



Swahili for the Broken-Hearted

Peter Moore

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Question: What do you do when you're dumped by the Girl Next Door?

Answer: Throw yourself into another madcap adventure and travel from Cape Town to Cairo...

A week after breaking up with the GND (his travelling companion through Central America) Peter Moore heads off to Africa to lose himself for a while. In the grand tradition of 19th-century scoundrels, explorers and romantics, Africa strikes him as the ideal place to find solitude and anonymity in the face of a personal crisis.

What follows is Peter's journey from one end of the Dark Continent to the other. Travelling the fabled Cape Town to Cairo route by any means of transport he can blag (or if he must, pay) his way onto, it's an epic trek that sees our intrepid Antipodean experience everything from the southernmost city in Africa to the Pyramids, vast game parks and thundering falls, cosmopolitan cities and tiny villages as he journeys through the very heart of Africa. And travelling on his own, it's inevitable that Peter falls in with a motley cast of characters and has a myriad misadventures: including coming face to face with a wild Hyena with very bad breath, crossing the treacherous Sani Pass, the highest in Africa, narrowly escaping a riot by hiding in a coffin shop, saving oil-covered Penguins in South Africa, acting as an extra in a WW2 epic, not to mention dodging 20,000 single women trying to catch the eye of the king of Swaziland during the annual Reed Dance. And then there was the time when he was kicked out of Robert Mugabe's birthday bash at gunpoint...

Swahili for the Broken-Hearted Details

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Author : Peter Moore

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From Reader Review Swahili for the Broken-Hearted for online ebook

Sarah Sammis says

Swahili for the Broken-Hearted by Peter Moore was born out of his break-up with his girl friend and traveling companion. After spending months with friends in South Africa, basically living on his friends' couch, watching soap operas, he decides it's time to head home. Rather than head home by hopping on a plane bound for Australia, he decides to travel overland along the eastern coast of Africa for Cairo.

Although Moore's book is about traveling through Africa, don't confuse it for a travel guide. It's not; it's a memoir about a white Australian bloke traveling through areas of Africa that tourists wouldn't normally go to — while en route to the very places that tourists do flock to: Victoria Falls, the monastery in Ethiopia, the pyramids of Giza.

Since it's not a travel guide, Moore relates his adventures as they happen, for better and worse. He tells about the bribes he paid, the bribes he refused to pay, getting into fights over bus windows, numerous beers drunk, and visas approved and visas denied. It's not a complete lark, though. Moore describes hiding in a coffin shop (and inside a coffin) to escape a riot and gunfire.

With all the ups and downs, though, Moore manages to paint a picture of life in eastern Africa taken one individual at a time. He does it with self deprecation and humor.

John says

Although a "sequel" to THE FULL MONTEZUMA, this one can be read before that one; the "broken hearted" aspect doesn't overshadow the story as much as the title would suggest. Solid writing, but not much especially humorous or clever. Moore seemed to lose some momentum by the time he reached Ethiopia, and frankly so did I.

Jacqui says

This book was fantastic. It was perfect for me to read while traveling in Africa. Admittedly, I didn't go all the way from Capetown to Cairo, but I certainly traveled by a variety of transportation choices (some questionable) in several of the countries he passed through.

His descriptions as a Westerner - mostly of his first impressions of Africa - are hilarious, and really appreciated by this first timer to the continent. I think going on an epic journey is one of the best ways to overcome heartache. Or an existential crisis :)

Highly recommend this book - it's a light and amusing read, plus you get a lot of insight on the various amazing cultures in at least part of Africa, both their high and low points, without getting too involved in politics and so on.

I can't believe this guy tried so hard to get into Sudan though - that part I thought was a bit insane on his part. Didn't he hear about the, uh, civil war and subsequent horrors in Darfur? I don't know - the entire book was great, but I thought that plot indicated he was a bit... irresponsible maybe?

That's just my \$0.02 though - I still give it 5 stars.

Neha says

Nothing in the book to write home about except that it is really good writing. It flows extremely well although I can't shake off the fact that such backpacking adventures can only be undertaken by those who have some amount of privilege. You can't really even call it a travel book because it's just mostly a guy's daily travel log becoming a book. There isn't really much novelty or actual travel advice in the book - just how the author managed to successfully take rickety cars, and buses without much worry or anything untoward. Despite its good writing, the book becomes repetitive in the last 100 odd pages. Reading it almost 14 years after it was first published, I wonder how easy or difficult the same journey would now be given how much the African continent has really developed in the last decade.

Kavita Favelle says

A humour-filled account of a backpacker's journey from Cape Town to Cairo, this book gave me an insight into both the backpacker way of travelling as well as the people of the countries Peter Moore visited. His experiences were certainly entertaining, thought-provoking and surprising and I found myself speeding through the book much faster than I had expected.

I occasionally felt that the descriptions of the long road journeys overshadowed infrequent insights into the actual places he visited, though I appreciate that it was during these journeys that he experienced many of the most interesting interactions with the people of Africa. Many travellers maintain that the journey is as important than the destination, and this book certainly supports that viewpoint.

As a non-backpacker traveller, I didn't find myself wanting to travel in quite the same way, though I did envy some of the people-contact he gained through doing so and definitely enjoyed the read.

Steve says

Really, man? An entire book dedicated to your public transport exploits and staying in hostels? "They were tribesmen of the African coffee table book variety..." pretty much sums this book up. It was written by a guy who has never lived in Africa, nor taken the time to learn about this continent, much less understand the people. And as far as the pantheon of travel-writing is concerned, this is pretty lame. Sorry. It just sucks.

C says

Peter Moore is an Aussie travel blogger turned writer. Years ago I'd read his misadventures online, and when I'd found he was publishing books, really wanted to get my hands on them and have a read, but since they're

Aussie publications, it was a royal headache to track them down and have them shipped to the States.

Imagine my happiness when I found them in eBook format for 5\$ a pop. No shipping! No hassle!

The book:

First, don't expect prose. He has some nice stuff in there, but nothing that's going to clutch you by the soul and send you flinging your way off into the great void of adventure. Unless you are about to become a backpacker. In which case, HEY! I have a book for you! ;)

Don't expect heartbreak, either. He's pretty bland by way of break-up angst. That is to say: there's none. Well, he's bummed. We get that.

That said, this guy is (very) well traveled. He's the human equivalent of that one pair of socks that gets washed and worn countless times on a backpacking trip. He's a bit threadbare and probably the best person to start reading if you want to vicariously learn about the horrors and fun of low budget travel. He generally chooses hostels, hitchhikes, and takes the advised-against routes wherever he is.

There is a faction split between people who want to travel in luxury and stay safe - removed from the "local color" - and people who want to really insert themselves under the skin and get down to the meat and bones of a culture. Peter Moore is the latter. I'm instinctively more of the former. Alas. So it is interesting for someone like me to read from such a different perspective.

While he's not a huge risk taker by way of skydiving and bungee and "adventure culture," nor does he really do anything "stupid" or blatantly (well, let's say that's subjective) reckless, all along the way, he placidly strolls into situations that most sane folks would avoid. Within a few chapters I learned his foreshadowing language: *It probably wasn't the best idea.... I should have probably.... I could have... but...* and then the adventure starts.

There is a pretty balanced mix between the good, the bad and the ugly in this book. The places and mode of travel sometimes provoke vicarious anxiety wondering how I'd deal in this or that situation (likely a melt down). But, to balance that, he points out much of the beauty and relates a number of really interesting and positive experiences that really could only crop up via this mode of travel. In one case, he stays in a "hostel" where they can either sleep on a bunk in a tent, or outside under palm trees. Another, he finds himself in a deserted (but nice) lodge in the mountains. It is completely deserted, bar a ghostly innkeeper who starts a fire in the hearth while he's bathing, but is never seen at all.

In another case he wakes up as the bus driver is trying to regain control of his bus that's about to go off the road into a ravine. There's a lot of that sort of thing going on.

I can't decide if it makes me want to travel, or never travel. It is SO balanced it fails to move me in either direction. But, I admire that it is honest travel writing. Just a guy, traveling around, seeing what's out there. Nothing more, nothing less. You will pick up some tips on modes of transportation by way of example, the typical scammer in whatever country he is in, and the major things to see.

One thing I'd like to point out that I am grateful for: he doesn't try to over-educate. Writers like Bryson and Cahill are terrific, and I enjoy reading them, but periodically they get so bogged down on local history and subject matter that I'm dying to just get through it and on to the adventure again. Local/cultural information is definitely the support structure of such travel writing, but sometimes it can be a bit much. Moore works his information in a little more gradually, rather than in big doses of Local Information 101. I appreciate that.

The Aussie perspective is interesting, as well. Sometimes I have to remind myself of this, as I slip back into the assumption it's an American writer, then find myself a bit jarred when something distinctly Aussie pops up. Also, who knew there were places out there that hate Aussies? It's like a country that hates Canadians, or the Swiss. They're out there, but it's still a surprise to hear about it. ha!

Overall a good read if you enjoy travel writing. I can't really relate to the guy, as I'm too high strung all together, but hopefully reading it is a good influence. ;)

Worth the 5\$ to download and enjoy. I recommend reading with an Aussie accent in mind. It just makes it...more fun. ;)

Beth Peninger says

3.5 stars

Peter, a travel book author, took his broken heart and traveled from one end of Africa to the other. He gave himself 6 months to get from Cape Town to Cairo and to "get over" his most recent breakup. As he travels Africa he shares his adventures in each country he visits, makes friends along the way, and demonstrates a flexibility that is a bit hard for this Type A reader to embrace. Moore didn't do Africa in posh and luxurious ways but rather on the cheap, or as cheap as he could. I loved that part of his trip, he makes it do-able for those who don't have a lot of money to spend. In not romanticizing Africa, Moore manages to make it romantic. His honest stories of the people and the land might intrigue some and put off others. Peter's travels also give us a glimpse of the authentic Africa and not the "tourist approved" parts and people. He gives us a real look at what is rarely seen from a cruise ship or tour bus or the local Hilton. When I have spent time in Nairobi I have seen the real and the tourist version of Africa, they are quite different. Moore gives us the real, which I enjoyed so much. I love reading travel books because through someone else I am able to visit places I might not be able to otherwise. Moore has written others, I'm going to travel with him some more.

K. says

Eh? Moore's writing is often entertaining, and he certainly has a way with words. But as far as a travel narrative goes, he spends far more time discussing his bus trips between various places and the random people he befriended along the way than he does any of the places he actually visits. At no point during the book did I feel particularly compelled to visit any of the cities or countries he discusses, solely because there was often more about how much his hotel room cost or whether he felt ripped off than there was about what he saw along the way.

The sections on Sudan and Egypt felt especially rushed - after dedicating so much of the book to talking about his visa struggles with Sudan, it then felt like he was only in Sudan so that he could get into Egypt, that he only went there because it was in between him and his destination. I don't think there was any mention of "oh, and while I was in Sudan, I saw the following things". It was just "And then I sat on a train for a really long time".

So yeah. The start was definitely stronger for me than the end. But I guess it's kind of the way with any travel narrative about a long trip: you start out excited and enthusiastic about everything, and by the end you just

want to go home and put on a t-shirt that doesn't smell faintly of socks.

Ton says

Peter Moore might very well be one of the greatest traveling companions in the world. The guy's honest, down to earth and, more importantly a leaf on a rocky river. From being confronted with an unclimbable Kilimanjaro to a life threatening uprising in Ethiopia, he let's the experiences flow underneath and past him, making notes and sharp observations in the process.

Sally Seymore says

I enjoyed this book, especially because Peter Moore takes you through the roads of Africa, less travelled. However, I was disappointed to read his version of the history of District Six in Cape Town as it was not the people now living in Kayalitsha and other townships who were moved, but the colored people from the Cape Flats. Although he has travelled Africa before writing this book, he made it clear that he will not do so again, as everything seems to have fallen into disrepair. I suppose I can identify with some of it as our own rainbow nation is busy losing its foothold so fast it is scary, but that is Africa. You either hate it or love it.

ashok says

I got this book as a gift. Unfortunately, I read a couple of chapters and hurled it across the room. You have to weep if this the state of travel writing. Someone needs to educate the author, with perhaps a book by Robert Byron.

If you are looking kindling -- this book will certainly make the cut.

Pussinbooks says

Screamingly funny - had me laughing out loud on the train.

This is the first of Moore's books I read - I then went on to read some of his others which had the same effect.

He has a real way with words, managing to describe the most mundane things in such a way that made me almost wet myself with laughter!

Emilie says

Really enjoyed this book, reminded me of all the crazy and slightly reckless positions I put myself in similar travels in Latin America....I particularly loved how Moore didn't mince words - if a place was shit, he had no gripes saying so. Makes me want to backpack again!

Nicole Hardy says

I enjoyed Peter Moore's writing and his mostly phlegmatic attitude towards his fellow travellers. Many hair-raising adventures and endless hot, dusty, exhausting journeys in death-trap vehicles. Fun. I would read something else by Mr Moore and would recommend this to anyone who enjoys travel or is interested in other countries/cultures, and to those who (like me) are just armchair globetrotters! Mr Moore's irreverance and good humour are really refreshing and just the thing if you're in a dark mood. (You can be glad you're not stuck on a broken down bus full of chickens on a steaming hot, muddy track, with nothing to eat or drink and no hope... That's sure to make you feel better!)
