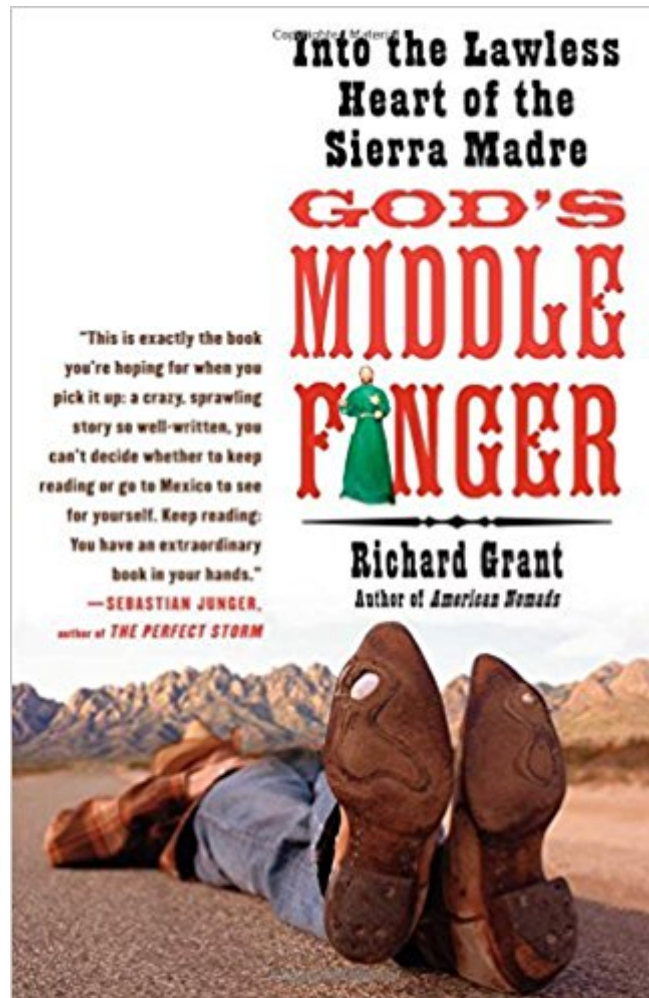




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God's Middle Finger: Into The Lawless Heart Of The Sierra Madre



Synopsis

Twenty miles south of the Arizona-Mexico border, the rugged, beautiful Sierra Madre mountains begin their dramatic ascent. Almost 900 miles long, the range climbs to nearly 11,000 feet and boasts several canyons deeper than the Grand Canyon. The rules of law and society have never taken hold in the Sierra Madre, which is home to bandits, drug smugglers, Mormons, cave-dwelling Tarahumara Indians, opium farmers, cowboys, and other assorted outcasts. Outsiders are not welcome; drugs are the primary source of income; murder is all but a regional pastime. The Mexican army occasionally goes in to burn marijuana and opium crops -- the modern treasure of the Sierra Madre -- but otherwise the government stays away. In its stead are the drug lords, who have made it one of the biggest drug-producing areas in the world. Fifteen years ago, journalist Richard Grant developed what he calls "an unfortunate fascination" with this lawless place. Locals warned that he would meet his death there, but he didn't believe them -- until his last trip. During his travels Grant visited a folk healer for his insomnia and was prescribed rattlesnake pills, attended bizarre religious rituals, consorted with cocaine-snorting policemen, taught English to Guarijio Indians, and dug for buried treasure. On his last visit, his reckless adventure spiraled into his own personal heart of darkness when cocaine-fueled Mexican hillbillies hunted him through the woods all night, bent on killing him for sport. With gorgeous detail, fascinating insight, and an undercurrent of dark humor, *God's Middle Finger* brings to vivid life a truly unique and uncharted world.

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Customer Reviews

Starred Review. As he travels through Mexico's Sierra Madre, one of the largest drug-producing

regions in the world, British journalist Grant (American Nomads) encounters a rugged landscape where the mythical old Mexico meets the challenges of the new. The birthplace of Pancho Villa and the Apaches' last refuge, the Sierra Madre has long been home to outlaws and eccentric characters that inspired a variety of American westerns. Into this legendary danger zone, with its exceptionally high murder rate, rides Grant—on horseback, though he has never ridden previously. Grant is the finest kind of travel narrator; though fully cognizant of the dangers and foolhardiness of his obsession with this land, he throws himself into crazy situations, such as a quest for buried gold treasure, a sampling of Mexican folk remedies, a terrifying Tarahumara Indian ritual when God gets into his annual drinking bout with the Devil, a little cocaine or blasting parakeet with local drug dealers, and lots and lots of drinking. He narrates these adventures with unflappable charm and humor, risking his life to the reader's benefit, shared fear and delight of discovery. Though eventually worn out by his physically and emotionally challenging journey, Grant still manages to produce a clear-eyed, empathetic account of this complex, fascinating place. (Mar.) Copyright © Reed Business Information, a division of Reed Elsevier Inc. All rights reserved.

Twenty miles south of the Arizona-Mexico border, the Sierra Madre Mountains begin their ascent. Nine hundred miles long, the range climbs to nearly 11,000 feet and contains several canyons deeper than the Grand Canyon. Grant points out that the land is home to Indians, drug smugglers, bandits, Mormons, and opium farmers. Fifteen years ago, he explored this land, where he was chased by cocaine-fueled Mexican hillbillies seeking to kill him. He visited a folk healer hoping to cure his insomnia and was told to take rattlesnake pills, and he attended strange religious rituals. Grant also consorted with cocaine-snorting cops, taught English to Guarijio Indians, and hunted for an outlaw's buried treasure. "I never want to set foot in the Sierra Madre again," he writes. "I was out of courage, out of patience, out of compassion." It was an arduous trip for Grant, but readers will be glad that he took it. --George Cohen

My thirty-something son recommended this book to me and, at least at first, I really found it fascinating. Why someone, especially an English, from England, someone would want to go into one of the most lawless sections of North America was one of the main reasons I wanted to read it. And the author explains that very well while he is giving background stories of the area and famous people who populated it. His adventures are true modern day great stories of wonderful people trapped into growing and selling marijuana and being surrounded by very, VERY bad guys who will get too drunk with alcohol, too high from drugs and too ego-stung with power so will shoot you with

little provocation just to feed the trigger finger. Like the author, toward the end, grew tired of the macho male attitude and was glad to get out when he did.

A good scary read about Mexico 10 years ago. Am a big Copper Canyon fan and a lot of this centers in the region. Liked it so much, bought a second used copy for my cousin. He had several DEA friends at one time and said that Grant's writing reminded him of their "war stories".

I liked the author's sense of humor, and his descriptive language. I will recommend this book to anyone who appreciates history, social studies, and going on a fantastic journey without leaving their home! I will read anything this author has published.

Grant's harrowing tale of traveling the Sierra Madre is educational, exciting and fun. The big flaw is that he obviously gets bored by the last of his travel because no one will engage with him. I was disappointed that he skims over places he previously talked up. He avoided Sinaloa, after the first and only time he is treated disrespectfully. He apparently attends a religious ceremony with a Shaman and gives no detail. Even with the flaws, it was a really fun read.

The account of Grant's journeys into the Sierra Madre is humorous, poignant and chilling, all at once. Having traveled there myself, I can say that it is also an honest look at that magical, mystical, terrifying place filled with indigenous peoples, outlaws and certifiable characters. His prose is graceful and he keeps his finger on the pulse of each moment. I recommend this book to anyone even harboring a thought of traveling into the Sierra, and to anyone who admires those who travel into forbidden places, filled with curiosity and foolhardiness. A truly engaging read!

Loved it The rest of these words are simply because seems to require 20 words but I have no need to write that many.

This book is an exceptional character study of Mexican culture and why it isn't thriving (hint: machismo). It's a great read for those who like travel tales. This is one of my go-to books that I buy over and over to give away to fellow readers.

If you think Salman Rushdie was brave for writing prose that Islamists labeled blasphemy, you haven't read Richard Grant, the bravest, craziest writer I have ever read. He makes the late Hunter

Thompson seem diffident. How Richard survived the lawless Sierra Madre and deadly, darkest Africa in CRAZY RIVER is a mystery to me. I am sure scores of murderous drunken drug gangsters walked away from Richard after encountering him in their bailiwick muttering: "Gringo loco, muy loco." I read CRAZY RIVER first, then backtracked to GOD'S MIDDLE FINGER. They are both testaments to the incredible bravery or stupidity of Richard Grant. He's my new hero. Hope he survives to write more. Michael Henry

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