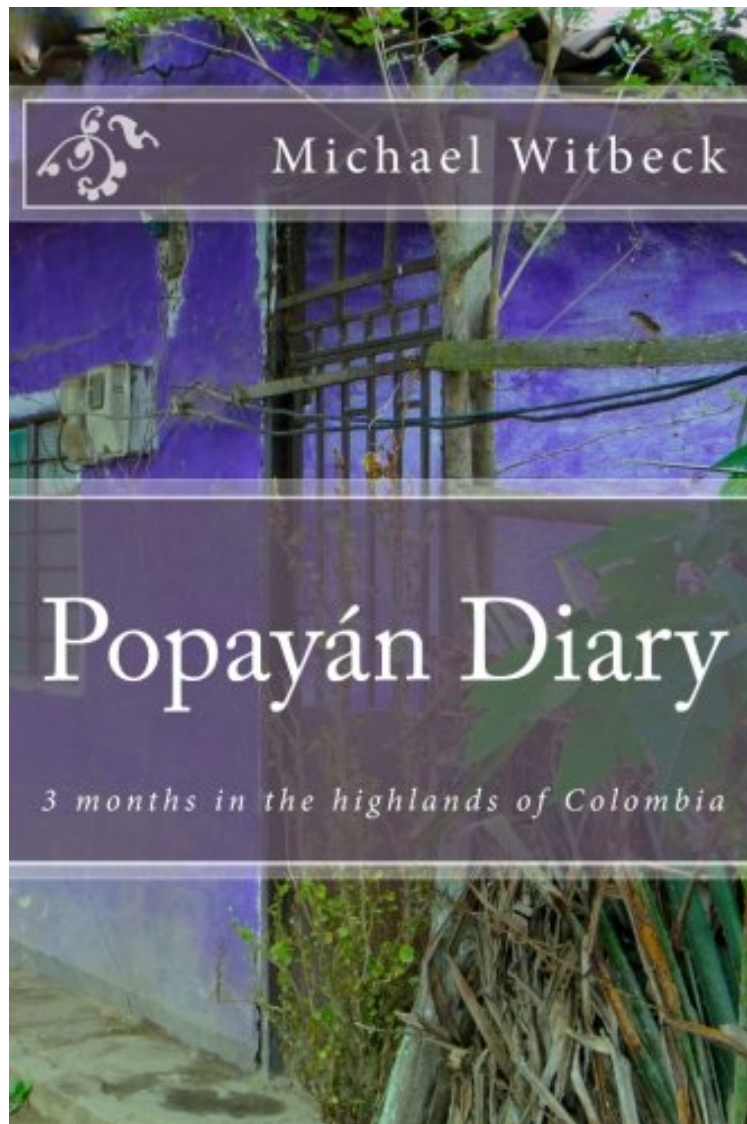


(Download pdf ebook) Popayan Diary: 3 months in the highlands of Colombia

Popayan Diary: 3 months in the highlands of Colombia

Michael Witbeck

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Michael Witbeck : Popayan Diary: 3 months in the highlands of Colombia before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Popayan Diary: 3 months in the highlands of Colombia:

1 of 1 people found the following review helpful. A truly personal account - characters and stories that cut to the heart.By Andrea SanchezA charming and witty account of expat experience, told through the eyes of an experienced world traveler. But unlike so many language professors who have lived everywhere and seen everything, Witbeck's stories haven't lost the the visceral or the gut-response. From finding a place to get your damn hair cut to avoiding over

caffeination in the coffee capital of the world, you'll hear the first-person-animal through his third-person singular. Part anthropology lesson, part storytelling, part historical account, the author makes a country sound like the place your cousins and aunts and uncles all come from, the ones you're proud of, or the ones you lovingly tease. In one witty sentence, you will find yourself giggling and then reflecting, as when "drug lords... purposely kept Cartagena peaceful so they could have a place to go and relax... from the daily grind." For anyone who wants to spend a little time in Colombia or who's heart belongs there, take this with you to fill those caffeine-stoked nights. 0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. ... show how his experiences gradually lead him toward a better understanding of the Colombian people and their culture

By Florencia

The diary parts of this book describe the author's day-to-day life in the highland city of Popayán and show how his experiences gradually lead him toward a better understanding of the Colombian people and their culture. Later, he describes visiting Cali and Cartagena and delves into the country's history, including the recent era of the drug cartels and the long guerilla war that now seems to be winding down. Some of the most memorable passages are retellings of stories told to him by people that he met. One man talks of working in the coca industry from the time he was a child. Another tells of working as a policeman whose assignment was to find and destroy cocaine labs hidden in the jungle. Another tells of a team of social service workers sent to visit a remote native village eight hours from the nearest road. The general tone is sometimes somber but more often light, and the ideas are wide-ranging and engaging. This is a great introduction to Colombia by an experienced world traveler. I recommend it to anyone interested in that country, especially those who are preparing to visit Colombia themselves.

Popayan Diary combines text and color photos to trace the events of the author's time in the city of Popayan, a provincial capital more than a mile high in the Colombian Andes. Surrounded by green hills where tropical fruits and coffee plants grow wild, Popayan has both modern shopping malls and a well-preserved colonial old town dating from the sixteenth century. The Diary begins by noting daily challenges, personal safety issues, local news items, and dinnertime stories, as well as the sights, sounds and flavors of the town. After a long period of violence, better times have come to Colombia in the last half dozen years. There is a ceasefire in effect in the war with Marxist revolutionaries. The counter-revolutionary paramilitaries are keeping a lower profile and the country is no longer the world's largest producer of cocaine, having lost that distinction to Peru. The infamous north Colombian city of Medellin no longer has the world's highest murder rate and now advertises itself as a great place to spend the Christmas season. For the first time in decades Colombia has become an attractive destination for mainstream tourists. There are places around Popayan, however, where the revolution still simmers and farmers still find a market for dried coca leaves at seventy-five cents a kilo. As he learns more about his temporary home, the Diary's author is drawn into a survey of the nation's history, looking for clues about how it all came to be this way. He sketches the events surrounding independence from Spain and tells of Simon Bolivar's imperial dream of Gran Colombia, a vision not entirely shared by his chief subordinate, Francisco de Paula Santander. More directly relevant is the area's more recent history and the diarist finds he must also address Colombia's late 20th century political divisions, its complicated relationship with the United State, and some of the ways that the nation was affected by the influxes of drug money and oil wealth that began in the 1970s. In the end, what the author finds most important is that Popayan is a place where ordinary Colombians still go about their business as they always have--even in the worst of times--caring for their families and building up a fascinating and modern nation. The Diary is a loving depiction of a city which is not on the main tourist trail but which is a place of warmth, caring and unstoppable energy. It opens up a small window on what life is like in Colombia today and provides the reader with a personal and engaging introduction to Colombian culture and history.

About the Author

Michael Witbeck is a writer and educator who currently lives in Oregon, having lived and worked for a number of years abroad, including stints in Slovakia, Japan, Spain, Yemen, Turkey and Cyprus. Popayan Diary describes his first extended stay in South America. Michael grew up in Utah and began preparing for his Colombia trip in 1964 by signing up for Spanish from Mr. Wahlquist at Mt. Ogden Junior High. He later obtained a Creative Writing degree from the University of Utah and a graduate certificate in English language teaching from UCLA. Michael loves to drive and has published two automobile related works: Confessions of a Jaguar Owner and Autobiography: A Life in the Age of the Automobile. His summer car is a 2004 Jaguar XKR convertible; in the winter he drives a 1989 Toyota Corolla. He is also the author of an e-book novel, The Adventures of Rudi the Rational Man.