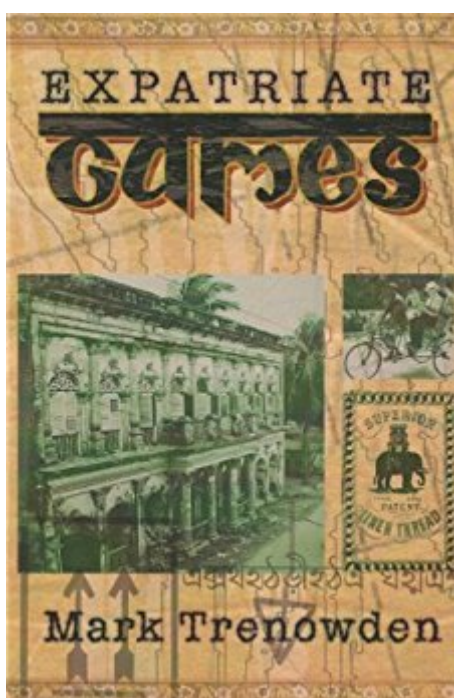


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Expatriate Games - 662 Days In Bangladesh: An Account Of Time Spent In Dhaka Not A Guide Book



Synopsis

This is a revised for 2012 TMwarts and all account TM of a two year posting to Dhaka, Bangladesh. An ill-conceived plan to establish a western style Investment Banking office in the Bangladeshi Capital is the premise. The unfortunates who are despatched to implement this plan arrive to find no support and an impossible business environment. A six day work week, heaps of bureaucracy and Dhaka's own brand of TMeverydayTM frustrations. Despite these daunting circumstances things do get off the ground. This is not a TMsugar coatedTM account but it does give an insight into what you will find if moving to Dhaka. Contrary to some suggestions the author left Bangladesh having had a very positive experience. He made a great many friends and is still in touch with many of them today (including his cook who insists on telephoning in the middle of the night.)

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Customer Reviews

I read this because I will be traveling to Dhaka for business and hoped to get a feel for what the city is like. The book is entertaining enough but the author maintains a distance from Bangladesh and her people so that it is more a description of how to survive as a Brit abroad rather than really diving into every day life in Dhaka. But so far as business travel is concerned, I suppose it hits the marks

more than a leisurely travel book would.

I read this book while being out on a work assignment for several weeks in Dhaka. I was a little worried at the beginning because of some of the negative comments the book received but it has proven an interesting and entertaining reading. The experiences the author describes remain somewhat the same today even if one can see the country has progressed and developed a lot since the end of the 90's. To some extent, this book has helped me going through this month in Bangladesh, helping me avoiding some of the traps of the local situation and gave me some good laughs.

Having lived in Bangladesh for a while myself, I found this to be an amusing read. Bangladesh is like no place else I've been, not even India. There are just so many bizarre and quirky things about the culture (bizarre and quirky to someone from a Western background, that is), and Mr. Trenowden's stories highlight some of the funniest results. On the other hand, I was somewhat offended by Trenowden's lack of cultural tolerance. Bangladesh is a very frustrating place to live if you go there expecting it to function like a Western country--but eventually you learn to appreciate the ways in which it differs from the West, which, in many cases, can be very refreshing (the slower pace of life, for example). Trenowden, however, spends what feels like half the book complaining about the inadequacy of the country's decorators/dry cleaners/architects, etc. He never gets into local cuisine, because he's convinced it will make him sick. Only at the end of his stay does he bother to try to get a glimpse into what life is like for the majority of Bangladeshis, and it's a brief glimpse at that. His attitude throughout the book can basically be summed up as, "I want to be as isolated from Bangladesh as possible while still living in Bangladesh." So while his account is probably a pretty accurate portrayal of how the expatriate community lives, it's a horribly uninformed, inaccurate, biased, and ethnocentric view of the country as a whole. I'd urge anyone who is thinking about taking a posting in Bangladesh to read this book as an example of how NOT to go about your experience. Bangladesh is a fascinating place, full of the warmest people I've met in all of my travels; if you give it a chance on its own terms, you won't be disappointed. (And in things not related to content: Did anyone even bother to edit this book??? It is absolutely swimming with mistakes--misplaced commas or, more often, a total lack of commas, or periods beginning new sentences where commas should be, etc., as well as some sloppy writing here and there. I'm talking multiple times per page. It's like someone just transcribed Trenowden's personal journal and sent it off to the printer. It was distracting, and I was a little frustrated that I'd spent actual money on this

thing, when the publisher couldn't even be bothered to have an editor read it through once. But I digress.)

I won't say I'm sorry to read this book, but it was disappointing to me. I hoped for more detailed and heartfelt descriptions of the country, people, and culture. The most descriptive Mr. Trewnowden gets is about a cricket game he played which went on for quite a few pages (not being enamored of cricket I skipped most of this). Few, if any, of the positive aspects of the culture were mentioned. I think the author and his wife suffered from culture shock most of the time which may be why the book seems to simply glide along their experiences by mostly highlighting misadventures in their quest for alcohol and club-memberships which would entitle them to drink. Mr. Trewnowden, at times, does have a funny turn of phrase. I chuckled when he described the "bone-laced biriyani" that he was offered after the cricket game and enjoyed his resourcefulness at avoiding a flight in order to get his visa towards the end of the book. I did learn of another book I could read and about the American School in Dhaka. But I did not feel as I had traveled to Bangladesh with him.

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