



So Happiness to Meet You: Foolishly, Blissfully Stranded in Vietnam

Karin Esterhammer

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After job losses and the housing crash, the author and her family leave L.A. to start over in a most unlikely place: a nine-foot-wide back-alley house in one of Ho Chi Minh City's poorest districts, where neighbors unabashedly stare into windows, generously share their barbecued rat, keep cockroaches for luck, and ultimately help her find joy without Western trappings.

Karin Esterhammer was an editor, writer, and travel columnist at the *Los Angeles Times* for fifteen years. She's been published in the *Chicago Tribune*, the *Baltimore Sun*, and other publications. She lives in Los Angeles with her husband, son, and three cats.

So Happiness to Meet You: Foolishly, Blissfully Stranded in Vietnam Details

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From Reader Review So Happiness to Meet You: Foolishly, Blissfully Stranded in Vietnam for online ebook

Marianne Wason says

I give it a three with some hesitance. A lot of glib humor at the expense of those she professes to like -- and a gleeful self-absorption that made me stop reading for a couple weeks. But I'm glad I finished the book. I learned a lot, but I wish she hadn't offered so many repetitive anecdotes and had given us more insight into Vietnam from her unique perspective as the only American--the only foreigner--living in her neighborhood of Ho Chi Minh City for two years (2008-2010). She enjoys writing light, sometimes snarky, humor, and she's good at it; but she could have created a more significant book if she'd let herself pursue those parts of her experience that don't lend themselves to the rhetoric of humor.

Melissa says

Karin Esterhammer worked as a journalist in LA for many years. When the economy tanked, she lost her job and the family's main source of income. She and her husband decided to live for a year in Vietnam, where she would work as a freelance writer and parent their young son, and he would teach English. Sounds simple, right? Well, things weren't exactly that easy, but the way she relates her story is engrossing, readable, and touching. The tale is filled with humor and appreciation for the culture of Vietnam and a deep love for the people they encounter.

See full review on my blog: <https://lifefullybooked.com/2017/09/2...>

Lauren Erdmann-Rued says

One of my favorite non-fiction books of the year! Esterhammer wrote with such amazing detail and genuine love of the country that it made not only more excited for our upcoming visit, but also made me want to move there and experience all Vietnamese culture has to offer. This book literally had me laughing out loud more than once and I highly recommend it for anyone interested in Vietnam or travel memoirs.

Dianne says

I must take some time to digest what I read - but I neither loved it or hated it but I do know that I disliked Karin and Robin (the point of the book) quite a lot.

Phú Ông says

I loved the book! It is very interesting to read about an American experience of living for 3 years in my home country. I love how Karin narrated the story. The sense of humor is subtle and light. Would definitely recommend the book.

Caroline says

I loved this book! The author did a wonderful job of bringing her experience to life - I could absolutely picture the neighborhood and all the many characters - who were real life people. She paints an honest picture of life in Vietnam that is eye opening, especially to Americans who perhaps have not considered the conditions in that country once the Vietnam war was over. Highly recommend.

Tally says

So fabulous. I felt like I was there the whole time! A good hearted read with some laugh out loud moments. Thoroughly enjoyed :)

Aoi says

I loved every second of it! The author writes with such warmth about her two year stay in Vietnam (and among the locals, and not a part of the expat community!) - I feel like I know her vastly engaging neighbours personally.

Ciara Johnson says

This is a lighthearted adventure of three years in Vietnam after the 2010 housing crash. It's not a bad little story about the town I live in, but I think it fails to capture much of what is good about being here.

Terry says

Delightful read! Karin moves her family to Vietnam in 2008 after loosing her job. She thinks renting out their house in L.A. and living in Vietnam, which she thinks will be less expensive will help them recover financially. The family's adjustment to the cultural differences are treated with warmth and humor. You felt as though her neighbors were your friends, too.

Lisa Tener says

Love this book! Really gives you a sense of the people and place beyond a travel memoir, since the author actually lived there--and not in an expat community either. The author's sense of humor contributes to a wonderful read.

Dale says

This book was a wonderful diversion from the pressures of my Western life. I laughed out loud several times and there are some deep observations about Vietnamese culture and language. The writing is personal and engaging. The most amusing portions are often hidden in plain sight. I'll let you find those gems. The author is quite open about her shortcomings and foibles which is certainly braver than I could be in such a book!

The only real negative was the fact that I wondered how her neighbors might react to their nicknames if they had read this book. She has moments during the book when she displays her privilege but she does a good job of admonishing herself during these times. Now that I write this, I believe this to be a minor quibble.

There is little doubt left in my mind that the author truly loved her time in Vietnam and had an actual experience of living abroad and participating in the culture first-hand. That's a pretty rare read these days. I highly recommend this book.

Lori says

A book that I could not put down. Easily read in 2 days. Funny, laugh out loud kind of book. It gives one an insight to another culture. My mother in law is from Vietnam and I was able to connect with what was written. I thoroughly enjoyed this book.

Amy says

Esterhammer's background in writing makes this book a delightful read. Feelings, humor and challenging situations are shared with great insight and tact. The memoir is a very entertaining and quick read, with frequent chapter breaks, making it easy to pick up and put down. It would be especially appealing to those who love to travel and/or experience other cultures.

After the recession hits their Los Angeles family hard, Karin, Robin and their adopted son Kai move to Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam. Though they've toured there before, the story of becoming residents in a district where they are the only non-natives is eye-opening. While Robin is able to secure a job teaching English, Karin is left to home school Kai, do freelance work and take care of their home while befriending the neighbors.

I received a copy of this book as a Goodreads giveaway in exchange for an honest review. Thanks to the author/publisher for participating in the giveaway.

Gaelynn Thurman says

A wonderful journey through a trying time, filled with humor and grace. A talented lady indeed.
