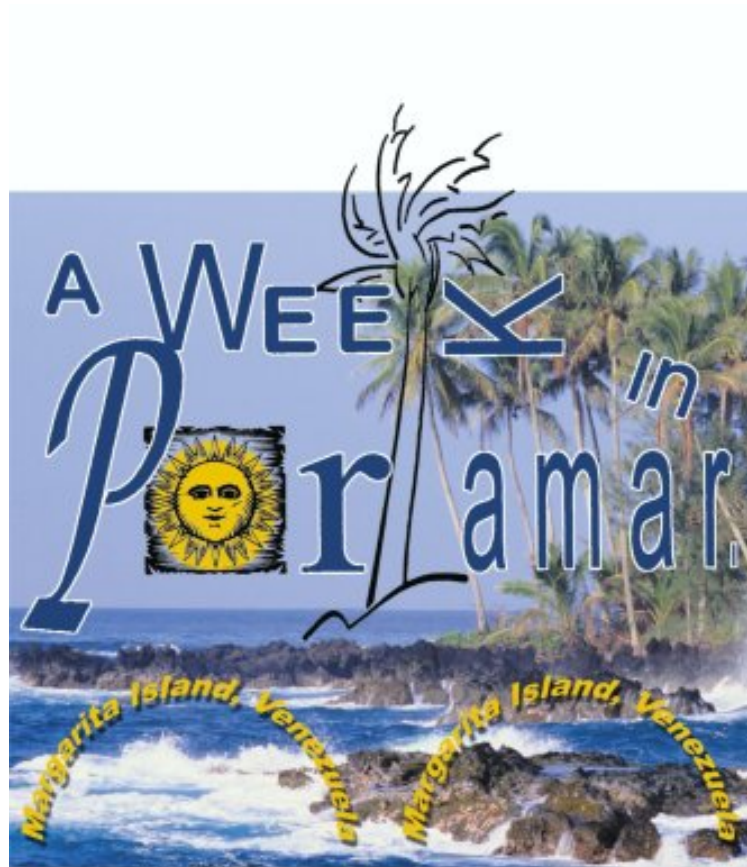


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A Week In Porlamar, Margarita Island, Venezuela

Barbara M. McMahon

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Barbara M. McMahon : A Week In Porlamar, Margarita Island, Venezuela before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised A Week In Porlamar, Margarita Island, Venezuela:

0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. A fast read. Funny...By pwilleyFunny book w/lots of useful information...4 of 5 people found the following review helpful. A great disappointmentBy J. SmithI purchased this book because I am planning a trip to Venezuela (including a week on Margarita Island) next February/March to visit some Venezuelan friends of mine. I am also a big fan of the travel writing genre, and have done a fair amount of

travelling myself. I was looking forward to reading another American's impressions of Margarita Island and gaining some insight on the place. Imagine my disappointment when confronted with this rambling, self-indulgent drivel. Now, travel writing as a genre tends to be very personal and self-reflective; but all good travel writing contains at least some cultural or historical context about the location. Not so this work. The author spends more time describing her air-conditioned room at the Palomar Hilton than she does describing the Venezuelan culture or experience. The book is a composite of several trips to Margarita, yet not once does Ms. McMahon describe any meaningful interactions with Venezuelan natives. All her conversations with Venezuelans are limited to her dealings with hotel staff, taxi drivers, or waiters in the context of their jobs in the service industry. On the first page we are told that there was an attempted government coup the month before her visit, yet nowhere in the book does she expand on this event or even express any interest in it. Instead we get detailed descriptions of her shopping trips and lunches at French restaurants. Her lack of interest in the actual country of Venezuela (outside of the Hilton, the shopping, and the beaches) is absolutely mind-boggling. Could it be that, a mere month after an attempted coup, she did not have a single conversation with a taxi driver, bartender, or person on the street about the political situation in the country? Apparently so. What about the rich Venezuelan history, the music, the cuisine- Ms. McMahon apparently did not attempt to explore any of these. Instead she gives her attention to the fact that the tour group she booked with did not give her her promised hotel room with a view. This book unfortunately embodies the definition of "stupid American" that so many of my fellow countrymen are unfairly labelled with when travelling abroad. To top it off, the book suffers from an appalling lack of editing. There is missing punctuation; words are partially italicized at random; and throughout the book, the well-known beverage "Cuba Libre" is incorrectly called "Cuba Libra". It's amazing that the book was published in this state, given the volume of errors. All in all, I was hugely disappointed by this book. If you are looking for a true travel book about Margarita Island or Venezuela, this is definitely not for you. If, on the other hand, you want to read detailed descriptions of the author's quest to find an unoccupied chaise lounge in the sun next to the hotel swimming pool, by all means read this book.

0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. Good laughs in a charming travelogue

By Stephen McNally
Barbara Mandelowitz McMahon writes her travel memoirs with a charming touch. The laughs come regularly, and the book is a pleasure, whether or not you're planning on a South American Island adventure. Our intrepid couple keeps coming close to disaster, but never have a bad experience. Their humorous close calls with island bureaucracy, unreliable airlines, annoying French tourists, challenging rental cars and traffic, just seem to bring them closer together. While there are clouds following them around, it never gets worse than slightly overcast, with bright sun by the end of each chapter. And what are we to make of the mysterious "Rick" figure. He is hardly says anything, and yet is at the center of Ms. McMahon's attention. How are we to understand this Zen-like figure and his inexplicable role in this delightful travelogue? Maybe because he is simply the best at "getting the ice."

This is an irreverently funny, intimately charming, culinarily conscious true saga of a culturally challenged couple on the loose in Latin, no problema, America. The war of worlds begins with planning a vacation in the wake of an attempted coup and proceeds down to Margarita Island, Venezuela, where pristine beaches, exotic cuisine and copious quantities of alcohol form the backdrop for the myriad disasters, aggravations and pleasures that make up a week in paradise. There is even an excursion back to the 1800s with the couples historic counterparts (Simon Bolivar and Maria Guevara). The book has a lighthearted, quirky voice that captures human nature in appealingly identifiable terms. Every blissfully mismatched couple who has set toe to tarmac will want to take this trip.

About the Author The author, an attorney in private practice, lives in South Salem, New York. She has been married to her contributing editor for eleven years, and together they have traveled selectively to Central and South America. Food, wine, art, gardening and keeping the deer at bay are present pre-occupations.