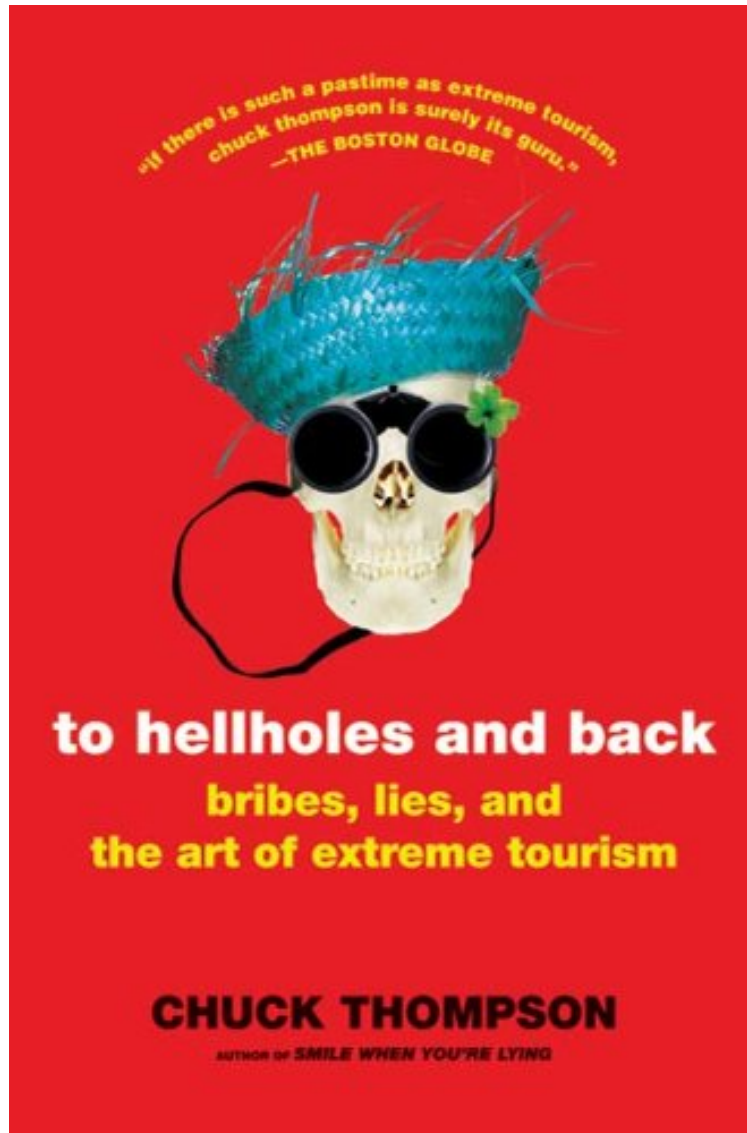


To Hellholes and Back: Bribes, Lies, and the Art of Extreme Tourism

Chuck Thompson

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Chuck Thompson : To Hellholes and Back: Bribes, Lies, and the Art of Extreme Tourism before purchasing it in order to gauge whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised To Hellholes and Back: Bribes, Lies, and the Art of Extreme Tourism:

13 of 13 people found the following review helpful. A Witty, Intelligent, Page-Turner By Michael Maffei First and foremost, this book is a great and enjoyable read. I had trouble putting it down - except on a few occasions when I found myself laughing out-loud. Some of Chuck Thompson's witty one-liners were priceless. His stories are well-

conceived and packed with intelligent observations. Now, it's not perfect - there are some jokes that go over flat and I didn't agree with all his conclusions, but those are few and far between. Overall, this book is a great, intelligent, and humorous read. Even more, Mr. Thompson is a writer who has done his homework. I have some colleagues that have just returned from a four month stint in India. I shared a number of Mr. Thompson's experiences and observations from the India portion of his book with them - and they found themselves laughing and agreeing whole-heartedly. An excellent book - I recommend to all! Mr. Thompson seems like the type of guy you'd love to sit down and have a beer with.

1 of 1 people found the following review helpful. Insanely annoying writing style
By TRAVELDUDE
It's not the standard backpacker story, and Thompson winds tangential stories into his travel narratives in an effort to break up the monotony that curses many travel books. However, his insane use of analogies, similes, and "inside" jokes make the reading hair wrenching. It is like I write this review like Jerry Garcia pre-1990, but not Jerry Garcia in 1976 Grateful Dead, and if you were at their show in Oswego in 1992 you know what I'm talking about. Do you get it? It's one thing to make an analogy: "traveling through Kinshasha is about as easy as a morning dump after a night of competitive eating burritos", but Thompson goes on and on and on: "traveling through Kinshasha is about as easy as defecating fire, or as hard as trying to date J-Lo, or like that time I saw Family Guy reruns on a cross country Grayhound without any sound, etc etc etc etc. The story he tells is interesting, and nicely packaged. But damn it Thompson, you're trying too hard to be some kind of hipster in your prose. And enough with making yourself out to be a junior Chris Hitchens; you're not that contrarian.

3 of 3 people found the following review helpful. It's just a damn-fun read!
By Gr8Ind
You may never travel to any of these destinations, but you'll appreciate that Mr. Thompson did when you read the yarns he spins in this latest work by the travel veteran. "To Hellholes..." is a travelogue potpourri, spiced with his classic whip-crack wit (pithy remarks you'll use later, I swear!), seasoned with a fair bit of sage advice, with a dash of cynicism and satire thrown in to find you either smirking or irking. Thompson's a straight shooter, and pulls no punches when giving an account of his adventures, exploits and experiences, i.e. this is not your Conde Nast "G" rated prose. But if you're looking for a read that won't have your head spinning with Clancyish technical details, make you blubber because a beloved character tragically dies, or just want that four hour flight to be over ASAP, then this is the book to stuff in your carry-on, or put on your hotel night stand. In the spirit of George Macdonald Fraser, it's reading entertainment at its raucous, raw and rambunctious best!

The guru of extreme tourism sets out to face his worst fears in Africa, India, Mexico City, and Disney World; most terrifying of all; at Disney World. In the widely-acclaimed *Smile When You're Lying*, Chuck Thompson laid bare the travel industry's dirtiest secrets. Now he's out to discover if some of the world's most ill-reputed destinations live up to their bad raps, while confronting a few of his own travel anxieties in the process. Whether he's traveling across the Congo with a former bodyguard from notorious dictator Joseph Mobutu's retinue or diving into the heart of India's monsoon season, *To Hellholes and Back* delivers Thompson's trademark combination of hilarious stories and wildly provocative opinions, as well as some surprising observations about America's evolving place in the world.

From Publishers Weekly
If you've ever wondered how a frat boy would fare in the Congo, then Thompson (*Smile When You're Lying*) has written the book for you. It's not just the Congo either; the former Maxim editor and extreme tourism expert also slogs across Mexico City, India and Disney World. Along the way, he encounters elephant penises, eight-year-old boxers and naked gurus who climb into the shower with him. Thompson's stated reason for his extreme tourism is that Americans have grown soft, and he must prove his travel writer toughness by going places he doesn't want to go. Thompson uses a Maxim-derived prose that features present-tense narration and unfortunate similes. Every page is disfigured by a phrase like Flat as the Kinshasha investment market, and brown as a turd.... Thompson poses as an iconoclast, but his critiques skew toward the obvious (he notes that there are two Indias, one rich and one poor, and that Disney runs a very tight ship). Sanctimonious liberals provide one target, as does soccer; not manly enough for Thompson, and they don't score enough goals. In the end, Thompson's observations and strained prose will wear thin on readers. (Dec.) Copyright copy; Reed Business Information, a division of Reed Elsevier Inc. All rights reserved.

From Booklist
As a former editor at Maxim and Travelocity and the author of *Smile When You're Lying*, a gleeful trashing of travel industry fables, Thompson is a well-traveled and street-smart kind of guy. Here he turns out a riveting, hilarious, and wildly entertaining account of trips to four destinations he has long avoided. The "hellholes" on his no-go list include the African Congo, India, Mexico City, and Walt Disney World. Readers will enjoy following his adventures and running commentary, whether tangling with crooked officials in Africa, a scary mob in India, having the time of his life in Mexico City, or merely perplexed in Orlando. Thompson makes it his business to smash popular misconceptions about travel, all while offering up his own ironic observations and provocative opinions. Will be a hit with readers who enjoy smart, funny, and unorthodox travel writing. --Kathleen Hughes Praise for *Smile When You're Lying*