

Only in Berlin: All reviews

Brigitte Hilzensauer, translator of the German edition:

A treasure box of strange and interesting lore.

The Wizard, www.amazon.co.uk:

Great Background.

I bought this as I am a frequent visitor to Berlin, which is where you will no doubt be required to be to physically assimilate all that is in this book. It is eminently easy to read, citing genuinely interesting corners, with generous historical background to the whys and wherefores of each. Even without being there, the book has provided me with a rich source of material to build up a very detailed perspective on this young, cosmopolitan, historically turbulent, and influential world city. I have not encountered anything similar to compete with it.

From Koren Holbourn, UK:

I am currently studying Geography at University College London and one of my courses this term is on Berlin. I am writing a piece on the advantages of travel writing (as opposed to academic writing) with respect to Berlin and want to tell you how interesting I found your “Only in Berlin” book, and how valuable it has been in my argument that travel writing offers a brilliant insight into urban environments like Berlin! Thank you very much and keep up the good work!

Nicky Gardner and Susanne Kries, www.eurocheapo.com:

Essential Reading: Maps and travel guides.

A guide to hidden corners, little-known places and unusual objects, says the blurb, nicely summarizing the emphasis of a series of guidebooks which we have recently discovered. “Only in Budapest” was published in 2006, with author Duncan J. D. Smith adeptly reviewing 84 offbeat and eclectic curiosities around the Hungarian capital. Now Smith has followed his Budapest debut with a trio of new titles. “Only in Berlin”, “Only in Vienna” and “Only in Prague” bring a bit of Duncan Smith’s distinctive style to three more central European cities, with in each case 84 hidden gems being unveiled. Clearly there is some magic to the number 84 to which we are not privy.

Monster water lilies and Turkish cannonballs.

We learned that a mosque not far from our Berlin home is the oldest in Germany, discovered monster water lilies in Prague and found out about old Turkish cannonballs embedded in the stonework of Vienna buildings.

The Internet may have revolutionized our travel planning, but decent maps and first rate guidebooks are still a must. Yet the latter are often not written with an eye for detail, and that’s where the “Only in...” series really appeals to us. The author reveals the entire history of a city and its hinterland through 84 detailed snapshots of the urban landscape, every one of them well worth a visit.

In a way, Duncan Smith’s approach is similar to our efforts with “Hidden Europe” magazine gently trying to get beneath the skin of a place and identifying spots that are genuinely offbeat and not on the regular tourist circuit. And all the better as almost all the sights mapped out by Duncan Smith in his guidebooks come with no admission charges.

Michael:

You have done a great job. I know the city well, having travelled there since the 1960s, and now feel I want to return to look up your suggested hidden corners. I would like more of your books.

Hidden Europe Magazine (Issue 26, May-June 2009):

In a world where places seem to become ever more similar, it was an absolute joy to stumble on the “Only in...” series of guidebooks written by Duncan J. D. Smith. Each guide identifies 84 distinctive sights within a particular city. His approach to places and history appeals to us a lot. The “Only in...” series is a refreshing antidote to the prevailing tide of uniformity favoured by too many travel guides.

Martin Dawes, The Sheffield Star (17.07.08):

‘Urban Explorer’ Duncan J. D. Smith sips a cappuccino and gazes out of the window of the Cafeteria coffee bar on Leopold Street and sees, not Sheffield, but Berlin.