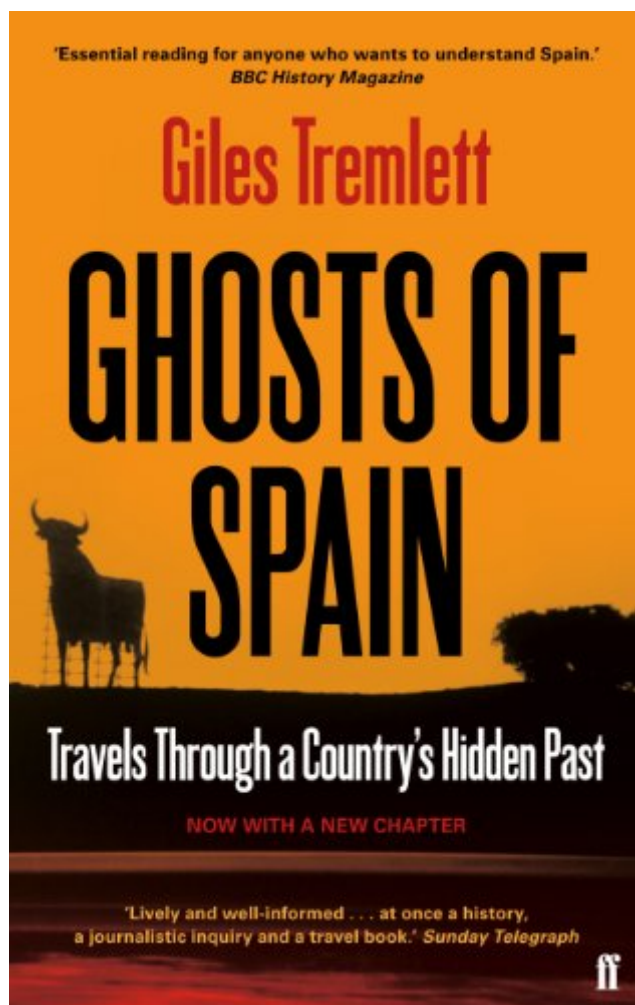


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Ghosts Of Spain: Travels Through A Country's Hidden Past



Synopsis

The Spanish are reputed to be amongst Europe's most voluble people. So why have they kept silent about the terrors of the Spanish Civil War and the rule of dictator Generalísimo Francisco Franco? The appearance - sixty years after that war ended - of mass graves containing victims of General Franco's death squads has finally broken what Spaniards call 'the pact of forgetting'. At this charged moment, Giles Tremlett embarked on a journey around Spain - and through Spanish history. As well as a moving exploration of Spanish politics, Tremlett's journey was also an attempt to make sense of his personal experience of the Spanish. Why do they dislike authority figures, but are cowed by a doctor's white coat? How had women embraced feminism without men noticing? What binds gypsies, jails and flamenco? Why do the Spanish go to plastic surgeons, donate their organs, visit brothels or take cocaine more than other Europeans? 'Lively and well-informed . . . at once a history, a journalistic inquiry and a travel book.' Sunday Telegraph

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Customer Reviews

What comes to your mind when you think of Spain? Does it remind you of a place where you can

spend your holidays? I have never been to Spain. Judging by the postcards, movies and the excitement on the faces of my friends, I expected Spain to be an ideal place to spend your holidays. But little did I know Spain has more layers to it besides being a place for fun and frolic. It is also a place which is struggling to come to terms with its ghosts. Less than 40 years after the death of the Generalissimo, Francisco Franco, the people are still divided on what Spain went through during his reign. A lot of modernization happened under Franco. On the other hand, there was also a lot of brutality. Ironically, it was also a time when brother turned against brother or neighbour against neighbour. Even after all these years, Spain is still deeply divided on this subject and is reluctant in exorcising the demons. Modern Spain is trying to forget the past. At the same time, it is also trying to capitalize on the tourism. The tourism which has boosted construction has also ushered in corruption. At the same time, there are lone wolves who stand up against the tide. If this is not enough, nationalism is creating a division in the map of Spain. The Basques refuse to be Spanish. Similarly, Barcelona is not Spanish if you take the language and culture into consideration. Having spent a considerable time in Spain, Giles Tremlett shows us a side of Spain which we have not seen. In order to paint this picture of Spain, he not only draws from the experience of living in the country for so many years but also the networks he has created in the country. He goes to different parts of the country, conducts interviews and uses this as the basis for telling us about the struggles of Spain. This technique serves in telling the facts like in an investigation in a very interesting way. This is the book to read if you are armchair traveller or if you plan to visit the country. Visiting places can help you take photographs. Knowing the people will help you tell a much more interesting story using the photographs. It will also help you understand and appreciate the locals you meet.

I have learned a lot about the Spain, politically, culturally and emotionally. The Spanish are an interesting and very diverse people; some of whom do not want to be one nation but a federation of states. My only criticism, if it is that, is I wish there was more on the Spanish Civil War, which is why I picked up the book. Yet I am glad I read the book because of the other facets of the nation that I now understand a little better. It really makes me want to go back and visit specific regions of the country.

For those who are interested in the pre WW II wars between Fascism and Socialism/Communism. this book, though somewhat repetitive with other books on this subject, is a very good read. Do take the time for this book!

a real insight into the Franco days and the aftermath of "forgetfulness" and "reinvention" of a nation. Well written and harrowing in parts as the history is still recent. He's still very much revered in the older circles and still whispered about behind closed doors by those who still fear and mistrust the system. Brought to life by an excellent researcher who clearly loves his adopted country.

I read this book while touring Spain. I wish that I had read it before beginning the tour, but it found it to be exceptionally well written, very balanced, and wonderfully educational. I gave it to our tour guide once I completed reading it. I would recommend this book to anyone that plans to travel to Spain, especially those that will travel within the country. The descriptions of the various regions will appreciate the history of each, the differences, and most importantly, why the Spanish seem to lack a sense of nationalism, and are much more loyal to their region.

In an effort to explain a secretive history, Giles Tremlett seems to repeat himself endlessly in a very long-winded fashion. Even as someone who is enthralled with the history of Iberia, this book was so hard to get through I couldn't even finish. The information he provides is interesting, albeit much of it is something you can find elsewhere; the major issue is his writing style.

Nice follow up after reading the classic Iberia by James Michener. Brings the reader up to date on life in modern Spain which is still haunted by ghosts of its civil war and the battle between tradition and modernism. La Transición, or Spain's transition to democracy is something that is occurring both historically, politically, and personally as Spain enters a more globalized, connected world. Tremlett describes this "transición" from all perspectives, but it is his personal perspective, as an ex-pat Brit raising his family in Spain, which I found particularly enjoyable. His descriptions of day to day life juxtaposed into chapters dealing with deeper historical and political events, such as the aftermath of the Spanish Civil War, the legacy of Franco, the Basque separatist movement, the pride of Catalans, and the 2004 Islamic bombings, makes this book very readable and pertinent to truly understanding not only the country but its people, and their remarkable history.

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