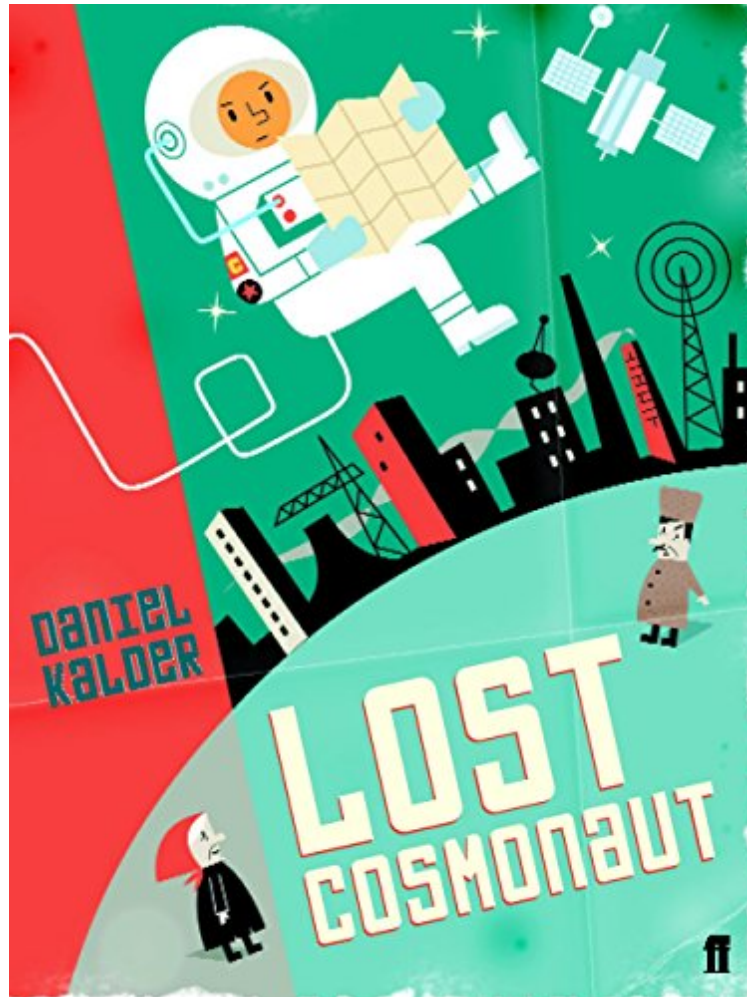


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LOST COSMONAUT

D Kalder

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D Kalder : LOST COSMONAUT before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised LOST COSMONAUT:

1 of 3 people found the following review helpful. Delightful bookBy Pauline AksungurThis 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 Udmurts are also a Finno-Ugric people. The Mari had fought against invaders but the Udmurts 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 heard 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. Awesome
By 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 indulgent
By 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 do 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.

Book by DANIEL KALDER