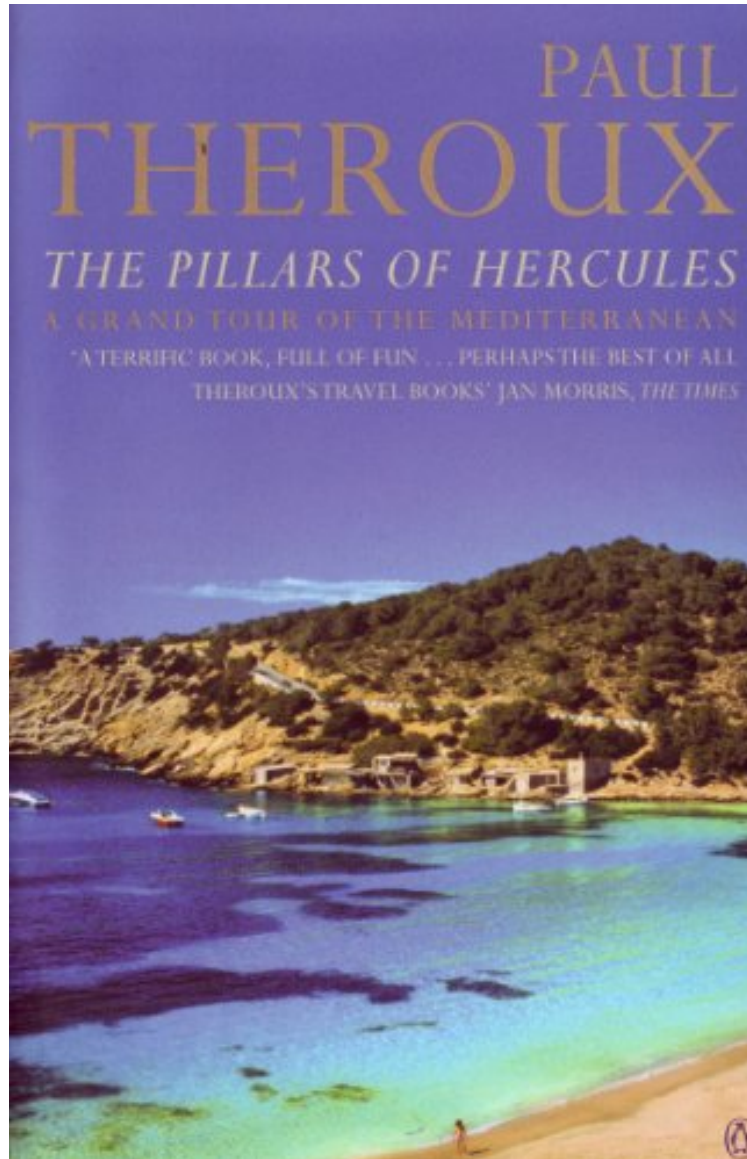


[FREE] The Pillars of Hercules: A Grand Tour of the Mediterranean

## The Pillars of Hercules: A Grand Tour of the Mediterranean

Von Paul Theroux

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**Von Paul Theroux : The Pillars of Hercules: A Grand Tour of the Mediterranean** before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised The Pillars of Hercules: A Grand Tour of the Mediterranean:

KundenrezensionenHilfreichste Kundenrezensionen3 von 3 Kunden fanden die folgende Rezension hilfreich. a good writer and a lousy travelerVon HeidiI must admit I enjoy reading Theroux for his verbal wit, astute observations and

linguistic acrobatics. As a traveler, however, the man is a complete failure. In a sense, he doesn't really travel at all: He surrounds himself with a bubble of his arrogant American expectations and never bothers to take a step out of it. In a way, he has never really BEEN to the places he writes about. In this sense, he is not unlike those spoiled rich folks floating around in their luxury cruise ship gazing at the mediterranean world through rose-colored glasses, except that HIS glasses are an especially ugly shade of gray. Maybe he should give up traveling altogether- it appears to make him profoundly unhappy- and write humour columns for newspapers instead- a la Dave Barry. He'd be good at that.

0 von 0 Kunden fanden die folgende Rezension hilfreich. TALENTED WRITTING OR POLITICALLY WRONG?:

BOTH Von Ein Kunde Mr. Theroux is making an attempt to achieve something very difficult; to make a trip through lands of different culture, history and political status and describe their people, mentality and way of life. I followed his path step by step. Sometimes feeling like a secret fellow traveler somewhere hidden in the same bus, the same train the same ship. I passed through lands I have never visited and his eyes became my eyes. I was discovering paths and myths I had never encountered. New worlds revealed to me: Spain, Sardinia, Croatia, Albania, Turkey. Apart from that, I was expecting to cure my homesickness; to virtually visit my motherland Greece and walk together with Paul Theroux into the same streets I had grown up, look the same sunsets and smell again a scent, just a scent, of the classical dream. On the contrary his view on our country frightened me. Through his eyes the sun became black and the people ugly, aggressive, illiterate and dirty. Through his descriptions monuments became pissed stones. In his 200 Km bus trip, only shepherds existed. It is not my intention to judge a famous and distinguished writer whose writing always excited me. The writer has the freedom to reflect his thoughts into the paper and his eye is always valuable and welcomed whatever unfair we feel it is. I would only like to discuss certain parts which I find to be politically incorrect and kindly contribute some ignored information. In page 326 the author claims that 'The Greeks were not Greek, but rather the illiterate descendants of Slavs and Albanian fishermen (sic!)' and 'Beyond the headland was the Greek island of Chios, where Homer was born - if there was a Homer (sic!)' (p.355) According to that, not only the modern Greeks do not exist, but probably not even the ancient ones. The above is a surprising statement since it is very difficult for a two day village visitor to conclude on the cultural and historical continuity of a whole nation during the centuries. It is also notable and rather unexpected ! for an educated man like Mr. Theroux, that his travel to Greece he does not even visit one of the 1614 museums, or at least a theater performance and an exhibition. 'many words that we think of as distinctively Greek are in fact Turkish: kebab, doner, kofta...' : all Turkish.' (p.332) In fact most of these Turkish food nouns are not used at all in Greek and in any case, it can not eliminate the contribution of the Ancient Greek in thousands of words of the western languages. The above especially applies in science and medicine or words starting with (ana, anti, para, ev, syn)- (i.e. anaesthetic, antithesis, paranoia, parameter, evangelist, synopsis, apart from other words such as economics, electronics, stereotype, geography or Europe) - the tasteful kofta cannot change that. 'After almost two thousand years of neglect, during which Greek ruins had been pissed on ...- the ones that were not hauled away (indeed rescued for posterity) by people like Lord Elgin...' It is true that the marbles started attracting scientific attention after 1821 when Greece became an independent state after a four century rule of the Ottoman Empire. The motives of Lord Elgin though, who 'hauled' two statues from the Parthenon were indeed impressive. He sold them to the British Museum where they are still exhibited. A huge discussion is open at the moment in the United Kingdom about the feasibility of their return to Acropolis. The new archaeological museum of Athens which is already built for the Olympic Games of 2004 has kept a place for them. 'The litter in Greece was remarkable- the roadsides, the beaches ...' Apart from the fact that the author did not visit any beach, the Greek seas were voted as the second cleanest in Europe for 1998 after Belgium. (by the European Commission relevant authorities). They are also 'voted' every year by more than six million tourists. 'The average Greek was just as pathetic as the average Albanian' (p.288) and 'Greece was a successful version of Albania' (p.339). On the contrary, the total income per capital for Albania (C.I.A. factbook , 1997) is almost the 10% of the Greek one and no serious comparison can be made. 'They boasted in their glorious past , but were selective... in the 1960s these passionate democrats had welcomed a military coop.' (p.332) No coop in the history was welcomed - otherwise it would take on power through elections. In fact, after seven years of difficulties and fighting, a stable democracy was reestablished in 1974. Seven years later the country became a full member of E.C.. It is also interesting that during the last 50 years all the Mediterranean countries had a period of dictatorship. (Spain, Italy, Greece, Turkey) During the author's visit in Cyprus , an always difficult objectivity test, the northern of the two divided parts is treated as having the same legal status although it is the result of the 1974 Turkish invasion and it is not recognized by any country in the world (including U.S.). It is obvious that I agree that the visit of the author in both sides is helpful and also that simple people are usually the victims of politics. Nevertheless the care given to the people talking about the Greek-Turkish 'differencies' is substantially disproportional (pages 341-416 vs. only 465-469). Apart from the above I would recommend the 'Pillars of Hercules' and I did not abandon the journey due to its inaccuracies. It is very well written , very human, and the 'Therouxish' type of humor is remarkable. Besides, the Greek people will never feel insulted by a writer. They can only welcome another visit of Mr. Paul Theroux, probably together with less prejudice and more information. But even if this is not feasible, the invitation is still valid.

0 von 0 Kunden fanden die folgende Rezension hilfreich. Not a travel guide! Von Ein Kunde I chose this to be the first book to read about the area I plan to visit by way of a cruise ship (not a Turkish one!) this year. I laughed when I

checked out the chapter about the Seabourne Spirit to Istanbul and the passengers, but when I returned to the beginning and started, I was almost instantly depressed. I know there are ugly tourists everywhere, but Theroux seemed to delight in finding them and writing about them. Since this is my first book by him, I was in turn entertained, then appalled. I did like the way he stayed in inexpensive places to get the feel for the place and I'm impressed with his language abilities. Maybe if the average tourist had those linguistic skills, he wouldn't have been able to find so many boorish ones. I liked his pilgrimages to literary haunts and his quotes of what other writers had said about his itinerary. His description of Albania was stunning. Theroux minces no words and certainly tells it like it is. It left me disturbed and ready to look for a real tourist guide to pump me up before I leave for the region. But I won't forget his descriptions and may even read it again someday, when I'm not so emotionally involved. His descriptions of the coast of Spain were particularly upsetting, since I lived in the interior of that country many years ago. It sounded absolutely desolate and ugly! How sad! If a good book leaves one with strong emotion, then this is a good book. But a travelogue, it is not!

**Kurzbeschreibung** At the gateway to the Mediterranean lie the two Pillars of Hercules: Gibraltar and Ceuta, in Morocco. Paul Theroux decided to travel from one to the other but taking the long way round. His grand tour of the Mediterranean begins in Gibraltar and takes him through Spain, the French Riviera, Italy, Greece, Istanbul and beyond. He travels by any means necessary - including dilapidated taxi, smoke-filled bus, bicycle and even a cruise-liner. And he encounters bullfights, bazaars and British tourists, discovers pockets of humanity in war-torn Slovenia and Croatia, is astounded by the urban developments on the Costa del Sol and marvels at the ancient wonders of Delphi. Told with Theroux's inimitable wit and style, this lively and eventful tour evokes the essence of Mediterranean life..dePaul Theroux has developed one of travel writing's most identifiable styles: always the foreigner, always a bit apart, slightly irascible, but perfectly observant. At last he has ventured to one of the most traveled places on earth, and returned with his most exhilarating, revealing, and eloquent travel book. In this modern version of the Grand Tour, Theroux sets off from Gibraltar, one of the fabled Pillars of Hercules, on a glorious journey around the shores of the Mediterranean..comPaul Theroux has developed one of travel writing's most identifiable styles: always the foreigner, always a bit apart, slightly irascible, but perfectly observant. At last he has ventured to one of the most traveled places on earth, and returned with his most exhilarating, revealing, and eloquent travel book. In this modern version of the Grand Tour, Theroux sets off from Gibraltar, one of the fabled Pillars of Hercules, on a glorious journey around the shores of the Mediterranean.