

[PDF] American Nomads: Travels With Lost Conquistadors, Mountain Men, Cowboys, Indians, Hoboes, Truckers, And Bullriders

Richard Grant - pdf download free book



Books Details:

Title: American Nomads: Travels with
Author: Richard Grant
Released: 2005-01-07
Language:
Pages: 320
ISBN: 0802141803
ISBN13: 978-0802141804
ASIN: 0802141803

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Description:

From Publishers Weekly In this cogent but uneven meditation on American wanderers past and present, British writer Grant, who has written for GQ and Esquire, parallels his own travels through

the American Southwest with those of earlier explorers, conquerors, cowboys, Indians, bikers and hoboes. In 1985, the author, without prospects and sick of London's dreary weather, escaped to the U.S. He's spent the past 15 years feeding his "wanderlust, restlessness, itchy feet, antsy pants, white-line fever," crisscrossing the country, but sticking mainly to the Southwest. Along the way, he has grappled with certain questions, internally and in the articles he has written to finance his travels. As he puts it in his prologue, "What drove a man to spend his life in motion? Was it a natural human impulse, recognized and obeyed, or was it a disease of the soul? Why was the type so prevalent in America...?" To find the answers, he hung out at all-night truck stops, chatted with grizzled hitchhikers and rail tramps, and attended love and peace fests (including the popular Rainbow gatherings). He also spent time in libraries, researching the history of the wanderers-both native and European-who came before him. While certain profiles (e.g., of early Spanish explorer Cabeza de Vaca and mountain man Joe Walker) do absorb, Grant occasionally strays into the extraneous (a too-long chronicle of the horse's introduction into North America and a spotty history of the notorious Freight Train Riders of America are particular examples). It makes for a lively, though sometimes tiring, pastiche of travelogue and regurgitated history.

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From Grant, an English writer who has written for *GQ* and *Esquire*, has penned a travelogue par excellence, cloaked in the robes of a sociological examination of the American nomad. Resolved to leave his own sedentary life, the author spends time with an assortment of truckers, rodeo cowboys, RV-ers, and wanna-be Indians (usually white computer geeks looking for escape). He examines, too, records of some of the genuine nomads of our past, such as the explorer Cabeza de Vaca, the Indian hunter horse tribes, and the legendary frontiersman Joe Walker. Readers may feel a certain sadness about the artificiality of some modern versions of nomadism, especially during a passage in which, at a gathering of would-be American Indians, Grant searches for the genuine article. This is a wondrous essay, documenting a style of life that eschews government authority--property taxes, drug laws, gun laws, nudity laws, truancy laws, and sexual age-of-consent laws. For all the problems inherent in such a lifestyle, readers may still fantasize about what life could be like away from the rat race. *Allen Weakland*

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