its borders to Western travel after being closed for ten years. With few travelers, fewer maps, no travel infrastructure and no guidebooks, information about Laos runs on second-hand accounts, guesthouse rumor, and the unverifiable promises of the lone visa agent for Laotian travel in Nong Khai, the Thai departure point for Laos and its capital, Vientiane. "Trust me," he says. Once in Laos, Boyter's journey takes him from Vientiane south to Pakxe, and then, as the lone traveler heading overland north, to the ancient capital Louangphrabang, where the question "Who would want to shoot me?" becomes fully realized. As much as *Crescent Moon Over Laos* is about an external journey, in the best tradition of travel writing, the journey is also internal. *Crescent Moon* unfolds in the parallel stories of a traveller discovering a country, and a country being discovered by a traveler. Tied together with personal anecdotes, what begins and ends as a simple travel memoir of Laos evolves into a discussion of the ethics of travel, of Buddhism; of love and relationships, and of what it means to be human. "We are all," as singer/song-writer Glenn Chatten says, "the crescent moon."

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

I found *Crescent Moon Over Laos* an engaging memoir. Boynter's memoir is a diary of his trip in Laos. This book is well-written, and he paints vividly what he sees along his way. This travel memoir of a largely unknown country offers the reader glimpses geography, cuisine, and hotels, not to mention tales of an exotic locale, and how he discovers himself along the way. I found the uncertainty of Boynter's travels to be hauntingly beautiful yet mysterious. This isn't your ordinary travel memoir! So much is packed into a 17 day sojourn. Humanity at its best and worst! Five stars for sure

Mark Boyter has written an excellent account of his trip to Laos. Filled with vivid description of this largely ancient and unknown country, Boyter shares several compelling incidents, including the story of the corrupt visa officer, the Spartan *luxury hotel* that he and several companions shared and the surprisingly inexpensive French-influenced cuisine that he dines on for less than \$ 3 dollars. *Crescent Moon Over Laos* is not only a traveler's fascinating account of an exotic place, it's an interesting journey of self-discovery.

Good book for those who like to travel but not a lot of information about the country itself for those who are looking for that kind of information. For hard-core travelers who have spent a lot of time overseas, much of Mark's insight and experiences will resonate. All in all a good read. I enjoyed reading another fellow traveler's musings as I neared the end of my own two-weeks of travel through Northern Laos. Beautiful country. I am sure that helped add to the pleasure I received from the book. Two thumbs up.

Crescent Moon over Laos was an interesting but somewhat disjointed story of Mark, a man traveling through Laos looking for a reason to justify his being there. It seemed that Mark had an immense quantity of psychological questions that bothered him and not too many satisfying solutions that

fulfilled his desire to answer these questions. He seemed to be in constant conflict about being identified as a Western foreigner or Russian when in his opinion he was an entity and nothing more. Throughout the story, Mark would throw out a lot of "what if"s allowing the reader to draw their own conclusion on what Mark was supposed to do or should have done. Unfortunately Mark was easily duped into buying drinks, not getting answers he wanted and the story ended with Mark still having questions.

Crescent Moon Over Laos, by Mark Boyter, takes the reader to Laos in the early 1990s, a time when that country was just opening its borders to the outside world. The author succeeds in capturing the mindset of travelers who seek the "unspoiled" parts of the globe and has some interesting insights on the question of whether or not such travelers are not actually spoiling the unspoiled by their presence there. A reader interested in the issue of cultural chauvinism will encounter more than a few interesting episodes in the book that provide food for thought. Boyter has a knack for seeing the humanity in people as well as their foibles and the absurdities that result from them. His observations are conveyed in smooth, engaging and easy to read prose. The book is interspersed with anecdotes (often quite personal ones) from the author's life and from experiences in other Asian countries, especially Japan and Nepal, but these only serve to enhance the narrative and underscore the points the writer wants to make. In the end, this story about travels through Laos is very much about a journey through life that many readers will find interesting, easy to relate to and, indeed, to reflect upon.

Excellent travel memoir. Must read if planning a trip to Laos. Even if you are not there is a varied of deep topics covered, and it would be a great read either way.

A well written experienced traveler's look into the culture and people of Laos.

A great read by a great writer! A travel novel and in depth voyage into self - a personal adventure and discovery.

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