



It's Not About the Tapas: A Spanish Adventure on Two Wheels

Polly Evans

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Single, stressed, and living amid the hustle and hurry of modern Hong Kong, Polly Evans had a vision: of mountains and orange groves, matadors and promenades—and of a glorious, hassle-free journey across Spain by bicycle. But like any decent dream, Polly's came with its own reality: of thighs screaming with pain and goats trying to derail her, of strange local delicacies and overzealous suitors. In fact, like any great traveler, Polly had bitten off more than she could chew—and would delight in every last taste of it.

Exploring the country that gave the world flamenco, chocolate, sherry, Franco, and Picasso, Polly takes us from the towering Pyrenees to the vineyards of Jerez de la Frontera, spinning tales of conquistadors and kings, vibrant history and mouthwatering cuisine. In the end, this hilarious, irreverent, always engaging memoir of a journey on two wheels unveils a lot about one modern woman, even more about an utterly fascinating nation, and countless reasons why it's better when you do it on a bike.

It's Not About the Tapas: A Spanish Adventure on Two Wheels Details

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Author : Polly Evans

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From Reader Review It's Not About the Tapas: A Spanish Adventure on Two Wheels for online ebook

Nan says

I skipped through the last half of the book because Evans gets rather mean-spirited about the residents of the small towns she stops in. She also seems to dislike retired people who go on holiday in the places she visits. This cycle of going to a new town, writing about how boring it is, disparaging the locals and making fun of elderly women's hair colors got old after 100 pages.

Her writing style is nothing new - it's the voice of the post- "Bridget Jones" 20 or 30 something female writer who's trying to be witty/funny/self-deprecating. Evans doesn't pull this off, and if anything comes across as a bit whiny and intolerant (and completely obsessed with losing weight and looking like a "real cyclist").

David says

* Cassette edition read by Lucy Scott. Pre Lance Armstrong coming clean.
Better than expected and not quite as "girly" as I was concerned it would be

JD AReader says

Soooo condescending. This lady cycles through Spain bashing everybody and everything she sees/experiences there. It's a pity since she may be able to write something good. Her writing could be fluid and humorous – sometimes. The historical information added was interesting – and the only reason I finished the book. Still, all these positive facts are overshadowed by her arrogance and distasteful disrespect!

Sally906 says

IT'S NOT ABOUT THE TAPAS is the first travel book written by Polly Evans from her series of adventures across the world. Set in Spain IT'S NOT ABOUT THE TAPAS was quickly joined by other travelogues set in South America, New Zealand, China and Canada. For some unknown reason this was the last of her books that I have read, and I am glad I saved it for last as I don't think it is her best work. She starts off really well and had me in stitches as she brings Hong Kong alive and her reasons for leaving. However, once she has purchased her bike and arrived in Spain she seems to change gear [pun intended] as she sets off on two wheels across the country.

I do like how she brings the history alive of each place she visits, and real interesting stuff too – not just facts and figures. Spain has a long, fascinating and often blood thirsty history. Unfortunately Evans is only able to skim the surface but the trip is her focus after all. I loved reading about the Queen who dragged her husband's dead and decaying body around Spain, another king who kept pickled heads (I kid you not!), as well as the history behind the Basque separatist movement, why pork is so popular, the origins of flamenco dancing and just how influential the Moorish civilisation was on Spain.

Trouble is, she spends quite a lot of time complaining about her experience. In her other books she meets some really extraordinary people and seems to like the people she meets despite the cultural differences. Evans seemed to not find much to interact with Spanish over, she seemed unhappy with the lodgings she picked, the towns she went to and the people she met. When she did see something that fascinated, such as the elderly pensioner ladies all dressed in black but with brightly tinted hair, her she related it with clarity and wit and brought the people alive.

Karen Bordner says

I love travelogues - books about people who go to a different countries than their own and write about it. But this book was horrible, tiring, boring.

Our author decides to leave her job in Hong Kong and bicycle through Spain. She arrives in Spain and discovers that the Pyrenees have mountains (surprise!) and the mountains are steep!

She begins her trip and finds NOTHING she likes about the country. ("... dull, dreary little towns. . .") All of the locals seem stupid or dirty. All of the little towns are dirty. The cheap hostels that she rents are not luxurious. She makes fun of the people who venerate the Virgin of Guadalupe.

She only describes the scenery in a couple of places, and that without any kind of music. She only shows contempt for the people of Spain. When someone tries to engage her in a conversation about cycling, she "escapes" from them. And then she gets lost. And her history lessons to the reader seem as if they are taken from the Encyclopedia Britannica or a tourist brochure.

She also could have used an editor. (". . .nowhere was open. . .") where exactly is "nowhere" and when does it close? There are no photos in this book - a book about travel. When I googled some of the towns, they appear quite lovely.

This is a terrible book. If you want a travelogue, read Willaim Least Heat Moon or Bill Bryson or any number of authors who have a respect for their subjects.

Madalene says

This bike travelogue of solo bike travel through Spain had a lot of fun parts, including little anecdotes about Spanish history that was perfect to read as I headed to Spain for the first time. The descriptions of the hills and navigating the maps was useful too, as I have no doubt that many solo women cyclists encounter lots of misinformation in a misguided attempt to keep them safe on the roads.

However, the book's main flaw is that the author spends a lot of time fat-shaming others on her journey, and commenting repeatedly on how pleased she is at dropping pant sizes through her six weeks of biking, while bragging about eating meals of chips and cokes back in her hotel room. I dare say she might have more pleasant interactions with the local Spaniards she encounters if she went out to local establishments and stopped judging their bodies instead of holing up alone for meals.

Leslie says

This was a hard read for me. I'm traveling to Spain in a few months and I liked the play-by-play descriptions of travel and tourism and sights and sounds, but Polly Evans is so disdainful of the locals and customs that it

made me feel bad. This book was a gift from someone who thought I would find it funny. A lot of other people have found it funny, so my reaction shouldn't be seen as the norm. I think the reason I didn't laugh was because I didn't find humor in ridiculing the people of Spain, who often came across as stupid and ugly.

Meghan says

I read this on the plane and it was a lovely travel and poolside paperback. Yes, some annoying and invigorating things happen. No, I would never be able to cycle up and down the Pyrenees in a million years. But, otherwise, it felt very much like something that could happen to anyone and without a terribly dramatic or romantic adventure. It doesn't seem to leave the author very much changes as a result and is generally enjoyable during but not a terribly memorable book.

Shauna says

[Of course, they were also planned in a time before she learner that "the word puerto meant **pain**". (hide spoiler)]

Laura says

An interesting little read. It's not very engaging and the author/narrator doesn't seem to have much personality other than to complain the entire away about animals, the landscape, the Spaniards, and everything else. She also has a very annoying tendency to become very condescending towards the various Spaniards she meets along the way, mocking them, their style of speech, how they talk, how they dress, right down to how they dye their hair. It made for a less than enjoyable read. The book redeemed itself with the absolutely fascinating historical tidbits about Spanish locals, legends, and cities. I learned more about the Moorish occupation of Spain than I could have imagined as well as the bits about the Spanish Civil War, bullfighting (bloody business that), and numerous artists. There was more personality in the historical parts than there were about the cyclist herself. Overall, not impressed, but does make me want to visit Spain all the more.

Sandy says

I gave Polly Evans' *It's Not About the Tapas* two stars because I liked the Rick Steves-esque treatment she gives the history of the regions she travels through. That is to say, she gives a tongue-in-cheek synopsis of historical events to keep things light and humorous, even if some of it is speculation.

What I found completely off putting about her story is the depiction other people she encounters. The only people "as good" as she is are her friends that visit for the last couple pages of the book, they are of course, perfect. If we are to believe Evans, Spaniards are everything from ignorant simpletons to insane zealots. Even other tourists don't meet her approval as she projects imagined personalities and values onto people she doesn't even bother to converse with. Sadly, even her own parents don't escape judgment.

While I suppose colorful personalities make for a more interesting story, it really isn't impressive to portray an entire country as fat morons.

Veronica says

A rather unpleasant little book which I skim-read. Polly Evans leaves her high-pressure job in Hong Kong to cycle 1,000 miles round Spain on her own. It's admirable to achieve this, but unfortunately Polly's brand of "humour" relies on sneering at everyone she meets because they are not up to the exacting standards set by her and her well-off, sophisticated friends. Crowded places are sneered at because they are full of tourists. Worse still, elderly tourists, who despite being wrinkly, ill-clad and with dyed hair, appear to be having a good time. Tiny villages in the countryside are sneered at because the streets are not lined with bars and restaurants and there's nothing for Polly to do (her leisure activities appear to be highly dependent on shopping). Hence their inhabitants must all be snivelling feckless peasants. Given how much she dislikes the countryside, one wonders why she chose such an itinerary.

She shows no empathy with anyone, or any desire to talk to the people she meets other than to demand food, drink, and hotel rooms, and then be dissatisfied with the result. She doesn't even have the excuse of not speaking the language, because she had lived and studied in Spain some years before. She claims to speak the language "after a fashion", enough to order a beer, but she's clearly better than that as she can eavesdrop on conversations between strangers. If you don't like foreigners or discovering other cultures, perhaps a career as a travel writer is the wrong choice.

The one good point about this book is that she covers events in Spanish history in a brief and fairly entertaining way. But it's not worth ploughing through the rest for these bits.

Rob Innis says

In my many years of living in Spain I have always found the locals in all parts of Spain as welcoming and friendly. Pity the author did not, don't know what her problem was. except that everything was not instantly available the minute she wanted it, but I was not enamoured with this book which really added very little positive to this hospitable country.

Jan J says

It was ok-kind'a dated.

Izzie says

Polly Evans is a biker and a storyteller. Even though I don't bike and knew almost nothing about Spain when I started, I enjoyed reading about her travel. Through her stories you pick up not only the local flavor but also some history. Glad I read it!

Greta says

Bike riding is a favorite exercise for me, especially along a beautiful lake or stream, but I would never want to do what Polly Evans accomplished in Spain on her bicycle. History of Spain, humor about her experiences traveling solo through Spain and food figure prominently. Loved her self-effacing sense of humor and her determination to accomplish her goal.

Regina Ebbesen says

Funny travel writing. I get associations to a female Bill Bryson. She comes with a lot of facts as she rides her bike through Spain. But just half of the facts and anecdotes are interesting. Most of the time a negative outlook on the Spanish people, which annoyed me a lot.

Kate Dalgleish says

Reading this book while travelling Spain is highly recommended :)

Sharyn says

I read this book because I am going to Spain and picked it for a book club where we read by topic, and this month is travel. Ms. Evans decides to cycle 1000 miles through Spain. The history sections of the places she visits were interesting, but I didn't find much humor in her descriptions of the people in the small villages she visits.

Lisa says

I wasn't very impressed with this book. Unless you want to know all about the history of Spain... from somewhat recent history, to the 1400's, then you might enjoy this... It was a little too heavy on the history for my likings...
