



McCarthy's Bar: A Journey of Discovery In Ireland

By Pete McCarthy

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McCarthy's Bar: A Journey of Discovery In Ireland By Pete McCarthy

The #1 Irish Bestseller

Despite the many exotic places Pete McCarthy has visited, he finds that nowhere else can match the particular magic of Ireland, his mother's homeland. In *McCarthy's Bar*, his journey begins in Cork and continues along the west coast to Donegal in the north. Traveling through spectacular landscapes, but at all times obeying the rule, "never pass a bar that has your name on it," he encounters McCarthy's bars up and down the land, meeting fascinating people before pleading to be let out at four o'clock in the morning.

Written by someone who is at once an insider and an outside, *McCarthy's Bar* is a wonderfully funny and affectionate portrait of a rapidly changing country.

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Editorial Review

Amazon.com Review

Although Pete McCarthy was raised in England, his mother hails from West Cork and, despite never having lived there, he can't shake the strange feeling that Ireland is more home than home. A return pilgrimage reveals immediately why he (or anyone, for that matter) feels "involved and engaged" in Ireland. On arriving at the airport in Cork he's greeted by a guy in a giant rubber Celtic cross getup who's telling jokes with a latter-day St. Patrick (the guy who cast all snakes and pagans out of Ireland). Later, when McCarthy happens to mention that his surname matches that of the pub he's in (ever faithful to his Eighth Rule of Travel: Never pass a bar that has your name on it), the owner buys him a Guinness, invites him to her raucous all-night birthday party, then insists he move to Ireland because, well, obviously he belongs. McCarthy's Second Rule of Travel states: The more bright primary colours and ancient Celtic symbols outside the pub, the more phoney the interior. While the island is turning into a haven for upmarket tourists--and McCarthy offers outstanding examples of bumbleheaded tourists in action--he still finds plenty of pubs where you can buy a bicycle and which still exist primarily as venues for conversation and Irish music sessions.

While most travel writers seek out opportunities to meet the famous--or the infamous--McCarthy has the charming knack of just bumping into them on his rambles, which is how he met Noel Redding, formerly of Jimi Hendrix's band, and the author Frank McCourt. Far more interesting, though, are the eccentric and talkative bachelors and landladies who turn up in pubs, B&Bs, and the middle of the road. McCarthy has mastered the art of getting creatively lost, wandering the back lanes of Ireland where the hype of tourism has yet to arrive, pursuing stone circles, impossibly romantic ruined abbeys, and, of course, pubs. What he discovers is that "In Ireland, the unexpected happens more than you expect," which makes for a hilarious tour through one of the most beautiful, friendly, and quirky places on earth with a comedian who has honed the art of telling a good story and of having fun.--*Lesley Reed*

From Publishers Weekly

McCarthy, writer and performer of the BBC series *Desperately Seeking Something*, is a worthy addition to the ranks of P.J. O'Rourke, Bill Bryson and Peter Mayle. English-born to an Irish mother, McCarthy spent childhood summers with relatives in West Cork. As an adult, he travels around the south and west of Ireland on a quasi-pilgrimage culminating in a visit to Lough Derg, an ancient penitential retreat. Following the mandate "Never Pass a Bar That Has Your Name on It," he narrates a series of hilarious and surprising adventures with an acerbic eye and a comedian's gift for timing. Like all good travelers, he encounters an eclectic assortment of characters, including a pagan Christian priest who's rejected the Church, an Anglo-Irish Marquess, Jimi Hendrix's bass player Noel Redding, and Frank McCourt. Although occasionally indulging in tourist stereotyping--e.g., earnest Germans and loud, lazy Americans--McCarthy mines a rich comic vein, yielding delightful, often sidesplitting stories steeped in the peculiarities of British humor. He strikes some serious notes, too, adeptly capturing the impact of Ireland's recent social changes, from its astounding economic growth to the "bungalow blight" marring the beautiful countryside. He visits places where historic tragedies still loom large; his account of a mass grave for potato famine victims is simple and moving. This wonderful debut will appeal to readers who are looking for a well-observed travel guide, or simply for its incisive hilarity. (Mar. 19)Forecast: A bestseller in Ireland, this book will surely find an American audience if conspicuously displayed, given the Emerald Isle's current status as a hot vacation spot. The attractive cover photo of the author in front of an Irish bar is a plus.

From Library Journal

Fans of Bill Bryson will enjoy reading McCarthy's droll narrative of his rediscovery of his family's roots in Ireland. Winner of the Travelex Award for Best TV Travel Writer, BBC personality McCarthy takes the reader on an odyssey through Ireland, where he unfailingly obeys his rule: "Never Pass a Bar That Has Your Name On It." The son of an Irishwoman and an Englishman, McCarthy spent many idyllic summers in the Emerald Isle and here revisits places he remembers from his youth. Traversing rural areas from Cork to Donegal, McCarthy observes that although much has changed, the Irish people of his childhood have not. Humorous and history-laden, McCarthy's debut is already a No. 1 best seller in the land of his forefathers and is sure to be popular in public libraries. DSandy Knowles,, Henderson Cty. P.L., NC
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