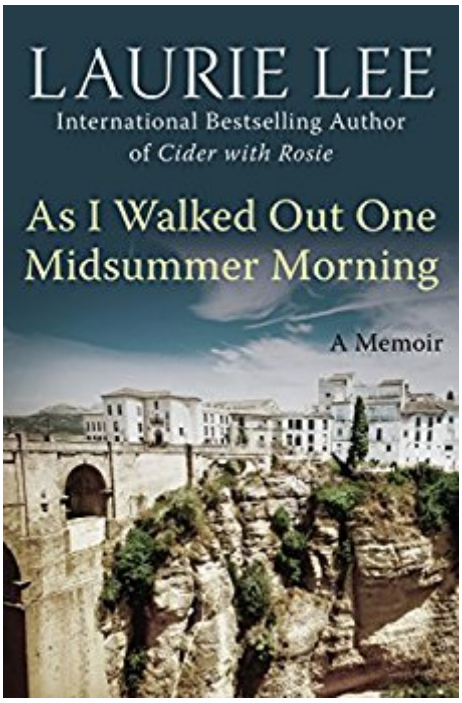
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As I Walked Out One Midsummer Morning: A Memoir (The Autobiographical Trilogy Book 2)



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Synopsis

The second volume in Laurie LeeÃ¢â ¬â„¢s acclaimed autobiographical trilogy, an unforgettable glimpse of Spain on the eve of its civil war. On a bright Sunday morning in June 1934, Laurie Lee left the village home so lovingly portrayed in his bestselling memoir, Cider with Rosie. His plan was to walk the hundred miles from Slad to London, with a detour of an extra hundred miles to see the sea for the first time. He was nineteen years old and brought with him only what he could carry on his back: a tent, a change of clothes, his violin, a tin of biscuits, and some cheese. He spent the first night in a ditch, wide awake and soaking wet. From those unlikely beginnings, Laurie Lee fashioned not just the adventure of a lifetime, but one of the finest travel narratives of the twentieth century. As I Walked Out One Midsummer Morning, written more than thirty years after the events it describes, is an elegant and irresistibly charming portrait of life on the roadÃ¢â ¬â •first in England, where the familiar landscapes and people somehow made Lee feel far from home, and then in Spain, whose utter foreignness afforded a new kind of comfort. In that brief period of peace, a young man was free to go wherever he wanted to in Europe. Lee picked Spain because he knew enough Spanish to ask for a glass of water. What he did not know, and what would become clear only after a year spent tramping across the beautiful and rugged countrysideÃ¢â ¬â •from the Galician port city of Vigo, over the Sierra de Guadarrama and into Madrid, and along the Costa del SolÃ¢â ¬â •was that the Spanish Republic would soon need idealistic young men like Lee as badly as he needed it.

Book Information

File Size: 1280 KB

Print Length: 196 pages

Publisher: Open Road Media (June 10, 2014)

Publication Date: June 10, 2014

Language: English

ASIN: B00KGMIY1Y

Text-to-Speech: Enabled

X-Ray: Enabled

Word Wise: Enabled

Lending: Not Enabled

Screen Reader: Supported

Enhanced Typesetting: Enabled

Best Sellers Rank: #138,258 Paid in Kindle Store (See Top 100 Paid in Kindle Store) #23

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Customer Reviews

I’ve read a lot of travel books about people like Lee, who set off on their own to "see the world". What piqued my interest in this particular diary, however, was it’s connection to the beginning, at least, of the Spanish Civil War. I grew up in the 30’’s, and well remember this precursor to WW II, and the fateful & terrible events to follow. It also provides many stark descriptions, which I think most of us have either forgot... or never been aware of...the conditions of extreme poverty that existed in pre-WW II Europe, and are still extant in the third world. A more than worth-while read..

This is the second part of Laurie Lee’s trilogy and he has left home and travels first to London and then to Spain. I wasn’t happy that the first part of this book was actually in the first book, so essentially I paid for half a book. That being said, the author takes us on a journey of self revelation through the streets of London, where he makes a living doing low paying labor jobs and also playing his precious violin. His journey takes him on a walking journey to Spain where the country is starting to feel the upheaval that war will bring. Again, a beautifully written book, wonderfully detailed and a joy to read. A perfect follow up to Cider with Rosie. I loved it.

This has got to be one of the most evocative memoirs ever written; it certainly tops all the other road-trip/travelers tales I’ve read. As befits an award winning poet, Lee’s prose has a concise, 3-D image making eloquence that drops the reader into the center of a scene, in the breathing presence of a character, or into the tactile truth of a landscape.In the mid-1930s, the nineteen year-old Lee sets out on foot from his Gloucestershire home, with a tin of biscuits and a violin, on his way to London via a hundred mile detour to coast "as I’d never yet seen the sea." Two years later he is fortuitously "rescued" off the coast of southern Spain by the Royal Navy trawling the Spanish beaches for stray Brits marooned between the warring factions of the Spanish Civil War. Lee’s narrative of what happens in between these events provides priceless images of life as experienced by a penniless wanderer in depression-era Britain and pre-modern Spain.Few histories of an era or place can conjure its emotional and physical resonance quite so well as a living memory. In his description of life on the road to London, Lee is able to capture the essence of the failure of capitalism during the Thirties (our current failure being but an echo of it’s father).Spoiler

Alert...quotations from the book:Lee finds himself among the "host of unemployed who wandered aimlessly about England at that time...They were like a broken army walking away from war, cheeks sunken, eyes dead with fatigue. Some carried bags of tools or broken cardboard suitcases; some wore the ghosts of city suits...walking up and down the country in a maze of jobless refusals.." Among them are professional tramps, like Alf, who taught him the ways of the road. "He wore a deerstalker hat, so sodden and shredded it looked like a helping of breakfast food...a tramp to his bones, always wrapping and unwrapping himself, and picking over his bits and pieces...never passing a bit of grass that looked good for a shakedown nor a cottage that seemed ripe for charity."Soon after he parts from Alf on the outskirts of Ascot, the other half of society rolls into view: "I wasn't surprised when one of the Daimlers pulled up and an arm beckoned me from the window..."Want a pheasant my man?" asked a voice from inside. "We just knocked over a beauty a hundred yards back." A quarter of an hour later I arrived at Ascot. It was race week...little grooms and jockeys dodging among the long glossy legs of thoroughbreds; and the pedigree owners dipping their long cool necks into baskets of pate and gull's eggs...Alf and the tattered lines of the workless were far away in another country..."Plus ÃƒÆ'Ã Â§a change, eh?

Memoirs are a favorite of mine, and I'm interested in different perspectives on the Spanish Civil War. The work of Laurie Lee is new to me (an recommendation), and working my way through this trilogy is most enjoyable.

It is a fact that there is a whole legion of walkers in the world and always has been. There perhaps are many like Laurie Lee and Paul Theroux who have walked to other lands but few of those have the gift of observation that sees things as they are and can write their opinion about it. Lee wrote in the last century- Theroux decades ago. In their reading it is clear they both truly liked about their adventures, the things they saw, and the people they met.Lee in his description of those two was most informative and entertaining; a gift to the 19year old novice walker that he was. The physical strength and endurance dictated by his route as well as his cleverness in finding the means to fit in and survive with the peasants of the many parts of Spain in the late 1930ÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã â„¢s as he traveled, is what amazed me. It is well worth the read; a fine well written adventure.

I loved this book and was amazed that Laurie Lee, with such an impoverished upbringing in a tiny country village, could write so brilliantly. I greatly admired his gumption in setting off on foot and on his own with almost no money, almost no clothes and just an old violin for company. That he

managed to survive in London - always an expensive place - and then get himself from one end of Spain to the other by busking is astonishing.Laurie Lee comes across as a highly intelligent person, in spite of having little in the way of formal education, but also an extremely empathetic and likeable person. I wish I could have met him - I'm sure it would have been wonderful!

My only regret is that just as Spain gets interesting from the historical perspective Laurie Lee gets evacuated to escape the impending Civil War and the narrative ends. Bummer!Lee's walk across Spain is a delightful narrative evoking the weather, the countryside and above all the characters that inhabited this down-at-heel corner of 1930s Europe. Armed with music to raise money and youthful energy the author throws himself into true adventure, no presumed or predicted outcomes recorded with an eye for detail and huge enthusiasm. A superb read.

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