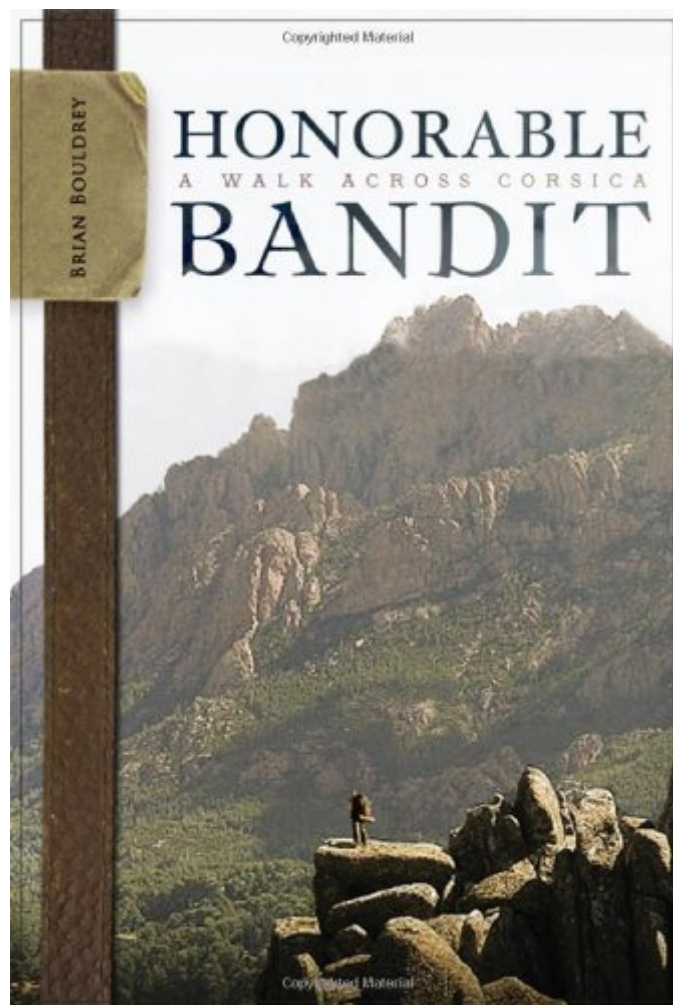


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Honorable Bandit: A Walk Across Corsica



Synopsis

Brian Bouldrey traveled to the island of Corsica, with its wine-dark Mediterranean waters, powdered-sugar beach sand, sumptuous cuisine, and fine wine. And then he walked away from all of them. Bouldrey strapped on a backpack and walked across Napoleon's native land with the same spirit many choose to dance or drink: to celebrate, to mourn, to think, to avoid thinking, to recall, to ignore, to escape, and to arrive. This wonderfully textured account of a two-week ramble along a famous Corsican hiking trail with his German friend Petra (she was good at the downhill while he was better at the uphill) offers readers a journal that is a launching point for reflection: thoughts on cultural differences, friendship, physical challenge, personal challenge, and getting very, very lost. Part travelogue, part memoir, and part lampoon, this book offers readers an impressionistic view of a little talked about yet stunningly beautiful landscape. Best Books for General Audiences, selected by the American Association of School Librarians and the Public Library Association Runner-up, Best Travel Book, National Association of Travel Journalists

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Customer Reviews

If you've read any of Bouldrey's other work, this book will come less of a surprise than a delight. If

you're new to Bouldrey, I envy you the discovery. "Honorable Bandit" is part travelogue, part memoir, part meditation on walking, and part shaggy dog story. Bouldrey spent several weeks walking across Corsica, the Mediterranean island best known as the birthplace of Napoleon (the ruler, not the pastry), and he does offer tips on dealing with pigs, flash floods, and tiny horses. But "Honorable Bandit" is not a guidebook. Corsica merely provides the context for tales of vendettas, lonzu, throat singing, disagreeable roosters, and a host of other subjects that won't get you across the island any quicker or more safely. Speed is not the point, after all -- the journey is about the journey, and the journey is through life and history, not an island that seems to be saying, "We're #1!" Reading the book is like watching a slideshow given by a loquacious, but very engaging, host, who stops the show for long stretches as one story leads to another, starting with the slide, but then sliding into tales of family and friends and escaped convicts and past journeys and memorable meals, yet always returning to the next slide, and just in the nick of time. In the hands of a lesser writer, such a book would be tedious at best and infuriating at worst. But Bouldrey loves language, and loves the reader, and has such wonderful things to tell you that you forgive him his excesses, even when they are excessive. The problem with most memoirs is that the memoirist generally thinks of him- or herself as the most important -- and certainly most interesting -- character in the story. Bouldrey is rarely guilty of that crime. He uses his experiences as a way to tell us about what he's discovered along the way, and in doing so, allows us to make our own discoveries. He is a most generous host, and his book is a most satisfying repast.

This book is not about Corsica at all, rather Brian Bouldry. It is a collection of pointless drivel written while hiking in Corsica with his snobby German companion. (or Austrian? Who cares.) At one point he goes on about people traveling with their "retarded man-child". Did he see a retarded man-child? No...so why is he including this in a book about hiking in Corsica? Beats me...I guess he thought it was just so witty. And the passages about the "dead little British boy" were disgusting. Not funny AT ALL. If you had bothered to find out the circumstances of how this child had disappeared and died on the island, then maybe it would have been relevant, but he cracks jokes about the child after seeing a missing poster. Dude, do that with your drinking buddies, but it really doesn't belong in a travel memoir. The author and his companion, Petra, seem to think everything is stupid, in fact, I don't think I've ever read a book that includes the word "stupid" as often as this one. There are virtually no sympathetic accounts of any people or areas they have visited. Really, the tourists are stupid, the locals are stupid. I guess the only enlightened beings on the whole island of Corsica were Brian Bouldry and Petra.

I have just finished the "acknowledgments" section of Brian Bouldrey's new book, and it's one of the best I've ever read. That may sound like hyperbole, but it's not. I'm a voracious reader -- I tear through 5-10 "acknowledgments" sections every week -- and Mr. Bouldrey's is as good as any penned by Mailer, Updike, or (God rest his soul) Vonnegut. Instead of struggling in vain to adequately describe the merits of Bouldrey's acknowledgements, let me just quote a short passage from what is destined to become a classic of the form: "The author wishes to thank . . . Larry Wood . . ."

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