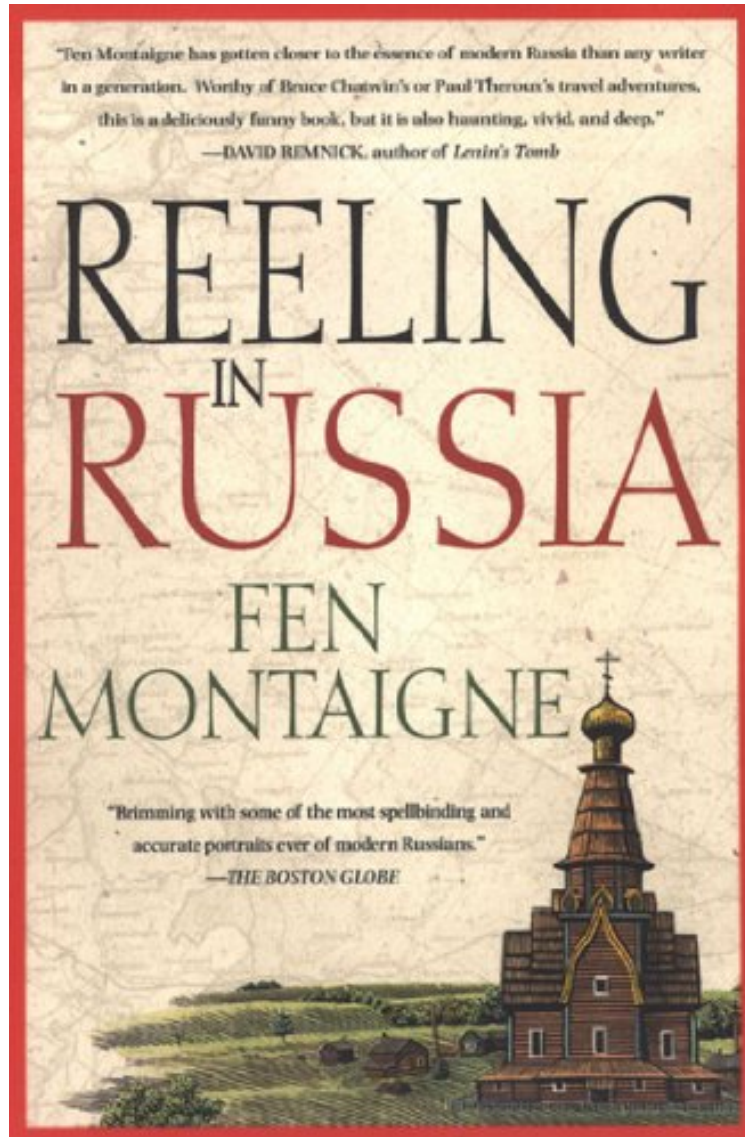


[FREE] Reeling In Russia: An American Angler In Russia

Reeling In Russia: An American Angler In Russia

Von Fen Montaigne

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Von Fen Montaigne : Reeling In Russia: An American Angler In Russia before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Reeling In Russia: An American Angler In Russia:

KundenrezensionenHilfreichste Kundenrezensionen0 von 0 Kunden fanden die folgende Rezension hilfreich. "Fishing Book" that Goes to the Heart of the Russian PeopleVon Ein KundeA great deal has been written about what was once the Soviet Union. Some predates the formation of what Ronald Reagan once called "the evil empire" and other parts cover the years since its dissolution. A couple of volumes--John Reed's Ten Days that Shook the World and David

Remnick's Lenin's Tomb--even appeared on the list of this century's one-hundred most important pieces of journalism. Maybe the number of books about this part of the world will eventually rival the biographies of Marilyn Monroe in total words. One of the latest entries in this literature, and certainly one of the best, is Fen Montaigne's *Reeling in Russia*. I have two friends now engaged in commerce in this part of the globe and each loudly proclaims this work the best representation of the lives of the Russian people. Some critics have compared Montaigne, for five years the Moscow correspondent of the *Philadelphia Inquirer*, to Bruce Chatwin and Paul Theroux. For me, though, the two writers who come to mind are James/Jan Morris and Jonathan Raban. Both of them qualify as "travel writers"; more than that, they uncannily capture the essence and the spirit of the people about whom they write. Montaigne has a literal "hook" around which he constructs his narrative. He fishes his way around the former Soviet Union. With fly rod in hand he travels from place to place, specific types of fish in exotic locales his quarry. Classifying this as a fishing book though is like categorizing *Moby Dick* as a story about a whale. Montaigne, neither a particularly accomplished fisherman nor an even mildly obsessed one, has a much bigger target. He wants to learn what has happened to the people among whom he lived and worked. And he also desires to find out about the types of Russians who inhabit some of the far stretches of a country he did not previously have the time or freedom to explore. From his very first adventure, near the Solovetsky Islands in northern Russia, Montaigne has his readers hooked. His impassioned and well-crafted prose connects us with types of Russians who seldom make it in front of cameras (or authors for that matter). We learn of their hopes and much more often about their frustrations. We follow him around the world's largest country, soaking up both important facts and fascinating trivia. Along the way, the author paints portraits of memorable individuals and the Russian people as a whole. There are no acceptable excuses to not buy and read this book. If you have no interest in fishing you have nothing to fear. If fishing makes your blood run as cold as that of these swimming creatures, both large and small, you will find else much in *Reeling in Russia* to keep you fully engaged. If you happen to actually like this sport you will have an extra bonus; you can imagine yourself in the flywaters in which Montaigne wades and learn about a fascinating people in the process.

George A. Singer
0 von 0 Kunden fanden die folgende Rezension hilfreich. "On the cheap" are the key words describing the author's journey.
Von Ein Kunde
One thing is clear: "*Reeling in Russia* is no "*Year in Provence*". It has no warmth, no charm and little humour. Instead, it is a painstakingly detailed account of a poorly planned journey across Russia. Granted, the author has courage: he dared go alone through a foreign country with bad roads and a poor infrastructure. His command of Russian seems amazing, his research of reference materials on the places he has visited is thorough, and his translations of Russian idioms are witty. Intent on sharing his adventures, Fen Montaigne must have had trouble deciding what audience to aim at. The title of the book almost scared me away, for it suggests that the intended reader is a fly-fishing enthusiast. However, Mr. Montaigne is not an expert sportsman and hardly a connoisseur of intricacies of getting fish in Russia. As far as fly-fishing is concerned, his book just might be a HOW-NOT-TO guide, for the number of places he fishes far exceeds the actual catch. Despite some interesting encounters and philosophical detours into the nature of Russia's present crisis, the prevailing feeling I experienced when reading the book was ever-growing irritation with the author. Determined to cross the country without spending a lot of money, he starts his journey at Solovetsky Islands and finishes it three months later in Kamchatka. He diligently transcribes names of all the people he comes across, illustrates his narrative with little-known facts, quotes other travellers... yet "on the cheap" remain the key words. Aware of the low living standards of the tortured postcommunist country, Fen Montaigne is resolute to take advantage of hospitality of strangers and to pay them only when forced to. Instead of money, he relies on cheap presents and the magic of being the first American in the Siberian wilderness. It is hard to imagine a Russian traveller traversing the vast territories of America in the hope that kind strangers would provide him with room, board, expertise and transportation -- all free of charge. Yet, this is exactly what Mr. Montaigne has managed to do in Russia. On the rare occasion when he does encounter a man unwilling to render services for free the author is appalled: "Suddenly, it dawned on me. I would be paying for all this - the driver, the van, the cottage, the cook, the food, the sleazy services of Arthur". Excuse me, and what did the author expect - that poor out-of-work Arthur would pay for it himself out of friendship to a man he had never seen in his life? The bill "sleazy Arthur" presented for a 5-day program of fishing and sightseeing was \$950. "This was my budget for a month! This was a Russian pensioner's income for an entire year!" the author laments. A double standard is obviously in effect here. How many countries does Mr. Montaigne know where you can cover thousands of miles on \$950 a month? Comparing the bill to the pensioner's income, the author is also well aware of the \$250 a day charged by the only local fishing camp open to foreigners, and on the last stretch of his trip he joins American anglers who had paid "\$5,500 apiece to fly-fish for the steelhead used in the study" by the joint Russian-American expedition. Dealing with the locals, however, he prefers to leave them with warm thank-yous and firm handshakes. Having reached the Buryat Republic, the free-spirited Fen Montaigne meets Alexander Sedenov, unemployed, living on earnings from chopping firewood. Alexander ("Me, hotel. You - come") opens his home ("a hovel") to the weary traveller and becomes his guide. He also introduces him to a professional hunter Valery who agrees to join them in search of fish and the deputy farm manager who provides transportation. After an interesting three-day fishing expedition, however, "everyone... had his hand out". Obviously, realizing that they were going to be stiffed, the locals started dropping "strong hints about wanting to be paid." As a

result, one of them received about \$40, and then the other two candidly admitted that if they were not paid for the trip they would think "oh, that greedy American!" Meanwhile the American feels offended because, you see, he has already given one of them "a dozen flies and some other presents" and "did not want to offend him by offering money". As a result, Valery received about \$60 and Alexander slightly less. "I didn't mind parting with the money, but I did object to the constant hints that I ought to pay", the author writes. Well, man, if you had at least mentioned paying from the start, they wouldn't have had to hint, would they? With the wealth of materials that the author had at his disposal, the book had all the chances to become a serious contribution to travel literature. It could have painted a vivid portrait of the great land in distress and of its hard-drinking, but kind and strong people. However, the petty considerations of Mr. Montaigne trying to save here and to freeload there overshadow everything else in the book. Even throughout his touching encounter with the former inmate of the Gulag who now lives as a hermit in the taiga, the reader is left wondering: did the author pay the old man for his stay? And if he did not want to offend his host with money, what did he leave him - a dozen of flies? von 0 Kunden fanden die folgende Rezension hilfreich. Excellent book on modern Russia Von G. McClintock In 1996 Montaigne, with fly rod in hand, traveled 7,000 miles overland across Russia. Fly fishing is one of his passions, and through fly fishing Montaigne encountered a fascinating array of post-Communist Russians and was granted a unique look at the turmoil and complexity of that society. And believe me, this was no pre-packaged tour of the Kola or Kamchata Peninsula (although he does visit both places.) This is a trek into the most remote and unwesternized reaches of Russia. Being fluent in Russian and possessing a well developed affection for adventure, Montaigne takes the reader into the real world Russia of today, a unique and exotic place full of surprises. Along the way he fishes for everything from steelhead to salmon, from grayling to taimen. To top it off he accomplishes this with wit and a writing style as finely tuned as Theroux. The great travel writers humanize the exotic. Reeling in Russia puts a face on the disturbing and difficult lives of the vast majority of Russians. The characters here become as knowable as neighbors and their concerns as human as our own. Obviously, I loved Reeling in Russia. It is real pleasure to recommend it. Grant McClintock

Kurzbeschreibung In the summer of 1996, award-winning journalist Fen Montaigne embarked on a hundred-day, seven-thousand-mile journey across Russia. Traveling with his fly rod, he began his trek in northwestern Russia on the Solovetsky Islands, a remote archipelago that was the birthplace of Stalin's gulag. He ended half a world away as he fished for steelhead trout on the Kamchatka Peninsula, on the shores of the Pacific. His tales of visiting these far-flung rivers are memorable, and at heart, Reeling in Russia is far more than a story of an angling journey. It is a humorous and moving account of his adventures in the madhouse that is Russia today, and a striking portrait that highlights the humanity and tribulations of its people. In the end, the reader is left with the memory of haunted northern landscapes, of vivid sunsets over distant rivers, of the crumbling remains of pre-Revolutionary estates, and a cast of dogged Russians struggling to build a life amid the rubble of the Communist regime..de "To some foreigners," writes American journalist Fen Montaigne, "Russia was anathema, a place grim beyond description. But to others, such as myself, Russia was an affliction, an incurable habit. From the very beginning, I was drawn to her dilapidated landscape, inhabited by people who knew hardship as intimately as we might a member of the family." After completing a stint as Moscow bureau chief for the Philadelphia Inquirer in 1996, Montaigne resolves to feed his habit in a somewhat unorthodox manner: a three-month fly-fishing expedition that will cross 10 time zones from west to east and cover 7,000 miles. Traveling with a duffel bag bulging with state-of-the-art fishing gear is probably not the best way to journey through a largely impoverished land without arousing suspicion, but the neophyte fly-fisher is romanced by the vastness and anonymity of the place and simply cannot resist. Unknown rivers and lakes, after all, are the stuff of anglers' dreams, and so Montaigne blithely sets out with dancing trout and salmon in his head. All too soon, however, he is disabused of such gumdrop notions. Environmental degradation, bureaucratic hoops, unscrupulous "entrepreneurs," and a parade of vodka parties greet him at nearly every stop. Montaigne's initial quest is swiftly superseded by a series of picaresque misadventures--some comic, others frightening--that serve to educate the innocent abroad as well as the reader. He tours centuries-old monasteries on the Solovetski archipelago that Stalin once turned into gulags, stumbles across a shallow grave near the Kolyma slave mines, narrowly escapes a pair of buxom highway robbers on the Trans-Siberian Railway, and breaks bread with fish-poaching apparatchiks on the Detrin River. Revealed along the way is a country in utter turmoil, trying to escape from its past without a destination in mind, almost childlike in its simplicity. Some of these East-meets-West scenes are strangely poignant in their squalor. At one vodka-soaked stop, the author obligingly gets drunk with the locals and caps the night by driving a brakeless Ural truck through town, much to the hoots and delight of his hosts: "'Second! Second!' the boys hollered as the engine whined, and I jammed the heavy stick into second gear. We hit a straightaway. I shifted into third and cranked the Ural up to about 25 miles an hour. Ashes from their cigarettes flitted about the cabin. I glanced over at the boys and saw that great, demented smiles had spread on their faces." Eventually Montaigne overcomes his ineptitude with a flyrod and manages to hook into some nice fish, but his triumph hardly matters; the real catch of the day is the

distillation of a moment in time, when a people and their nation drift helplessly in the current. --Langdon Cook
Pressestimmen "Wonderful...a vastly entertaining and edifying work." --"The Washington Post" "A passionate and beautifully written memoir...a vivid, compelling...portrait of a country that remains an enigma to most Americans." --"The Chicago Tribune" "Think of Montaigne as a Tocqueville with a fly rod who uncovers Russia in the raw." --"Sports Illustrated" "A first-rate book...[with] memorable writing...Mr. Montaigne...has netted a darkly comic tale in which he is the picaresque antihero." --"The Wall Street Journal" Wonderful...a vastly entertaining and edifying work. "The Washington Post" A passionate and beautifully written memoir...a vivid, compelling...portrait of a country that remains an enigma to most Americans. "The Chicago Tribune" Think of Montaigne as a Tocqueville with a fly rod who uncovers Russia in the raw. "Sports Illustrated" A first-rate book...[with] memorable writing...Mr. Montaigne...has netted a darkly comic tale in which he is the picaresque antihero. "The Wall Street Journal" "Wonderful...a vastly entertaining and edifying work." --The Washington Post "A passionate and beautifully written memoir...a vivid, compelling...portrait of a country that remains an enigma to most Americans." --The Chicago Tribune "Think of Montaigne as a Tocqueville with a fly rod who uncovers Russia in the raw." --Sports Illustrated "A first-rate book...[with] memorable writing...Mr. Montaigne...has netted a darkly comic tale in which he is the picaresque antihero." --The Wall Street Journal