



## **South from the Limpopo: Travels Through South Africa**

*Dervla Murphy*

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Dervla Murphy's journal of her cycle tours of South Africa in 1994 gives a day-by-day view of that period. When Dervla first pedalled across the Limpopo she fancied that she "understood" South Africa's problems because for more than 40 years she had - from a distance - taken an interest in them. Twelve hours later that illusion was shattered. This text reflects her moods of confusion and elation, hope and disappointment as she tries to come to terms with a country even more complex and fractured - but also more flexible - than she had expected. The journey of more than 6000 miles took her through all nine provinces of the new South Africa. As the months passed she came to realize how simplistic it is to see South Africa's conflict as only "black versus white".

## **South from the Limpopo: Travels Through South Africa Details**

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Author : Dervla Murphy

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## **From Reader Review South from the Limpopo: Travels Through South Africa for online ebook**

### **Dovofthegalilee says**

Informative but dated it is another attempt by Murphy to capture a segment of time. It was too long for me but I did finish it.

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### **Emma says**

Always liked this writer, until she travelled the area that I personally know. Her style, her range and details were still impressive, but some of her quick judgements based on truly wrong facts, started me doubting, whether I could trust her as a travel writer. Her division of good and bad runs very close to the line Black and White. A rather cliched approach and politics based (I suspect) on politically correct opinion books and popular articles. I can cope with that, I suspect that a lot of travel writers have do that. In a limited time one can only experience that much at first hand and personally. And in this case I myself can correct the faulty contents in my head. I am not talking about her opinion, I am referring to factual content. The way she thinks about South Africans, black white or purple is her full right.

But the big problem with this book is that I now have to distrust the contents of her other books, which I mostly enjoyed. Were they based on correct facts? In a way I am truly sorry I read this book. It spoiled the others.

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### **Roger says**

Dervla Murphy cycles several thousand miles around South Africa on the cusp of the vote that made Mandela president. She's an engaging character, writes well, and has an interestingly balanced take on the end of the apartheid era.

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### **Diane says**

I really enjoy Dervla Murphy's approach to travel writing – she rides a bicycle, drinks beer with the locals, talks with all sorts of people, and is very tolerant of different opinions and approaches to life. This book is about her travels around South Africa at the very end of apartheid in 1993. She returns for the elections and returns again to see what has happened a few months after the election of Mandela in 1994.

I nearly stopped reading after 72 pages – so many acronyms and an entire social-political system I knew so little about that I could almost not follow the text. But, then the real Dervla showed up. After she begins talking with people and telling their stories, I really enjoyed the book and felt I learned quite a bit about the history and the life of many different people in South Africa. I enjoyed her stay in the black "slum" of

Khayelitsha. I also was impressed that she genuinely liked many of the Afrikaners she met, even though she differed greatly from them in her political views. And, of course, her bicycle adventures and her great appreciation of nature are always of interest. I liked learning just a little bit about her personal life when she visits her daughter lives in Mozambique. I was also a bit shocked when she admitted to not knowing how to change her own bike tires or I suppose tyres since she is Irish.

An unexpected treat was a bit of history about Redvers Buller during the Boer War. My father always told me that my Uncle George was going to be named Redvers Buller because he was born on the day Buller led the relief at Ladysmith (February 28, 1900). I think my grandmother insisted on George instead. I need David McCullough to write a book about the Boer War(s).

I think the book is a good place to start learning about South Africa today. I am not sure what my next book should be in that area.

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### **Sarah says**

A large portion of all of Murphy's travel books deal with the physical nitty-gritty details of travel itself, parts of her books show an insight into people's struggles that is not always seen in travel books.

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### **Rebecca says**

this woman is totally crazy but a very interesting book...

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### **Dedra says**

A little slower to read...same continent...you have to keep remembering that this is a 50-something year old woman riding her bike through these countries..

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### **Tuck says**

unbelievably bad ass old granny who rides her bike from limpopo river up in the northeast corner of SA and down and around all over to capetown in the southwest. the audacity of that alone is pretty cool, but then of course in south africa you don't only have to deal with weird ass bugs, awe inspiring landscapes, and electric fences, but also the people, which will pretty much blow anybody's mind. 14 official languages, huge, tragic geography of race, huge tragic poverty, huge tragic wealth.

and this lady pretty much rides her bike unassisted through it all. she's one bad hombre irish lady. and a good writer.

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## **Jean Grant says**

I liked the book but it wasn't as evocative as her book on Ethiopia. I found the diary entries a bit ho-hum occasionally. Still I learned a lot. I wish she'd cut it by ten percent and it would have been brilliant.

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## **Marcus says**

An extraordinary story of Dervla's ride through South Africa. Insightful and descriptive of the land and it's people.

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## **Jody says**

This one took me forever to read. I was about to give up at the 100 page mark, but it engaged me in a few tidbits that kept me going. I picked it up at the library when looking for travel guides to South Africa for our impending (at the time) trip.

It is a memoir of an Irish 'Granny' who bicycles through South Africa in three separate trips. First pre-election March - August 1993. Second, during election April 1994. Third, post election September - December 1994. Needless to say, each time was during significant social and political activity throughout the country as well as significant unrest and violence. (Although maybe NOT as much tension as in the thick of the anti-apartheid movement)

She spent time with all types of people and spoke with them about how they were feeling and what they believed about their country in its current state. She was able to cross the great divide and spend time with black and coloured people as a white woman. (She defined at the beginning of the book that she used the term 'blacks' to refer to native Africans and 'coloured' to refer to those of mixed race. A significant difference at the time... and maybe still.) Because of this effort to engage everyone who was willing, it seemed that she was able to get to the heart of what real people believed and how they lived. Obviously, not all of them, but it included the good, the bad and the ugly. This information is what kept me going. Currently, I can't imagine a scenario where I would be able to gather that information directly. Like Isabella Bird, she made this trek alone. In the process, she is warned a million and one times not to go where she was going due to the risk of violence. I'm not sure if that can be called bravery, but it is something.

There were two segments of the book of particular significance to me. First was a chapter where she spent an escorted week in one of the informal settlements outside of Cape Town. Again, I'd love to experience that, but I can't imagine how it would come about that I would be able to. (I think it would be in line with the principle that from afar we could never accurately judge how us privileged people can truly help those that are living in extreme poverty in a useful way and how they want to be helped.) Second, was a description of her visit to the Voortrekker Monument in Pretoria. (We had talked about going to it, but didn't. Now I'm glad.)

Bottom line, I'm glad I stuck it out, because, again, it gave me insight I'm not likely to gain any other way. I wonder how much has changed in the last 7 years since she has been there. It doesn't seem like much. I will continue to seek more info because my thoughts are now frequently engaged in contemplating what would help this young country keep moving forward, especially since I'm personally connected to it now. As I've been saying since I returned, apartheid may not be law anymore... but there is certainly still significant segregation and limited opportunities.

The reason I found the book difficult to get through was that it needed some further editing. There was much ado about stuff of little significance, so if you are going to pick it up... be prepared to be dedicated to the

topic.

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### **Amerynth says**

I absolutely loved Murphy's "Full Tilt" about her ride to India on a bicycle, so I really looked forward to reading "South from the Limpopo" about her bicycle trips in South Africa. However, I found this book really paled in comparison to "Full Tilt." She visits South Africa several times as Apartheid ends and Mandela is elected president. The focus on politics made the book extremely repetitive as she talks politics with most everyone she meets and generally encounters the same opinions amongst members of the same racial groups. There is a bit of alphabet soup as she refers to political parties and assumes you have more knowledge about South African politics than I do. I think this would be a great book for someone who has studied South African politics, but for someone with more superficial knowledge, this book drags.

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### **Matt says**

Very long read... but I stuck with it and I feel it did offer some good insights... I later recommended it to my sister before she traveled to South Africa.

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### **Joe says**

"Often my experiences here have been emotionally grueling - some verging on the traumatic...", Dervla Murphy states as she closes out her novel. I think most reader's will feel close to the same after experiencing her 400-page journey through South Africa before, during, and after Apartheid has been struck down during the early 1990's.

I went into this book expecting a travel book, but in reality it's a story about a country divided, coming together amidst massive political changes. By the end, I was somewhat exhausted trying to keep track of all the different cultures, political factions, tribes, ideologies, racism, violence, and vocabulary to describe all of it. The situation there at that time seems hopeless and many times I felt as if South Africa is succumbing to anarchy. It's apparent from this book that despite a positive change in political climate for a country, not all is right or functioning well. Placed next to any other country on the planet, this book is a mirror of the struggle for people's independence against a greedy, oppressive political landscape. While there's hope conveyed, overall, I found this book to be quite depressing.

I will say this - Dervla Murphy has some major "cajones", as I can not imagine myself traveling by bicycle through that region, let alone an elderly woman by herself.

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