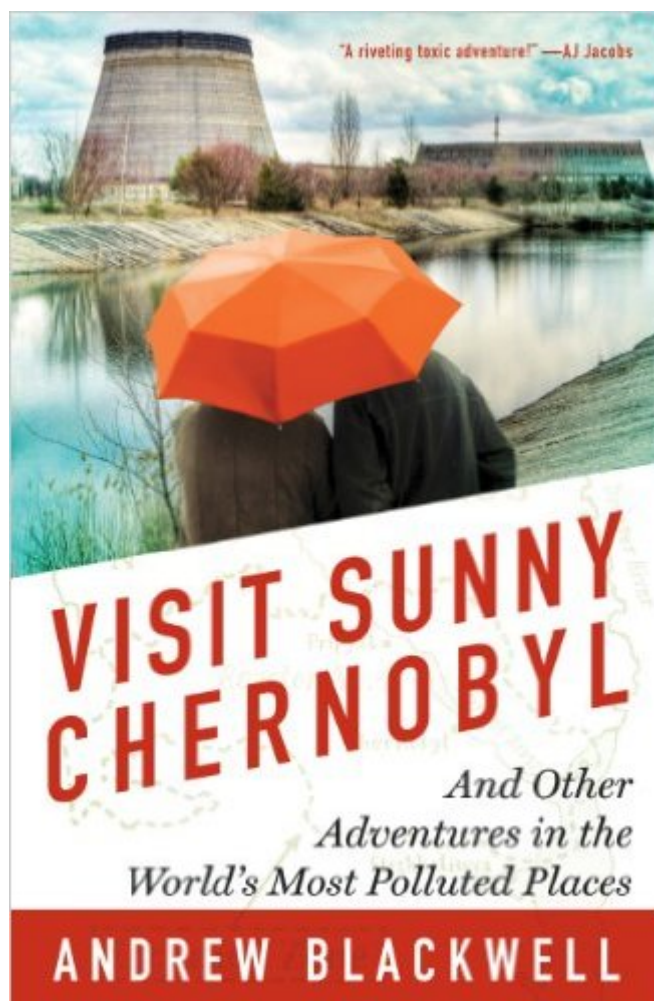


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Visit Sunny Chernobyl: And Other Adventures In The World's Most Polluted Places



Synopsis

For most of us, traveling means visiting the most beautiful places on Earth—Paris, the Taj Mahal, the Grand Canyon. It's rare to book a plane ticket to visit the lifeless moonscape of Canada's oil sand strip mines, or to set sail for the Great Pacific Garbage Patch. But in *Visit Sunny Chernobyl*, Andrew Blackwell embraces a different kind of travel, taking a jaunt through the most gruesomely polluted places on Earth. *Visit Sunny Chernobyl* fuses immersive first-person reporting with satire and analysis, making the case that it's time to start appreciating our planet as-is—not as we wish it to be. Equal parts travelogue, expose environmental memoir, and faux guidebook, Blackwell careens through a rogue's gallery of environmental disaster areas in search of the worst the world has to offer—and approaches a deeper understanding of what's really happening to our planet in the process.

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Customer Reviews

He recounts casual conversations with exotic foreigners. A simplified tour of the science for the benefit of liberal arts majors. I'm curious how Mister Blackwell accomplished all this. I was hoping for a clear explanation of Chernobyl which I could share with friends, as I live in Kiev and have been to all the places he describes. His is not bad. I am a bit suspicious as to the authenticity of his dialogue. Unless he is awfully modest on his Facebook page, he speaks only French and Spanish, but not Russian or Ukrainian. No surprise there - I've been trying for five years to learn and could probably just barely managed to conversations that he reports. And a by the way, Russian is the first language in most of this part of Ukraine. Blackwell speaks of Russkrainian - the locals call the

mixture Surjik.Blackwell is absolutely on the money and the most important thing. Chernobyl was not that big of a deal, in terms of human deaths. The UN puts the outside death toll at 100 at the time of the accident, and 5,000 maximum for lifetime exposure to radiation. As Blackwell says, this drives Greenpeace crazy. They have their own estimates, reaching as high as 100,000. Certainly nobody in Ukraine would give credence to such a number.He also talks about the way that the disaster has been exploited. The Ireland-based Children of Chernobyl charity has milked it pretty well for 25 years, with large charity balls here in Kiev every year and Lord knows what going on elsewhere in the world. The question in my mind is always been, what children? Those who were children at the time of the disaster are all well into adulthood. There aren't any widespread, documented pathologies among them.

VISIT SUNNY CHERNOBYL isn't what I expected. This vividly-written, highly entertaining, and occasionally witty narrative is not a rant about the dirtiest places in our world and how we've destroyed (or are destroying) our environment, but rather an exploration of the dirtiest places of our world and what it's like to be there, live there, and breathe there. This isn't a book that passes judgment; this is a book that lets you see things through Blackwell's eyes and make up your own mind.For those of us who like to armchair travel, VISIT SUNNY CHERNOBYL delivers in spades; the vivid language and use of the five senses is nothing short of amazing and the colorful characters he meets along the way leap off the page.Some of the more technical aspects of the story—how a nuclear reactor works, what oil sands are, how plastics break down—are described succinctly, in layman's terms, and appear organically; it's so entertainingly presented, in fact, that it feels like you've actually learned something with no effort at all.The best part of VISIT SUNNY CHERNOBYL, though, is the dry humor that emerges from Blackwell's spot-on observations; I didn't expect to be laughing, and while I'd like to share some of my favorite lines here, they really need to be taken within context.The second half of the book, I think, is a bit stronger than the first; there is a more personal tone to Blackwell's narrative and the humor is a bit more biting. This is probably because at the time he was writing those chapters he'd just faced a heartbreak, and he's trying to find himself and purpose in life again even as he's trying to finish the project.

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