

Only in Prague: All reviews

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.

Karen Nieslon:

The book (“Only in Prague”) seems to be perfect. Not the common guide. Very interesting. In comparison with the DuMont guide I believe yours is the winner. Good job!

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.

Isabel Küng:

I hope you keep looking and finding wherever you go - things as well as people. Do you by any chance know the book by Robert Fulgham, All I Ever Really Needed to Know I Learned in Kindergarten? At one point he says: "And then remember the book about Dick & Jane and the first word you learned, the biggest word of all: LOOK!" Your books remind me of that line; and, of course, one more quote, my favorite one: "be aware of wonders!"