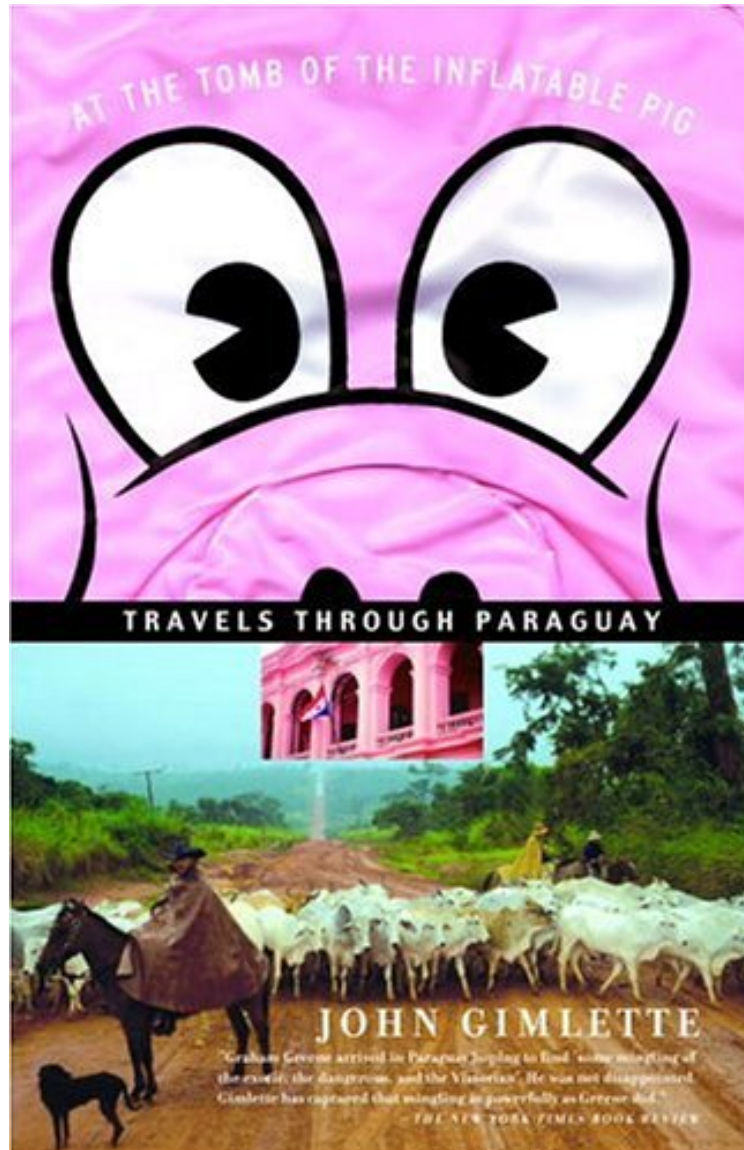


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## At the Tomb of the Inflatable Pig: Travels Through Paraguay

John Gimlette

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**John Gimlette : At the Tomb of the Inflatable Pig: Travels Through Paraguay** before purchasing it in order to gauge whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised At the Tomb of the Inflatable Pig: Travels Through Paraguay:

3 of 3 people found the following review helpful. There is something here to offend every one and no one By Roberto Shidokan Curtis Paraguay prides itself on being a country of "lace and legend". Strange, bizarre things occur almost

daily and things that are readily accepted by the Paraguayans cause most Americans and Europeans to scratch their heads in amazement. I continue to contend that this is mostly because modern day Paraguay's culture and people and politics are based on the influence of the Guarani language that most people, even immigrants, speak. Most of us observe the Paraguayan's activities and events from a Euro-centric point of view that limits our understanding of the Paraguayan mind set and acceptance of things that causes our brains to short circuit sometimes. Those of you married into a Paraguayan family will lovingly appreciate the classification. The rest will just have to imagine the pleasure, shock and joy one experiences in the Paraguayan culture. This book is a good introduction for you. The author does a great job summarizing Paraguay's history and politics from "El Supremo" through relatively recent times. If you only want to read one book on Paraguay's history, then this is the one for you as it contains a summary of the Triple Alliance War (Paraguay versus Argentina, Brazil and Uruguay) as the author visited many of the main battle sites and the Chaco War fought against Bolivia. Plus it touches on the revolution, Stroessner, Rodriguez and many of the other main political persons from recent times. You could use this book as your main information source for a college paper, or even a Master's Thesis. The author's observations will offend every one and no one as they are mostly spot-on and have little to no political-correctness restrictions. This book will cause laughter, amazement, anger, disgust, consternation, dumfoundedness and spark a general desire to visit Paraguay again, and again. The other reviews here do a good job of discussing the book's contents so I won't repeat it. If you want a good read with a little of everything included (murder, crime, romance, sex, business, trade, culture, etc.) then this should be the book for you. 2 of 2 people found the following review helpful. One can paint any kind of picture (with the good and bad) of any country's history. By Pedro D. Luzko. Although most facts are presented accurately, the tone and perspective given in this book are negative and critical of human beings living in this country. He might have chosen to shock readers in order to achieve more interest. There are inaccuracies (I never heard that people eat piranha soup in Paraguay, for example. Lido restaurant serves its popular surubi soup!) and most facts are told to enhance and radicalize this warm hearted country. One can paint any kind of picture (with the good and bad) of any country's history, and this author used his darker side to enhance the bad in order to degrade it. Many Paraguayans welcomed the author with hospitality and he returned a slap on their faces. 0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. Remarkable! By Seingalt. This is one of the most extraordinary histories/adventure tales/personal journals I have ever read. I learned a great deal while balancing between shock and black comedy. For fans of Flashman, this is a great read. For others, it is an equally great read.

Haven to Nazis, smugglers paradise, home to some of the earth's oddest wildlife and most baroquely awful dictatorships, Paraguay is a nation waiting for the right chronicler. In John Gimlette, at last it has one. With an adventurer's sang-froid, a historian's erudition, and a sense of irony so keen you could cut a finger on it, Gimlette celebrates the beauty, horror and charm of South America's obscure and remote island surrounded by land. He takes readers from genteel drawing rooms in Asuncion where ladies still gossip about the nineteenth-century Irish adventuress who became Paraguay's Empress to the Green Hell of the Chaco, a vast, inhospitable tract populated by aging Mennonites and discouraged Indians. Replete with eccentrics and scoundrels, ecologically minded cannibals and utopians from every corner of the earth, *At the Tomb of the Inflatable Pig* is a madly entertaining book.

From Publishers Weekly. Over the past 500 years, Paraguay has been invaded by successive waves of conquistadors, missionaries, Mennonites, Australian socialists, fugitive Nazis and, perhaps most improbably, Islamic extremists. "An island surrounded by land," bordered by vast deserts and impenetrable jungles, Paraguay is a country uniquely suited for those seeking to drop out of sight or, like Gimlette, find themselves. The author was 18 when he first traveled to Paraguay more than two decades ago; return visits only deepened his appreciation for the nation and its tragicomic past. Gimlette seems to have gone everywhere and talked to everyone. He boats down piranha-infested rivers, hobnobs with Anglo-Paraguayan socialites and hunts down the former hiding place of notorious Auschwitz doctor Josef Mengele. Gimlette, a travel writer and lawyer in London, proves a chatty, amiable guide to local institutions like the national railway (which has no running trains) and native wildlife, like the fierce, raccoon-like coatimundis (who, Gimlette writes, "make up for their absence of pity with fistfuls of dagger-like claws"). Yet he doesn't shirk from the nastier aspects of Paraguay's bloody history. Gimlette describes in horrific detail, for example, the rape and conquest of the Guarani Indians as well as the brutally repressive regime of Don Alfredo Stroessner (whose U.S.-backed dictatorship lasted longer than any other in the Western Hemisphere). Gimlette could have used some judicious editing—the narrative drags in parts, and its scattered chronology can be confusing—but he never fails to impress with his ingenuity, sincerity and sense of humor. 16 pages of color and bw photos, not seen by PW. Copyright Reed Business Information, a division of Reed Elsevier Inc. All rights reserved. From Booklist. If some Americans can't locate Canada on a map, it's likely many haven't even heard of Paraguay. Yet this California-sized South American country has endured an astonishing run of totalitarianism, instability, and war. Travel writer and attorney Gimlette shares that chilling history, drawing anecdotes from survivors and descendants as he explores the country. While his own doings seem unavoidably flat compared to the outrages he relates (one war killed four-fifths of the country's population, and 9

out of 10 men), it is interesting to glimpse the country today, which is happier yet still a place where the black market dwarfs the gross national product. Gimlette's prose has an almost cartoonish cast at times (a past ruler of "the hookwormed rabble" is "rutting, greasy-pawed"), yet sometimes he turns a perfect phrase ("They already had chimneys and now they wanted fireplaces"). Moreover, he conveys, though he can't explain, a national character that it doesn't seem clichéd to call inscrutable. Fascinating and compulsively readable. Keir Graff

Copyright American Library Association. All rights reserved "Colorful and meandering, by turns hilarious and horrifying, often delightful. . .and very, very odd. . . . An entirely faithful reflection of its subject." --The New York Times Book [Gimlette's] account is so rich in anecdotes, so suffused in color and dialect that we are left with a sense of having somehow inhaled all this Paraguayan history and then experienced it through a nightmare or a dream. Gimlette has given us a cast of characters as vivid as any by Dickens or Waugh.-- The New York Times Gimlette knows his subject cold, and its a subject bound to have something for everyone . . . Charming and vivid. . . crammed full of a wild cast of characters and incredible experiences. --San Francisco Chronicle A hilarious, informed anti-travelogue . . . with generous detail grounded in the authors personal experiences, this is a travel book of the mind.--The Boston Globe "Blends travelogue, history and flights of descriptive whimsy to highly tonic effect. . . . For all his mastery of Paraguayan history, it's Gimlette's extravagant prose and unhinged enthusiasm that make the book. . . . You couldn't ask for a more entertaining guide." --The Seattle Times "Hilarious. . . . What keeps you reading about Paraguay, maybe in spite of yourself, is Gimlette's marvelous wit and eye for character." --Pittsburgh Post-Gazette Reading the book is like watching a Komodo dragon eat a tethered goat. Paraguay, as Gimlette portrays it, is . . . completely bizarre. . . . Conquistadores and Nazis, whores and cannibals, all of them rather awful, all of them splendidly rendered. . . . Graham Greene would have approved. --National Geographic Adventure A glorious travel book . . . in which the countrys craziness is portrayed with humor, insight and considerable deftness of touch. . . . As a historian of the absurd [Gimlette] is superlative. --The Sunday Times (London) "A wildly entertaining read: a raucous blend of history, travelogue, and guide." --Conde Nast Traveler "At The Tomb of the Inflatable Pig should be ranked among the very best explorations of its kind: at once a history and a guide to one of the least hospitable nations on earth." --The Washington Times "Irreverent and rambunctious. . . . [A] superior travel book." --Foreign Affairs An extraordinary book, part history, part travelogue . . . so vivid that nobody reading it is ever likely to forget the country. . . . A book that sheds fascinating light on a forgotten corner of Latin America --The Daily Telegraph (London) A richly detailed catalog of oddities and horrors, the kind of eccentricities that flourish in isolation. . . . [Gimlette] spills Paraguays cruelest, most shameful secrets, but his admiration for the forlorn middle country is real on every page. --Outside "Howlingly entertaining. . . . There [is] no resisting Gimlette's rollicking account." --San Diego Union-Tribune "A truly wonderful exploration of one of the world's most captivating countries ... Brilliant." --Sunday Express "[A] wonderful, wacky book. . . . Filled with the offbeat and the bizarre. Gimlette's narrative attempts to flesh out a country that is as difficult to define as nailing Jell-O to a wall. Vivid, riotous, fascinating and never dull, his book is wildly entertaining." --The Tucson Citizen "Compelling. . . . Blackly comical. . . . Spicy, exuberant prose." --Mail on Sunday (London) "Eccentric and richly descriptive. . . . The best travel writers are those with both a sense of history and a sense of humor, and Gimlette qualifies on both counts." --Richmond Times-Dispatch [Gimlette] has a firm grasp of the countrys intriguing past, and a watchful eye on its perplexing present. --Literary Terrifically funny. . . . A great book in the noble tradition of British travel writing. Hartford Advocate Perceptive and entertaining. --The Times Literary Supplement (London)