



Vagrant Viking: My Life and Adventures

Peter Freuchen, Johan Hambro (Translator)

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Peter Freuchen, a Danish arctic adventurer, writes with the friendliest style you could possibly imagine while narrating absolutely harrowing adventures he experienced alone in arctic Greenland. He was the first man to cross the central glacier alone--eskimos didn't feel the need--yet the kindness of his style makes you feel that you could have attempted the feat yourself. Maybe you could, now, with the help of his insights... and a few years in Thule with an eskimo wife. But his insights would be no less necessary after such experience. Humans learn best from stories told by their loved ones, these stories will be useful to those who brave the arctic and you will love Peter Freuchen like a grandfather after reading this book.

Vagrant Viking: My Life and Adventures Details

Date : Published 1953 by Julian Messner, Inc.

ISBN :

Author : Peter Freuchen , Johan Hambro (Translator)

Format : Hardcover 422 pages

Genre : Nonfiction, Biography, Travel, Autobiography, Memoir, History



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From Reader Review Vagrant Viking: My Life and Adventures for online ebook

Phrodrick says

Among the best things that can happen when reading the book is to be taken to a new world and share the experience of adventuring in this strange place. Peter Freuchen's Vagrant Viking; My life and adventures takes us into several strange places and takes us on adventures almost impossible to duplicate. The world of Peter Freuchen is earth beginning just over 120 years ago.

Freuchen will take us from his birth in pre-20th century Denmark through a life in Greenland as far from modern American city life as the moon is and then through a variety of experiences including a Hollywood movie maker, an operative in the Danish underground during World War II before becoming a relatively sedate journalist and speaker.

The years spent in Greenland are spent among the native Eskimo where he learned to live like and respect their ways. Much of this is not for the faint hearted. In a place of extreme starvation and limited food, mass whale killings and a diet of your own sled dogs are the not the least usual events. Life and death decisions have to be made even at the expense of family members and sometimes people are left behind. Part of survival in the wastes of Greenland includes paying close attention to the people who have learned to take the worst of luck and the best of it and laugh at both.

Among the local habits is one of self-depreciation. Given how often strangers meet and how little defense a person can have from a more powerful stranger, the locals have a ritual of communicating how little they have and how poor the quality. No one would say of their home or of their food cache that it is sufficient or plentiful.

Among the last of Freuchen's adventures in Greenland will be a cross country trek that will result in him freezing one of his feet. Months later when he is able to get western treatment for this problem, he will lose that leg.

This brings us to the middle third of this book. It is odd that this portion will be the least interesting. During this time he will write and act in a movie, travel across the Trans-Siberian Railroad and make himself unpopular with the Nazi government in Germany. For anyone else these stories would be exciting. Even his stories in the last third of the book; about participating in the Danish underground after his country is invaded by Germany lack the riveting impact of life in Greenland.

Throughout Freuchen's writing style is engaging and undramatic. A bear wanders into a cave where his team is sleeping off a major storm, so long as the dogs stay quiet, there is no need to get excited. Suddenly find yourself on an Ice floe? With no way to land? Wait it out, this is just another day at the office. In this way it is insufficient to know the broad arch of this man's life.

What carries the book are the details of his word. He will befriend and depend on the people of Greenland, even as others despise these same people as savages. Freuchen will meet and befriend other great adventurers like Ronald Amundsen, and be used by a variety of unscrupulous other people. His litany of items collected across the new Soviet Russia and will never be seen again, becomes a punchline and not the complaint of a victim. Whatever befalls him, he is never a victim.

This is not the best of Peter Freuchen, there are too many stories. At times one can feel overcome by the flow of events. A large part of what Freuchen did in Greenland was to make maps, yet there are no good maps included. Perhaps he got in the habit of ignoring years but the book needed a few references to dates and once he moves into his life in the prewar years, he should have included more reference to events in the large world to provide better context to what he was doing and what was happening around him.

There are more Peter Freuchen books. Vagrant Viking and the others need to be if not back in print, at least on Kindle. These are great stories, better for the fact that they are true. Peter Freuchen was a giant among us and we could use some wonder at the life of an adventurer.

DropOfOcean says

Very interesting biography as life of Peter Freuchen was very colourful. You get the impression that the man was full of energy. Always going somewhere, always doing something. He had not only hair raising adventures in arctic, he was also talented and imaginative writer, war hero and most importantly a nice human being. This book slightly overlaps with another book of Freuchen where he writes about his youth in Greenland and this is rather small minus.

Geza Borbely says

At the beginning of the book you have the impression that Peter is making up all of his stories. But as time passes, you realise, that no one could possibly make up so many fascinating lies. At the end you just have to give in and enjoy the ride.

What I have learnt from this book in the first place is that: "nothing venture, nothing win".

Joanne McGirr says

Completely fascinating and couldn't put it down , the adventures in one lifetime are way off the scale . Brilliant .

Melissa says

If I only accomplish a third of what Peter Freuchen accomplished in his lifetime I shall be very happy. Except for the self-amputation of part of his own foot. I'll leave that well enough alone. Freuchen led an incredibly exciting life and this book is one that is hard to put down.

Vagrant Viking is Freuchen's autobiography. Born in Denmark, he was a disturbing child that performed many hijinks. As he grew up, he realized University was not for him and instead joined an expedition to Greenland and the arctic. Here he would stay many years running a trading post and marrying, but Greenland wasn't the last of his travels and he also went to Siberia and to Hollywood to make movies. During World War II he was part of the resistance and was arrested several times by the Gestapo. And those are only some

of his stories.

If this book was only about Freuchen it would still be remarkable. He did so much with his life and made an impact on so many people. While I think he was a little socio-pathic as a youth, he grew out of that and helped a lot of people. Most of the people he mentions in this book are spoken of fondly. He obviously loved his first wife, Navarana, and missed her deeply when she died. His second wife, Magda, was more distant and based on his descriptions I'm not sure what he saw in her. She certainly didn't have any redeeming qualities that I could see. His third wife, Dagmar, also didn't play much of a role in the book, but at least seemed a stronger person than Magda. People you knew he definitely didn't like were Hitler's regime. As part of the underground movement, he made a lot of trouble for the Gestapo in Denmark.

Freuchen goes on a lot of adventures in this book. Some of them good, some of them bad, and he comes close to dying a few times. But that doesn't stop him. I like the way he added such detail to his books. You get the full effect of the taste of rotting seal or the fear of hiding from the Germans. Freuchen gets his emotions across very well. And while some of these descriptions might not be for everyone (the aforementioned seal), I hazard a guess that everyone will find something they like in this book. Just the section on Hollywood and his experiences making movies was exciting. I now want to find his Eskimo movie and watch it as he does actually act in it.

A fantastic life and I'm glad he shared it with us. Between this book and the Book of the Eskimos I read from him, I'm very much now a fan.

Vagrant Viking
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414 pages

Review by M. Reynard 2013

More of my reviews can be found at www.ifithaswords.blogspot.com

Billis says

Whatever the offer, he of course gave his immediate assent, then embarked. Straight ahead go-get'um character, fascinating little vignettes, a guest at the villa dives into the pool and slams her head on an alligator hiding there, a bizarre soviet sojourn, films and flights, and no reflection on the writing of the writings that pay for it all. What kind of mind did this man have?

Ben says

While this was a slow read for me I greatly enjoyed the time I spent deep in Freuchen's life. I stumbled upon who this man was from just a picture. This picture pulled me in and made me want to know more about who I saw. I was not disappointed in the least explorer, author, filmmaker, outspoken Nazi opponent the list just continues. Freuchen writes in a very calm but interesting manner providing a look at other cultures I had never put much thought into. An interesting person all around and a true BAMF.

Scott Perron says

Real life adventure at its best.

Liz says

This is an autobiography that continually leaves the reader wondering how all this could possibly happen to one person. The first solo crossing of the central glacier of Greenland, amputates his own foot, working with Hollywood producers to make a movie in Alaska, helping refugees from Hitler and so much more.

The authors writing style is fantastic, he doesn't portray any of these events as extraordinary, but rather writes about them as matter of fact. It's refreshing to read about the facts and events without feeling like the author is boasting the the rest of us mere mortals.
