



Another Quiet American: Stories of Life in Laos

Brett Dakin

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Brett Dakin spent two years working in Laos and returned to the States a changed man. In *Another Quiet American*, he takes you through the corridors of power and the living rooms of the poor in Laos.

You'll meet his boss, a wealthy general whose power and reputation scares his countrymen; a prince with connections to the French colonial past; an American pilot who left home for Indochina during the war and never returned; and, rich Lao twenty-somethings who have all the money they could want, but no happiness.

Dakin provides a sympathetic yet irreverent glimpse into life in one of the world's few remaining communist nations, questioning the US's influence on the country and embarking on the soul-searching identity quest of an American abroad.

Another Quiet American: Stories of Life in Laos Details

Date : Published October 1st 2003 by Asia Books

ISBN : 9789748303680

Author : Brett Dakin

Format : Paperback 296 pages

Genre : Travel, Nonfiction, Autobiography, Memoir, Cultural, Asia, Biography

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Nancy Clark says

In 1997, after graduating from Princeton, the author spends 2 years working in Laos as a marketing consultant to the National Tourism Authority - something he knows nothing about and the government apparently has no idea what it expects. This is a collection of stories and observations of his time there and they give a youthful, wide-eyed view of a country that most Americans know little about. Things have changed since he was there, but it is still a great background book for travel to SE Asia.

Marc Udoff says

This was collection of essays which tell the story of one young expat's understanding of Laos. Although the essays are independent of each other, reading it weaves together an understanding of what Laos was like in 2000, and apparently not much has changed. This book is very well written and you end up really feeling like you too have been lived in Vientiane. Would highly recommend to anyone visiting south east Asia, especially Laos.

Lori Watson Koenig says

Good depiction of life in Laos in modern times (I guess..I haven't been there). I learned a lot about Laos from reading this book. I was particularly interested in Royal family influences and roles and the author was able to fit that and a lot more information in the book without making it feel like a history textbook.

Katie says

Maybe more like 2.5 stars.

This has a bit of compelling information unique to Laos mixed in with a bunch of other things that would seem to apply to any developing, corrupt country. An easy read for those traveling to Laos, but don't spend too much time or money on it.

Sophie says

Not great but not horrible. Sort of like reading someone's travel journal which I would have found interesting for about 30 pages. I like reading about parts of the world a culture I don't know much about. This book gave what I thought was a good snippet of regular life in Laos. I also liked getting the history of the region.

Mary says

A snapshot of life in Laos, from the perspective of a young American volunteer living in Vientiane and working with the National Tourism Authority. Much has changed when this was written in 1999, but much is also similar. More people and better roads nearly 20 years later, but NGOs and consultants and the government still face similar issues and work in similar ways. An interesting and engaging collection of short essays that provide a rich insight into Laos history and culture.

Jessica says

Great snapshot of life in Vientiane, Laos prior to the 'tourist boom'. Also a good look into what it is like to live and work in a developing country.

I thoroughly enjoyed it particularly because I currently work for a non-profit just across the Mekong.

Dominic says

An amazing insight into Laos and its people. I went to Laos earlier in the year and had no idea about the political turmoil and policies in place. It appears that government are very clever with their cover ups.

I found the discussion of Laos communism pretty interesting. A decent read.

Katie says

I've had difficulty finding any books about Laos, so when I picked this one up, I wasn't expecting much. But I enjoyed all of the author's vignettes about his time working in Laos, and I hope it gave me a glimpse into Lao culture.

Anthony Nelson says

A book written by a 27 year old about his adventures from 21-23. I imagine I would have enjoyed it a great deal more if I'd read it at a younger age before traveling a lot myself.

It has some value as a relatively rare book about Laos, but I'd only read it if you have very little experience traveling in Southeast Asia.

Charlotte says

I picked up this book on Suvarnabhumi in Bangkok to have something to read on the plane, and I am so glad I did. Having recently returned from my year in Laos I cannot say anything else but: I love this book. It's fascinating to read about how the Laos I know and love has changed so much in just 15 years. This book speaks of Laos in the way I think about the country, with frustration, love and fascination.

Leonie Stanley says

After closing my bookshop, I have been challenged with all the books I now have to find space for. During one of these unpacking, repacking sessions, I came across the book *Another Quiet American* by Brett Dakin. The front cover promised 'Stories of life in Laos'. I didn't even know where to find Laos on the map. It was then that my eye caught the quote at the top of the page. "Makes Vientiane jump off the printed page." – Joe Cummings, author of *Lonely Planet Laos*. Interest peaked, I set the book aside to read.

Days later I finally got around to the book and assuming it might just be a book of someone living in Laos, who will now try and make it sound interesting, I started on the book. I admit, I didn't expect much, but after the first page, I knew I was going to read this book to the end.

As Mr Dakin started the book trying to remember his life in Laos, making mention of the bell of the fruit vendor and the fetid smell of mud after a rain storm, you find yourself walking alongside him, experiencing the sounds and the smells.

At the end of the formal education Mr Dakin enjoyed, he was ready for a new challenge, but most importantly, he wanted a change in his life. He wanted to escape his comfortable life he was born into, and what better way of doing this, than applying for a position as a language and marketing consultant at the National Tourism Authority in Laos.

You get to meet the people of Laos and you celebrate the festivities with them. And as Joe Cummings quoted, Vientiane was jumping off the printed page. What jumped off the pages for me, was the contrasting worlds we all live in. What is normal for me, is not normal or a daily occurrence to the person in the next country, even if we share a border.

One paragraph I enjoyed, was "I relished this ephemeral quiet before the quotidian chorus of roosters, children, dogs, and motorbikes erupted". Such beautiful words and if you sit quietly for a second, you can experience that ephemeral quiet.

Throughout the book, Lao proverbs have been added, and I found myself pondering some of these. 'One fish can spoil an entire basket; the sound of a single gong can fill the whole city'.

This is a work of non-fiction, but the read was comfortable. Brett takes his readers along on a road of discovery. You will get to know the life in Vientiane after the war and experience how this impacted the lives of the Lao residents.

Alix says

Pretty good book about Laos. I wouldn't necessarily call it a compelling read as it's a bunch of snippets from the author's two years in Laos, but it is very accurate and provides a lot of info about a country that the rest of the world knows very little about. A good book if you want to look see a culture quite alien from western life.

Ian McHugh says

This is an enjoyable book on Laos - it's culture, history, and contemporary society and politics. It gives good insights into the workings of the country through the eye of an expat American who has a two-year job in Vientiane. If you're visiting the country or wish to know more about it then I'd recommend.

Ralph says

O.K., I am biased. I am currently a volunteer teacher in Laos and this book is about as good an introduction to the people and the country as you are going to get. Mr. Dakin is the naive young American who comes to Laos to offer his services in any way he can - and the trials and tribulations which ensue. An interesting introduction to Laos and it's people by someone who cares.
