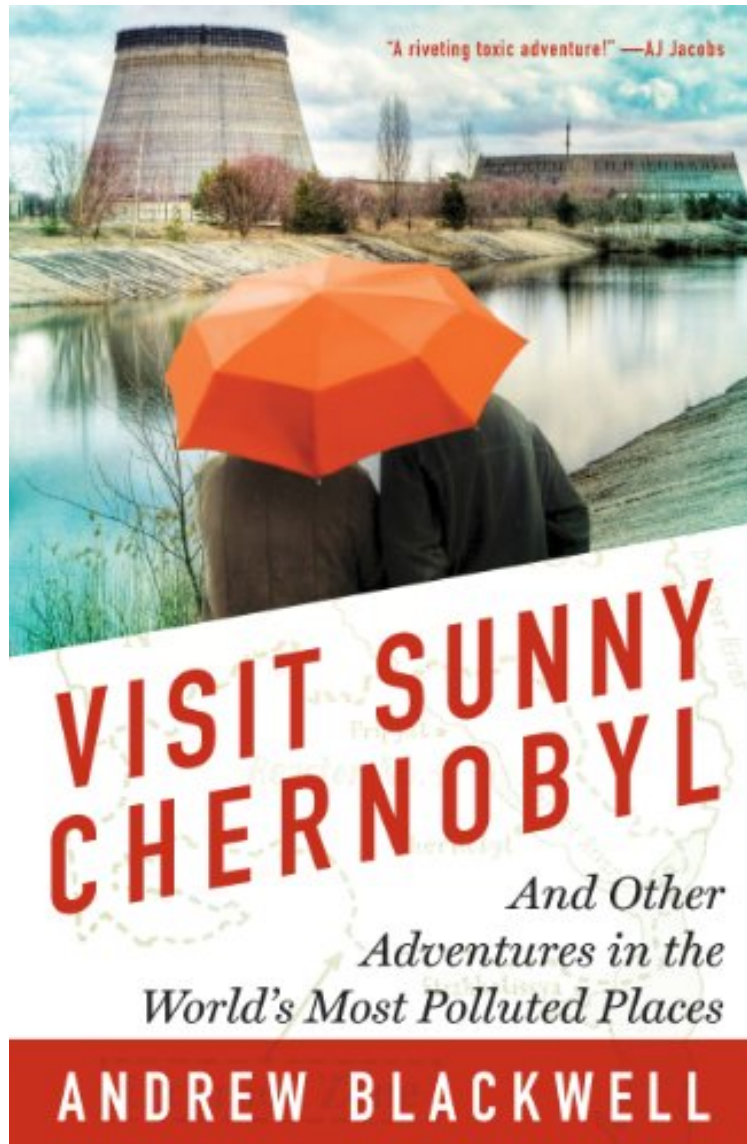


Visit Sunny Chernobyl: And Other Adventures in the World's Most Polluted Places

Andrew Blackwell

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Andrew Blackwell : Visit Sunny Chernobyl: And Other Adventures in the World's Most Polluted Places before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Visit Sunny Chernobyl: And Other Adventures in the World's Most Polluted Places:

2 of 2 people found the following review helpful. Vivid, entertaining, wittyBy Star GirlVISIT SUNNY CHERNOBYL

isn't what I expected. This vividly-written, highly entertaining, and occasionally witty narrative is not a rant about the dirtiest places in our world and how we've destroyed (or are destroying) our environment, but rather an exploration of the dirtiest places of our world and what it's like to be there, live there, and breathe there. This isn't a book that passes judgment; this is a book that lets you see things through Blackwell's eyes and make up your own mind. For those of us who like to armchair travel, VISIT SUNNY CHERNOBYL delivers in spades; the vivid language and use of the five senses is nothing short of amazing and the colorful characters he meets along the way leap off the page. Some of the more technical aspects of the story—how a nuclear reactor works, what oil sands are, how plastics break down—are described succinctly, in layman's terms, and appear organically; it's so entertainingly presented, in fact, that it feels like you've actually learned something with no effort at all. The best part of VISIT SUNNY CHERNOBYL, though, is the dry humor that emerges from Blackwell's spot-on observations; I didn't expect to be laughing, and while I'd like to share some of my favorite lines here, they really need to be taken within context. The second half of the book, I think, is a bit stronger than the first; there is a more personal tone to Blackwell's narrative and the humor is a bit more biting. This is probably because at the time he was writing those chapters he'd just faced a heartbreak, and he's trying to find himself and purpose in life again even as he's trying to finish the project. This struggle, though only glimpsed, adds a richness to the narrative and because of it, this grand tour of places most of us will never go yields a most surprising discovery: The task now, perhaps, is not to preserve the fantasy of a separate and pure nature, but to see how thoroughly we are part of the new nature that still lives. Only then can we preserve it, and us. (Page 173). If you like creative nonfiction/memoir, this is a great read. 3 of 3 people found the following review helpful. Good, but drags the longer it goes on. By Ben M. This book was recommended to me when I mentioned that I have sort of a weird obsession with Chernobyl and the town of Pripyat. I knew going in that this book covered many other polluted places as well, so my rating isn't even based on the fact that I wanted more about Chernobyl. I loved the first chapter about Chernobyl. It's not only informative about the disaster itself, but underlines the sociopolitical aspect of those living in Kiev, dealing with radiation, and the aftermath of the event. The first chapter is everything I could have wanted. It goes downhill from there. Every chapter gets a little more laborious than the last, and is filled more with personal anecdotes about travel and his love life. The chapter about the great Pacific garbage patch is far more about him being on a boat for weeks than it is about the garbage patch itself. He also has this weird habit of starting out some chapters in some action-packed hellscape that he never really connects the dots back to. The chapter about logging in the starts off with him in the aftermath of a slash and burn operation, cinders falling, shoes getting hot, smoke in his lungs... but then spends the entire chapter bemoaning the fact that the logging operations are not as severe as he thought, that slash and burn operations are no longer common place, and how much he wants to actually see it. The first two chapters were good, and if you have an interest in this kind of stuff it might be worth a read, but don't expect the book to keep the pace. 18 of 19 people found the following review helpful. Starts with a bang, ends with a whimper. By Bill BCI bought this book because of the terrific title... whoever thought of it, the author or an editor, is a genius. I was captivated at the beginning... the chapter on Chernobyl is terrific, as is the one on the Alberta tar sands. But then he starts to lose direction, and we get more and more of him and his relation with his girlfriend, the "doctor," and by the time he gets to the last chapter, in India, he's really gone adrift. In the last chapter we get some fairly gross descriptions of horrible river pollution, but then he goes off on some sort of pilgrimage with a bunch of people protesting the pollution, and the book goes unfocused. He seems to lose interest in pollution, and instead is captivated by the sociology of Indian protest marches. Possibly it was written at great speed, or the editor lost interest, but my interest certainly flagged before the end.

For most of us, traveling means visiting the most beautiful places on Earth—Paris, the Taj Mahal, the Grand Canyon. It's rare to book a plane ticket to visit the lifeless moonscape of Canada's oil sand strip mines, or to set sail for the Great Pacific Garbage Patch. But in *Visit Sunny Chernobyl*, Andrew Blackwell embraces a different kind of travel, taking a jaunt through the most gruesomely polluted places on Earth. *Visit Sunny Chernobyl* fuses immersive first-person reporting with satire and analysis, making the case that it's time to start appreciating our planet as-is, not as we wish it to be. Equal parts travelogue, expose environmental memoir, and faux guidebook, Blackwell careens through a rogue's gallery of environmental disaster areas in search of the worst the world has to offer and approaches a deeper understanding of what's really happening to our planet in the process.

A darkly comic romp. Elizabeth Kolbert, staff writer, *The New Yorker* An environmentalist book that avoids the usual hyperventilation, upending stubborn myths with prosaic facts . . . Blackwell is a smart and often funny writer. *Wall Street Journal* Witty and disturbing . . . Call this the anti-guide book. *New York Post* "Required Reading" About the Author ANDREW BLACKWELL is a journalist and filmmaker. He is a 2011 Fellow in Nonfiction Literature from the New York Foundation of the Arts. *Visit Sunny Chernobyl* is his first book. He lives in New York City.