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Four Corners: A Journey Into The Heart Of Papua New Guinea



Synopsis

A New York Times Notable Book about a PEN Award-winning journalist's extraordinary journey through the last frontier of adventure travel. At the age of twenty-four, Kira Salak took a three-month solo trip across Papua New Guinea, making her the first woman to have traversed the whole country. Amid the breathtaking landscapes and wildlife, she navigated the island by dugout canoe and on foot. Along the way, she stayed in a village where people still practice cannibalism behind the backs of the missionaries; met the leader of the OPM, the separatist guerrilla movement opposing the Indonesian occupation of Western New Guinea; and undertook an epic trek through the jungle. Four Corners is also an interior journey as she explores her dysfunctional family's past and the demons that drive her to experience situations that most of us can barely imagine. Reading more like a thriller than a travel memoir, Four Corners is compulsive armchair travel at its very best.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

Kira Salak is a National Geographic Emerging Explorer and contributing editor to National Geographic Adventure magazine. A PEN Award-winning journalist, she has traveled alone to almost every continent, visiting some of the world's most remote places, including locations in Madagascar, Mozambique, Bangladesh, and Borneo. She was the first documented person to kayak solo 600 miles down West Africa's Niger River. Salak was also the first woman to traverse Papua New Guinea, a country she writes about in her New York Times Notable Book Four Corners. She lives with her husband and daughter in Germany.

I've read many travel adventure books,, this is one of the best I've EVER read. Kira has a Phd. in English literature, so it's well-written. Her tale starts out in southern Africa, where she makes the insane decision to cross Mozambique (alone) during its 30+ year civil war. I wondered if she had a death wish. Kira details her strange childhood; being raised by Ayn Rand fanatics who didn't believe in loving their children or celebrating birthdays. To fill the void, Kira decides to travel. Her harrowing, near fatal experience with rebel soldiers in Mozambique sets up her journey to cross Papua New Guinea, by river & trekking, alone. This book was so involving that I couldn't put it down, but I didn't want it to end either. I would have read another 200 pages. As Kira travels & meets ex-pats, tribal people, missionaries (whom all loathe the tribal customs & the tribal people) & guerrilla fighters (fighting the genocide, that's being committed on the New Guinean tribes that live over the border in Irian Jaya, by the Indonesian government), she grows in confidence & begins to discover that she is okay just the way she is: she's worthy of love. Kira's bravery against potential rapists is extraordinary, her ability to learn pidgin & relate to the tribes is wonderful. Kira's travel to the deepest regions of PNG & her descriptions of the different colors of the rain forest, the Birds of Paradise, the colorful headdresses worn by the tribesmen make you feel like you're right there with her. It's a grueling journey; a trek up & down a jungle mountain in a torrential rainstorm at night, barefoot, but she overcomes every obstacle. This is an empowering book for women. My only regret is that Kira didn't bring a camera (this was before digital cameras) so there are no photos. If you want to know what it's like to travel alone, across PNG, as a woman, forgoing all comforts & hotel lodgings, this great book will make you feel that you're on the journey with the author. Her empathy for the tribes people whose entire families are being massacred by the Indonesian Muslims is heartrending. It is a holocaust that we don't hear about in the US press. When New Guinea was divided into independent PNG & Indonesian Irian Jaya, the systematic destruction of the indigenous tribal people & the Indonesian government's illegal deforestation of the rain forest continues to this day. What the Indonesian government has wrought on Borneo; deforestation, burning the remaining brush to make room for palm oil plantations (wiping out the habit of Orangutans) is the same thing that is happening in Irian Jaya, only the tribal people are Melanesian (a different race) & not Muslim, so the Indonesian government continues to slaughter entire tribes. I wish Kira would would write more travel adventure stories. HIGH RECOMMENDED.

I read White Mary a few years ago and was totally entranced by it, one of those books that totally absorbs you. So when I found out I was heading to Papua New Guinea and saw this, also by Kira Salak, I bought it immediately. I was not disappointed at all. Kira's writing grips the reader and she

writes extraordinarily well, you feel like you are with her. Probably one of the biggest attractions for me, is her emotional and self-awareness while writing. It is an outer as well as inner journey and she makes this interesting and relate-able for everyone. We are all on a journey of self-identity. I so admire Kira's courage and willingness to put herself in situations that push the boundaries of safety and comfort. This seems stupid at times, too, but it is fascinating to go along for the ride with her. Highly recommended.

I enjoyed this book very much. I was able to get through it in about a week, reading it for awhile each evening on the couch. If you like travel, dangerous situations, adventure, unexplored places, or PNG, this book is probably for you.

Kira Salak must have a strong death wish to go to the places she travels- alone! After the harrowing experiences in New Guinea she states from then on she will now only visit safe areas like Cambodia, Iraq, So. America, etc. Good luck with that,eh? I'm starting her 1st novel- The White Mary.If you read her you will like her- guaranteed.gary gentry

Amazing! I rented the book from the library and ended up buying it shortly thereafter just so I would be able to read it again and again. Kira Salak is a wonderful writer and a all around tough chick! It is one of those books that you will be thinking about long after you are finished with the last page.

What a gutsy lady travelling in Papua New Guinea by herself. It is a rough place to travel in. Her writing is excellent. I could not put this book down.

It was an engaging story about an audacious adventure for any solo traveler. It was a bit self-indulgent but no more than expected for a 24 year old looking for the meaning of life.

Introduction really intense, recommend it to anyone who enjoys stories about war. Kira Salak has readers thinking they are actually on the battle field!!

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