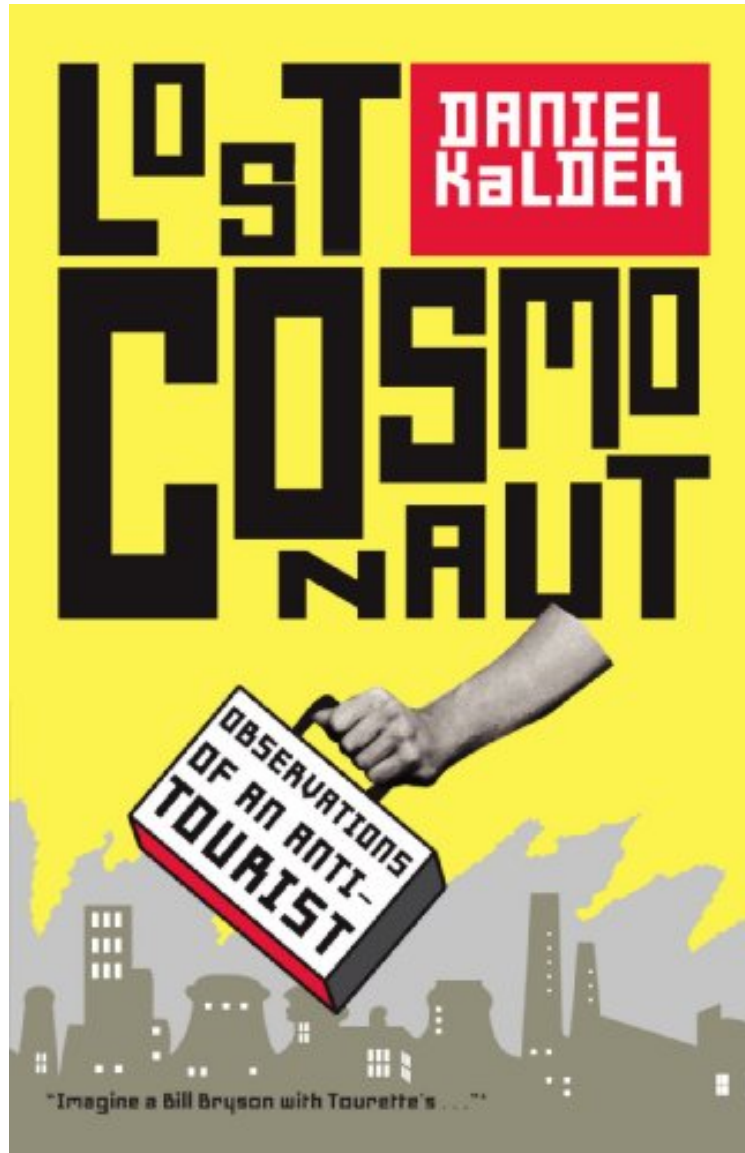


[Download] Lost Cosmonaut: Observations of an Anti-Tourist

## Lost Cosmonaut: Observations of an Anti-Tourist

*Daniel Kalder*

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**Daniel Kalder : Lost Cosmonaut: Observations of an Anti-Tourist** before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Lost Cosmonaut: Observations of an Anti-Tourist:

1 of 3 people found the following review helpful. Delightful book By Pauline Aksungur This is a delightful book. Among the joking that runs throughout the book, there are descriptions of places that I for one had never heard of. These places are republics of various ethnic groups that are found in European Russia. The author, Daniel Kalder from Scotland, visits these places sometimes with one or more companions and sometimes alone. Along with descriptions

of these places and his adventures there, Kalder also gives information about their history, of the people living there at present and their culture. The first place he visits with the 2 friends is the capitol of Tatarstan where he meets up with a Tatar who has a friend that is a Russian. These 2 took the 3 travelers around to see the sights. The next republic, that Kalder visited after a break during which he went to New York, was the Republic of Kalmykia whose people are ethnic Mongols and their republic is the only place in Europe in which Buddhism is the state religion. It is a sparsely inhabited and a dry, dead land. The 3 friends went to Elista the capitol where the most interesting thing to see was the Chess City which had been built for the 1998 Chess Olympiad by K. Ilumzhinov, president of Kalmykia. After Kalmykia, Kalder went back to Scotland. While trying to decide what to do next, he decided to write a book and went back to Russia. He next went to the Republic of Mari. The Mari's are an offshoot of the original tribe of the Hungarians, the Finns and the Estonians. In El Mari, he went looking for the pagans that were supposed to live there and found the high priest of the pagans. The last republic that he visited was Udmurtia. The capitol, Izhevsk, was home to the inventor of the Ak-47 assault rifle. The Udmurt are also a Finno-Ugric people. The Mari had fought against invaders but the Udmurt had not. They had become Christians after pressure by Russians and would run into the forest when anyone attacked them. They are a minority even in their own country and are assimilating with the Russians. So if you want to read about places and people that you (like me) have never hear of and unless you read this book probably never will, you should read this informative and funny book.

0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. AwesomeBy Anthony J Sullivan This book is just awesome. As a traveler who has been just about everywhere I found this book very interesting. It's a hard book to put down once you have started it. 2 of 4 people found the following review helpful. Pointless and self indulgentBy Guy R. Hearn Despite the title, and the printing of the splendidly pretentious "Anti Tourist Manifesto" on the inside cover, Anti Tourism is not Kalder's main theme and it seems as though the Anti Tourist packaging is the idea of the publisher rather than the author. Seeing as apathy seems to be a common state of mind for Kalder throughout his travels in the Russian republics, probably he couldn't be bothered disputing this spin either. Kalder's main idea is to explore parts of the old Soviet Union which are in Europe, but that relatively few Europeans have heard of or visited. Whilst this is a bit of a stretch in the case of Kazan, which gets reasonable numbers of travellers and has some tourist infrastructure, it's certainly fair enough in the case of Mari-El, Udmurtia and Kalmykia. And unsurprisingly, he finds there's a very good reason few people go to these places - because there's no reason to go there. Which is the problem with the Anti Tourist approach; I certainly agree that all people are inherently interesting, and in principle all places are worth going to, but if there's little to physically describe about the places you're visiting, and you don't really talk to many people either, then you have to be a better writer than Kalder to make a book like this work. There's only so much you can say about how rundown, bleak, uninspiring and boring the landscape is, how there's nothing to but go to McDonald's or watch Russian TV, or how to while away hours of boredom, without boring your reader as well. Kalder is an amusing writer, and is very good at describing apathy, boredom and disaffection - but ultimately this isn't enough. While I laughed a bit and found out a few things I didn't know, his travels, and this book, ultimately seem a bit pointless. Which is perhaps the point - but I think most of us have probably got better things to do.

Daniel Kalder belongs to a unique group: the anti-tourists. Sworn to uphold the mysterious tenets of The Shymkent Declarations, the anti-tourist seeks out the dark, lost zones of our planet, eschewing comfort, embracing hunger and hallucinations, and always traveling at the wrong time of year. In *Lost Cosmonaut*, Kalder visits locations that most of us don't even know exist -- Tatarstan, Kalmykia, Mari El, and Udmurtia. He loves these places because no one else does, because everyone else passes them by. A tale of adventure, conversation, boredom, and observation -- occasionally enhanced by an overactive imagination -- Kalder reveals a world of hidden cities, lost rites, mail-order brides, machine guns, mutants, and cold, cold emptiness. In the desert wastelands of Kalmykia, he stumbles upon New Vasyuki, the only city in the world dedicated to chess. In Mari El, home to Europe's last pagan nation, he meets the chief Druid and participates in an ancient rite; while in the bleak industrial badlands of Udmurtia, Kalder searches for Mikhail Kalashnikov, inventor of the AK-47, and inadvertently becomes a TV star. An unorthodox mix of extraordinary stories woven together with fascinating history, peculiar places, and even stranger people, *Lost Cosmonaut* is poetic and profane, hilarious and yet oddly heartwarming, bizarre and even educational. In short, it's the perfect guide to the most alien planet in our cosmos: Earth.

From Publishers Weekly When Kalder tells a passenger on a train to Kazan, the capital of the Russian republic of Tatarstan, that he and his friends are just tourists, she's convinced he's either stupid or lying. After all, who would willingly visit what turns out to be "a fairly sleepy provincial Russian city distinguished by a big mosque" and a McDonald's? But Kalder, a Scottish writer living in the former Soviet Union, is fascinated by the rundown "pseudo-countries" we never hear about in the news, believing them to be symbolic of all humanity. His "appetite for black holes" eventually leads to further travels in Kalmykia, Mari El and Udmurtia. Unfortunately, while his rhetorical enthusiasm remains strong throughout, a certain repetitiveness creeps in. Kalder wanders around the depressingly grim surroundings, cobbles together whatever cultural facts he can find online and has mostly frustrating encounters with

the locals ("I don't much like talking to people"). And while his real-life misadventures, like a visit to a sacred pagan grove with a high priest he meets through a mail-order bride distributor, are outlandish enough, he still engages in distracting fabrications and daydreams. Kalder's refusal to set himself up as an international expert is admirable, but his depiction of the remote republics of a "shadow Europe" remains uneven. Bw photos throughout. (Aug.) Copyright © Reed Business Information, a division of Reed Elsevier Inc. All rights reserved. From Booklist Adhering to an "anti-tourist" manifesto that demands the pursuit of the obscure and the bizarre, as well as an acceptance of hardships, Scottish-born Kalder reports on his travels through Eastern European republics little known and rarely visited by outsiders, for example, Tatarstan, Kalmykia, Mari El, and Udmurtia. Kalder lingers over cultural oddities such as Peter the Great's collection of embalmed dead babies, and does an extensive job of interlinking his detailed observations of each place to the larger world. In fact, so focused is he on miniscule facts, they overrun the narrative. Still, Kalder's adventures are daring and make for exciting reading, and he is witty and outspoken enough to raise eyebrows. Yet for all the can-you-believe-it? descriptions and hip commentary, the "why" is missing, the traveler's analysis that enriches the best of travel writing. But even this lack of dimension doesn't keep Kalder's tales of anti-tourist wanderings from being cool, wry, lively, and fun. Mark Eleveld Copyright © American Library Association. All rights reserved "Kalder has written a brilliantly funny travel book that questions the essence of exploration and the nature of tourism in an age when there's nowhere new to go." -- Esquire (UK) "Revelatory." -- The Times Literary Supplement (London) "A considerable achievement." -- The Guardian (London) "Imagine a Bill Bryson with Tourette's, and you'll have some of the flavour of this spasmodic, deliberately crass, strangely wonderful book." -- Evening Standard (London)