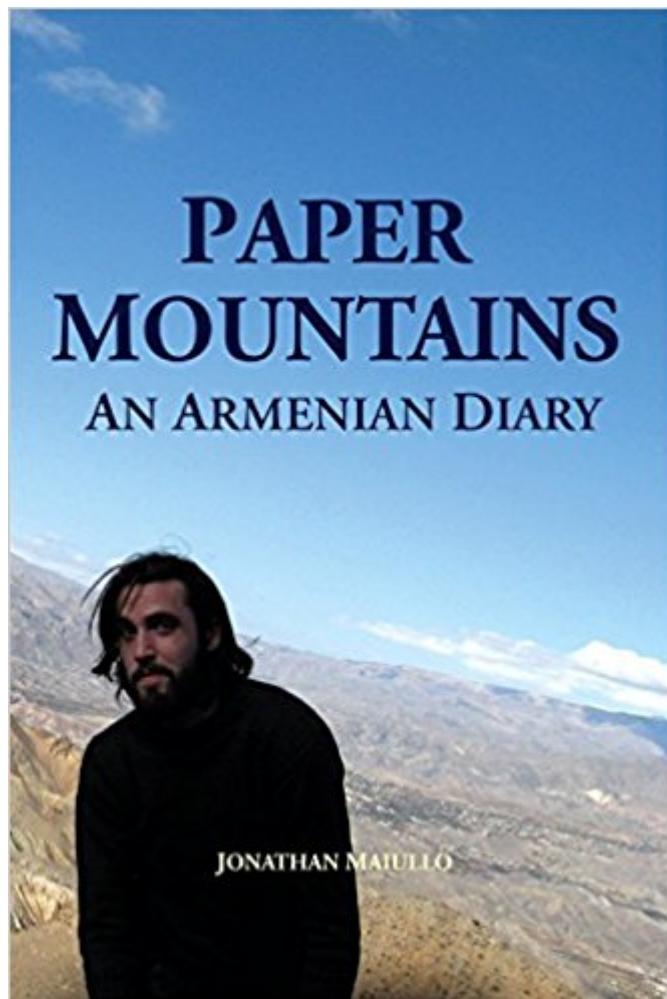


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Paper Mountains: An Armenian Diary



Synopsis

A delightful and sensitive account of a young American who visited, taught English and traveled in Armenia between 2008-10. This extremely well written book reflects on normal, everyday-reality in Armenia. A pleasure to read.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

Jonathan Maiullo first went to Armenia in 2008. He spent the next two years rambling over the country on foot whenever he wasn't teaching his English classes in Yeghegnadzor. He has since lived and worked as an English teacher in several countries, but has never quite been able to shake the memories of the the edenic world he found somewhere between Goris and Gyumri, which as invariably led him to visit many Armenian enclaves worldwide, if only to renew his familiarity with the musical language and search for the illusive boboki muraba (sweet green walnut preserves).

Jon perfectly captures the feeling of living in Armenia as a foreigner, and especially as a Peace Corps volunteer, living in small communities in sometimes out-of-the-way places. He represents the feeling of isolation and loneliness of living in a country and culture not your own, as well as the surprising feeling of belonging (and longing) that comes after living for more than two years in a community where you thought you'd always be a stranger. Many times I laughed (often at things that might be "inside jokes" for those who are familiar with some of Armenia's idiosyncrasies), and at times felt a little verklempt, and now that I'm finished I'm filled with the strongest desire to get out of the US and do it all again.

The author takes you on a journey to Armenia as a Peace Corps Volunteer sharing honestly the isolation and loneliness at the beginning, the great difficulty learning a language with a different alphabet; navigating different educational systems and customs; but also his fascinating transformation from feeling like an interloper to feeling at home with people he came to admire and respect greatly. His exquisite use of imagery takes you on literal paths through Armenia exploring the diverse beauty of the landscape and the courteousness of the people interspersed with humorous events. This book is also a testimony to the ongoing importance and relevance of the Peace Corps.

A surprisingly mature and eloquent memoir of a Peace Corps volunteer's adventure in Armenia. I connected the most with Maiullo's playful humorous dialogue with the local Armenians, especially the language mixups and fun exchanges with the children. In some passages, I felt like I was reading Emerson or Theroux, where there was this awe inspiring imagery of the Armenian landscapes. Maiullo has great honesty in his writing, and I would hope most international development volunteers would read this book and approach their service in a similar manner. I would love to read more about Maiullo's adventures.

Paper Mountains is a beautiful account of Jonny Maiullo's impressions of Armenia. It is a memoir of sorts of his two years living in a rural region of Armenia as a Peace Corps Volunteer. His descriptions of the village life surrounding him are so approachable yet quite elegant, taking us on a journey from his first very first months, and on through the many seasons of his time there. As the book progresses, so does his understanding of the subtleties of rural Armenian language and culture. The result is that his observations and meditations on life there take on new insight and real emotion. Throughout, he paints a tableau of rural Armenia with love and objectivity, all shrouded in a wonderfully poetic writing style. This is no ordinary book. Jonny opens his heart to the country, and shares it with the readers. It is a gem not to be missed...

Paper Mountains was a very enjoyable read. I was in the middle of reading Bill Bryson's "In a Sunburned Country" when I got Paper Mountains in the mail. I started reading, just to get a feel for it, fully intending to go back to "Sunburned". I was immediately hooked, and "Sunburned" was temporarily exiled back to my bookshelf. Maiullo painted a wonderfully vibrant and often times humorous picture of life as a foreigner in Armenia. Armenia is not a place I was very familiar with prior to reading the book, but after finishing, I am left with a desire to one day experience the

country myself. I highly recommend Paper Mountains.

A wonderful and engaging book that chronicles the authors time in Armenia. The book provides vivid descriptions of life/people/places, it also provides insights into the authors inner thoughts.

Wonderful story by a remarkable young man!

Beautiful, adventurous and funny. A nice peek inside the daily lives of Armenians and Peace Corp Volunteers.

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