



Kiwis Might Fly

Polly Evans

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NEW YORK TIMES BESTSELLER

Polly Evans was a woman with a mission. Before the traditional New Zealand male hung up his sheep shears for good, Polly wanted to see this vanishing species with her own eyes. Venturing into the land of giant kauri trees and smaller kiwi birds, she explores the country once inhabited by fierce Maori who carved their enemies' bones into cutlery, bushwhacking pioneers, and gold miners who lit their pipes with banknotes—and comes face-to-face with their surprisingly tame descendants. So what had become of the mighty Kiwi warrior?

As Polly tears through the countryside at seventy-five miles an hour, she attempts to solve this mystery while pub-crawling in Hokitika, scaling the Southern Alps, and enduring a hair-raising stay in a mining town where the earth has been known to swallow houses whole. And as she chronicles the thrills and travails of her extraordinary odyssey, Polly's search for the elusive Kiwi comes full circle—teaching her some hilarious and surprising lessons about motorcycles, modern civilization, and men.

Kiwis Might Fly Details

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Memoir

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From Reader Review **Kiwis Might Fly** for online ebook

Marilyn says

Ms. Evans has written an entertaining account of her motorcycle exploration of New Zealand, told with a great sense of humor and more than a little British reserve. She is constantly taken aback by how polite and friendly New Zealanders are, and does not seem taken with trying to be friendly herself. But her description of the country, and of her eventual success at conquering her extreme fear of the motorcycle, makes for an engrossing read. Looking for the ultimate Kiwi bloke was fun too. Read this book if you have a New Zealand trip in your future. It gives some excellent tips on places to see, stay and eat.

Sally906 says

After she read that the stereotypical Kiwi male was a dying species, Polly Evans got herself a motorcycle licence then flew to the other side of the world for a journey around New Zealand to see if she could still find examples of the hard-living, hard-drinking, ingenious New Zealand bloke of pioneer days.

I have read some of Polly's previous books – Fried Eggs with Chopsticks, Mad Dogs with an English woman and On a Hoof and a Prayer – and really enjoyed them. In **KIWIS MIGHT FLY** Polly Evans decides, despite having no previous motor biking experience, to hire a 600cc road bike and ride New Zealand from top to bottom. She gets her licence on a sedate little motor bike only days before departing England and is quite overwhelmed when she first meets her two-wheeled travel companion. Still, she is not game to say it scares her and that she is a novice, and so she accepts delivery and sets off.

There are two journeys in the book; the first one is Polly's journey to be a proper bike rider. As we read how she talks, reasons and pleads with the bike; it becomes an important back story and results in a series of unplanned adventures and some hilarious problems. The second journey is the search for the real New Zealand male. Is he a myth, a SNAG or he-man?

Polly Evans meets some really interesting people, both male and female. As is her customary style, she relates pertinent, and often unusual, historical facts to give her readers background information. She starts in the north island with giant trees, sweaty Santa's in Auckland, through boiling mud pools in Rotorua, and then finishes in the museum and café society of Wellington. In the second half of the book she travels by ferry to the south island and meets rugged men turned tour guides, and weather that doesn't listen to the daily forecast. She finishes in the beautiful, more English than England, city of Christchurch.

I think she treated Christchurch unfairly my experience of the place was that if my husband said let's move there I would have the house packed in 2 hours or less!!! We travelled from north to south only a year or two after Polly, and both thought Christchurch was a wonderful city and by far our most favourite of New Zealand. Polly made a few surprisingly derogatory comments of various places, which I felt was a bit unfair seeing as she only spent what seemed like 2 minutes there. I am surprised that anyone could go to Queenstown and not mention the glorious wineries in the region.

I have the only book of hers I haven't read ready to go. **IT'S NOT ABOUT THE TAPAS** is about her bicycle trip around Spain. I have this loaded on my Kindle to read on my upcoming trip to New Zealand

Jess Neuner says

Despite a rather shaky excuse for the trip (a newspaper article mentioned that the quintessential 'Kiwi bloke' was a dying species and she flew all the way to New Zealand to find out for herself), this was a great read. I've recently been to New Zealand myself and was delighted to revisit the country in my imagination, even if I can't go back just yet.

I was much more interested in the author's journey to becoming a competent motorbiker and her increasing connection to New Zealand than I was in the 'Kiwi bloke' search. The stereotypical Kiwi bloke was really nothing more than a stereotype, anyway - no one person was ever going to have all of those traits, even if many had some. Ignoring those bits, however, the book was an adventure around one of the most beautiful countries in the world. There's a lot more to explore than can be seen even in a few months and no book can truly convey how amazing a place it is, but this one comes close.

At least the search for the stereotypical Kiwi bloke led the author to meet a wide variety of people, of all different walks of Kiwi life. As much as one can in a single book, the author was able to give a good insight into the people that make up New Zealand, even if it really was just the tip of the iceberg. There's so much to learn and explore - I'm eager to go back!

Alex says

Being a Kiwi made this book interesting being able to picture all the places she went to in my head but I found it much more interesting when she was riding around Spain on a bicycle then New Zealand on a motorcycle.

silfanny says

This book appealed to me a lot because I've been to New Zealand. Lived there for onee year in fact so I know what's she's talking about in her book and laugh at it because it was so true. Like her writing style. Am thinking of reading her other books as well

Diane says

A fun read about a 32-year old London woman who rents a fast bike in New Zealand and tours North & South, looking for the personification of the real Kiwi bloke. Along the way, she battles and comes to terms with a bike too fast and powerful for a novice, one-lane railroad/car bridges and sheep.

While the search for a real manly man grew old quickly, I thoroughly enjoyed Evans' view of New Zealand's roads, attractions and towns. I laughed at her when she finally realized that no one in New Zealand cares

about the weather report because a) it's always wrong, b) people do what they do rain, snow, wind or shine, c) life is to be enjoyed, whatever comes.

So, if you're thinking about going to New Zealand, have been there, or just are curious about the land and its people, Kiwis Might Fly is a quick and pleasant read.

yo says

A little silly, but overall entertaining and full of interesting information about New Zealand.

Phair says

Premise for this grand tour of New Zealand was to find that vanishing species: the 'Original Kiwi bloke' who has largely been superceded by the caring, sensitive, considerate male. There were some good descriptions of the wide variety of NZ landscape but it was not as vivid and interesting as it could have been. Her 'study' kept intruding and there was far too much about herself and her experiences as a motorbiking novice.

Having had a New Zealand pen-pal for many years as a teen I was fairly familiar with the country but I'm not sure the writing here could convey much to the uninitiated. And there were no pictures & bare minimum map. Enjoyed her tour of Spain but was sadly disappointed in this one.

Mary Glass says

Long, winding road with a view

You take a trip with a good friend. There are moments of great fun and closeness and moments of irritation. The whole motorcycle issue made me a little mad. Just foolish. A nut. And the leathers. A vain nut. And the whole snarky Kiwi Bloke angle. A vain nut on the make? But, no! Our own fighting Polly is a far better lass than that! She covers a great deal of ground pretty well. History, geography, major spots and things to do all covered. Not a bad trip, after all.

Karen Banks says

I'm finished this book because I'm abandoning it. I have read three other Polly Evans books and thoroughly enjoyed two of them -- I didn't like parts of Fried Egg and Chopsticks because I did not believe Evans actually like China and it colored her writing in a negative way. But the whole premise of Kiwis Might Fly is finding the real New Zealand male who has, according to Evans, become emasculated (liberally paraphrasing Evans). And Evans riding a top of the line model motorcycle the entire time, even though she has just received her motorcycle license (after her second attempt), is ridiculous. She can't handle the bike at all. After 62 pages of this, I've had enough. What a disappointment.

Barbara says

LOVED IT! Ok, partly because I loved my own experience in NZ and eat up anything that takes me back again. This was my first encounter with Polly Evans -- it was a gift from Lesley in England, before it made the shelves here in the US. Even her early comments about learning to ride a motorcycle, and getting to know her rental in NZ, had me laughing out loud! The search for the last Kiwi bloke--well, great framework for the rest of her travels. She's a great observer, marrying the odd and unusual with bits of history, good story-telling and...well, it's just fun. My only "beef" was her complaint about getting to Paradise (beyond the end of Lake Wakatipu) but not sure it was really there. It was one of my favorite spots but yes, it's nearly the end of the road. I'd say, Polly, get off the bike and have the blokes from Dart River Safaris take you on a jet boat upriver!

Radford Secondary Library says

When Polly Evans read a survey claiming that the last bastion of masculinity, the real Kiwi bloke, was about to breathe his last, she was seized by a sense of foreboding. Abandoning the London winter she took off on a motorbike for the windswept beaches and golden plains of New Zealand, hoping to root out some examples of this endangered species for posterity. But her challenges didn't stop at the men. Just weeks after passing her test, Polly rode from Auckland's glitzy Viaduct Basin to the vineyards of Hawkes Bay and on to the Southern Alps. She found wild kiwis in the dead of night, kayaked among dolphins at dawn, and spent an evening on a remote hillside with a sheep-shearing gang. As she travelled, Polly reflected on the Maori warriors who carved their enemies' bones into cutlery, the pioneer family who lived in a tree, and the flamboyant gold miners who lit their pipes with five-pound notes, and wondered how their descendants have become pathologically obsessed with helpfulness and Coronation Street.

Jenny says

Fun book. I envy Polly's independence. I'm no good at traveling and really don't enjoy it but I love hearing about the places she visits and what she sees and does. I think This was one of her better ones I've read so far.

Michael Seeds says

A man would not admit that he dropped his motorcycle and could not lift it back up, but Evans takes us along on her motorcycle tour in search of a true Kiwi bloke. The charm of the book is the people she meets and the insights she gives us into the character of New Zealand.

Nancy Lewis says

Polly Evans can tell an engaging tale, but she throws superfluous junk into her stories. Endless descriptions of pumping gas, pages of driving down a dirt road just so she can tell us she made a u-turn. Here's her anecdote about getting carded at the liquor store:

"The checkout girl looked blank. She had clearly never seen a British driving license before. She screwed up her pimply nose... 'And there's my date of birth,' I jabbed my wrinkled finger at the spot, 'nineteen seventy.' The girl looked vaguely confused - she didn't have thirty-two fingers to count with - and ran the beer over the scanner."

But the rest of the book is pretty interesting, so if you're prepared to skim over the rants, it's a good read.

Brad says

Polly Evans is a big whiner. But it's kind of cute actually.

Whether she is complaining about the sixty school boys with whom she had to share her time in Rotorua or complaining about the cross winds while riding a bike much too big for her, she's got an affability about her gloominess that suggests at least some part of it is a put on.

Her personality makes *Kiwis Might Fly* a manipulatively calculated adventure story unlike any travel book I've read before (although I am, admittedly, a neophyte when it comes to travel books). You see, Evans hangs her journey on the weak premise that she's seeking the nearly extinct "classic Kiwi bloke."

He's the inventive Kiwi male with the chauvinistic pioneering spirit who can build airplanes in his backyard shed with wire, and he can tough it out through earthquakes and rainstorms and twenty foot waves. He's the hardened man of no sentiment who indulges in hard drinking and hard carousing after a day of hard sheep shearing.

Before her trip, Evans read in a London newspaper that the "Kiwi bloke" was an endangered species, so she wanted to fly out and see for herself. But all that is just an excuse really: an excuse to learn to ride a motorbike, an excuse to spend three months sightseeing New Zealand's islands, an excuse to travel and write her third in a series of travel books.

The annoying thing is that any of those three reasons would have been enough for her to make her trip without pretense. Hanging her trip on the idea of the "Kiwi bloke" is unnecessary and often pretty forced. Still, the pretense makes for some decent humour; I even found myself laughing out loud once or twice. But the humour gleaned from the "Kiwi bloke" really isn't enough to justify its presence in the book.

That is not to say, however, that *Kiwis Might Fly* is bad. When Evans focuses on her struggle to become a biker on her rented Suzuki or relates her outdoor adventures in kayaking, fishing, hiking and shooting, her book comes alive and reads as a convincing and entertaining piece of subtle tourist propaganda, making New Zealand worth a visit for far more than its connection to *The Lord of the Rings*.

Evans also delivers a sort of people's history of the places she passes through, and those are my favourite

parts of Kiwis Might Fly. She offers everything from the greater history of New Zealand's two waves of settlement, first the Maori then the Europeans, to local histories of pubs on rivers, families who lived in trees, and family ducks being eaten by family dogs. And she grounds it all in the people she meets, and the people who came before.

It's nothing like a comprehensive history of New Zealand, but Evans offers a great place to start; indeed, her book is a perfect catalyst for anyone who has any interest in New Zealand. It will spur you on to further reading, have you surfing the internet for photos of Te Papa or volcanoes or bird watching, and even get you started on your travel visa so you can see the wonders of the islands for yourself.

New Zealand tourism must love Polly Evans.

Sonatajessica says

Sweet, sweet nostalgia! I never rode a motorcycle in my life but I was right there as a passenger with Polly on her trip through New Zealand, revisiting and even discovering a couple of places I missed in my own days backpacking Kiwiland.

This is a light, fun travel book and I quite like that, it has something of a female Bill Bryson. She isn't quite as funny, I chuckled more than I actually laughed but her approach to the journey grew on me so I could overlook one or two over whingey comments. Mostly I enjoyed this trip because it reminded me so much of my own, so many details made me go "yeah, that's what it was like down there", I have to see how her style holds up for me when I don't know and love the place so much. But since she found a good enough mix of webbing (historical) facts and cute and/or odd anecdotes with her descriptions of the place I am quite curious about her Argentina adventure. Sure, she didn't get 'everything' in this book but that is okay, who can do that anyway, get it all into your travel experience? But she delivers a decent and charming description of this rough yet beautiful and heartwarming country, she gives her own preferences and dislikes rather than praising everything, I like that, that is believable and personal, that is how my own travelogue was like. Plus, she puts a nice own agenda into her descriptions, first her experiences on learning to ride the motorbike and conquering the roads on two wheels (which was entertaining to me), second her search for the real manly Kiwi bloke (which got annoying very quickly). So, don't expect the 'perfect' travel book (whatever that means anyway) but go with her on the ride when you miss NZ or are simply curious about this wonderful, adventurous land.

Cheers, Mate!!

Anna says

I don't know why Polly Evans needed the straw man of looking for a macho kiwi male (that we wouldn't like anyway) instead of a straight up travel memoir by a newly minted and therefore, inexperienced, motorcycle rider. Kiwis Might Fly is very funny and quite wryly observed. Pity that she didn't like Christchurch though (especially since she got to see it pre-earthquake) since it really is/was a lovely city. My favourite chapter was her visit to Stewart Island and it really made me want to go there.

Rebecca says

Completely uninspired New Zealand travelogue with two gimmicks -- riding a motorcycle cross-country, searching for the endangered Kiwi "bloke" -- that she seems to forget until she needs a segue. One cliche after another, a bundle of random events tied up together and published. blugh.

MB (What she read) says

Advertised as a travel adventure to discover Kiwi blokes, this turns out to be mostly 'what Polly did'. A few sentences here and there with flat and minimal character details do not satisfy, or rise to the level as advertised.

However, having been indoctrinated with Essie Summers' harlequins at an early age, all extolling the wonders of New Zealand, (and it's hunky menfolk), it's kind of interesting to read a modern and non-fictional version.

Readers who enjoy travel writing similar to Bill Bryson, Sarah Vowell or J. Marten Troost may enjoy this, although the humor is not quite so evident.
