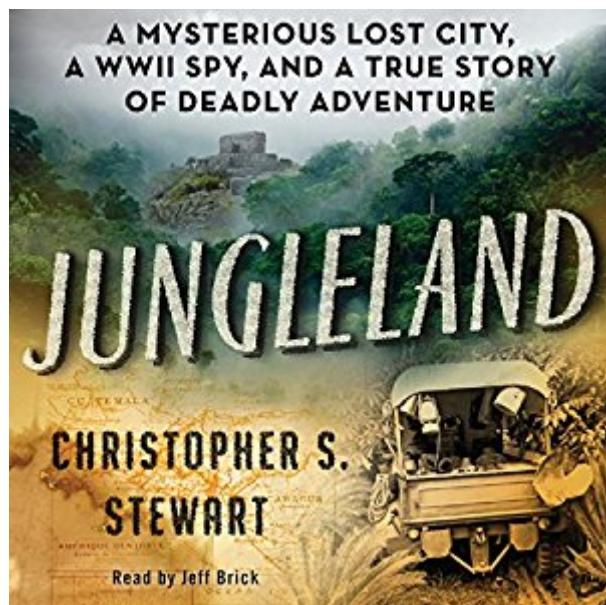


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Jungleland: A Mysterious Lost City, A WWII Spy, And A True Story Of Deadly Adventure



Synopsis

"I began to daydream about the jungle...." On April 6, 1940, explorer and future World War II spy Theodore Morde (who would one day attempt to assassinate Adolf Hitler), anxious about the perilous journey that lay ahead of him, struggled to fall asleep at the Paris Hotel in La Ceiba, Honduras. Nearly seventy years later, in the same hotel, acclaimed journalist Christopher S. Stewart wonders what he's gotten himself into. Stewart and Morde seek the same answer on their quests: the solution to the riddle of the whereabouts of Ciudad Blanca, buried somewhere deep in the rain forest on the Mosquito Coast. Imagining an immense and immaculate El Dorado - like city made entirely of gold, explorers as far back as the Spanish conquistador Hernán Cortés have tried to find the fabled White City. Others have gone looking for tall white cliffs and gigantic stone temples - no one found a trace. Legends, like the jungle, are dense and captivating. Many have sought their fortune or fame down the Río Patuca - from Christopher Columbus to present-day college professors - and many have died or disappeared. What begins as a passing interest slowly turns into an obsession as Stewart pieces together the whirlwind life and mysterious death of Morde, a man who had sailed around the world five times before he was thirty and claimed to have discovered what he called the Lost City of the Monkey God. Armed with Morde's personal notebooks and the enigmatic coordinates etched on his well-worn walking stick, Stewart sets out to test the jungle himself - and to test himself in the jungle. As we follow the parallel journeys of Morde and Stewart, the ultimate destination morphs with their every twist and turn. Are they walking in circles? Or are they running from their own shadows? Jungleland is part detective story, part classic tale of man versus wild in the tradition of *The Lost City of Z* and *Lost in Shangri-La*. A story of young fatherhood as well as the timeless call of adventure, this is an epic search for answers in a place where nothing is guaranteed, least of all survival.

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Customer Reviews

Chris Stewart decided he wanted to leave the security of life in Brooklyn and hunt for a lost city in Honduras. Obviously the trip was an adventure for him, but reading it was not a good vicarious adventure. To summarize his story, it is tramp through the jungle, endure all kinds of physical pain and frustration, miss the fam, see some indigenous people and wonder if you found the lost city. It's not that it's boring, it's just not very interesting. As a side story, Stewart alternated chapters with the story of an adventurer who tried to do the same thing 70 years earlier. The second story was a bit more interesting, but not much. Had Stewart's book just been about the other guy, Morde, it would have been better. Morde lived quite a fascinating life. Better yet, if a novel had been written about Morde it might have been terrific, but I'm not sure Stewart is the writer to do it. Stewart's writing is good, but the cover come on "... a WWII Spy" and mention of an Indiana Jones type individual were pure hype. I felt ripped off by this book. Stewart should have stayed in Brooklyn and sought adventure across the river in the jungle that is Manhattan. I've spent some time in Manhattan and it is a fascinating place. As an old movie said, "There are a million stories in Manhattan..." I also think Stewart should have stayed with his wife and daughter, but then I think there are plenty bugs, sweat and snakes of Southern Louisiana. And the natives are fascinating!

OK, so here's a passage near the end of Jungleland: "I hated the beans and rice. I hated my two sets of clothes. I hated carrying my backpack..." And so on. Now, if this had been a single cry of exhaustion during an arguably arduous journey, that would be one thing. The problem is, from the moment author Christopher S. Stewart whines about his wife's own whiny reaction to his idea about embarking on a quest for a fabled lost city somewhere in the jungle of Honduras until the end of the book, all he does is complain. And complain. And complain. There is no sense of adventure or awe or wonder; nothing seems to exist for Stewart but his own meticulously cataloged discomforts. So I guess I read a different book than all of the folks who thought this ultimately annoying bitch-fest was some sort of Indie Jones epic. When I finally forced myself to finish it, I felt a huge sense of relief that this caterwauling two -year old had finally shut the hell up.

Subtitled "A Mysterious Lost City, A WWII Spy, and a True Story of Deadly Adventure, this is the

story of how the author, who lives in Brooklyn with his wife and young daughter, decided to spend a month in the jungles of Honduras in search of a lost city. This book is the result of his modern-day journey using the diary notes of an explorer who had gone before. There is a lot of discomfort from the very beginning, especially his discomfort from being away from his family, but he keeps going in spite of the blisters on his feet, the extreme heat, the distrust he feels for his guides and the world of the hot steaming jungle. In between the chapters of his personal experience is the diary of the early explorer who trekked this jungle in the 1940's. I should have loved this book because I am at heart an armchair traveler but I found myself slightly bored and especially was turned off by all his whining about missing his Brooklyn family. When he returned after a month in the jungle I personally breathed a sigh of relief that I finished the book even though I must give credit where credit is due because I learned more about Honduras, its people and its climate than I ever thought I wanted to know.

First Line: The man called himself Rana, or Frog. Armed with a World War II spy's personal notebooks and the mysterious coordinates carved into the man's walking stick, journalist Christopher S. Stewart goes to Honduras to see if he can do what the spy (Theodore Morde) claimed he did in 1940: find the Ciudad Blanca-- the white city of gold hidden deep in the rain forest of the Mosquito Coast, one of the wildest places on Earth. What the journalist would learn is that the journey itself oftentimes is more important than reaching a destination. Alternating chapters tell us of Stewart, a New Yorker with a bad back and no fondness for camping or hiking, who decides to go off on this adventure even though there's political unrest in the area. Compared with the chapters on him, the ones about Theodore Morde sound like Indiana Jones. Morde was a seasoned amateur when he set out through the jungle in 1940. He'd already circled the globe five times and covered the Spanish Civil War with Ernest Hemingway and George Orwell. After claiming that he had found Ciudad Blanca, Morde would go on to become a spy during World War II and attempt to assassinate Hitler. I found this book to be uneven. As long as the author focused on Morde and Morde's expedition or on the facts of his own, I found it very interesting. However, Stewart's attempt to show The More Sensitive Side of Explorer Man sounded too much like whining. Blisters, rain, heat, missing his family, listening to his wife whine about things she should have been able to take care of in his absence... these things all brought the enjoyment factor down further and further for me. If you like finite results in books like this, you may want to rethink reading this book. There are no real results to either man's journey into the jungle unless you count what Stewart learned about himself. However, as uneven as I think the book is, it is worth reading if you enjoy the search for lost

civilizations. As wired and modern as most of us are, it makes me smile to think that there are still lots of adventures like this to be had on this planet.

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