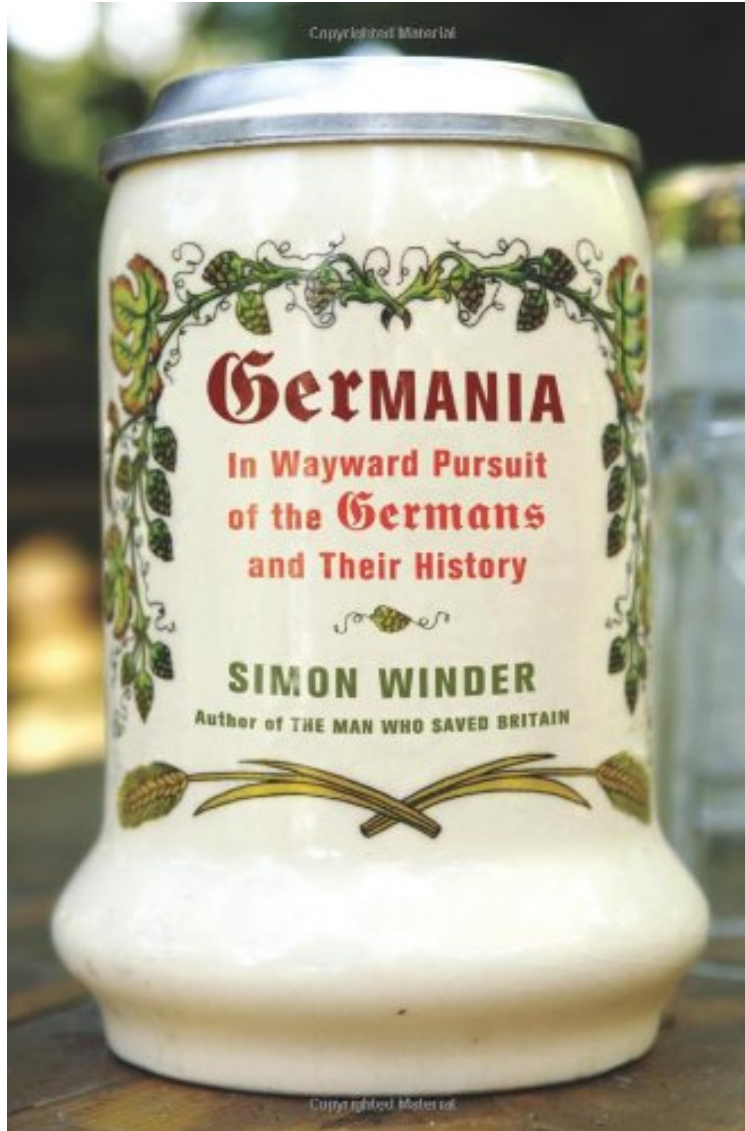


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Germania: In Wayward Pursuit of the Germans and Their History

Simon Winder

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Simon Winder : Germania: In Wayward Pursuit of the Germans and Their History before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Germania: In Wayward Pursuit of the Germans and Their History:

8 of 8 people found the following review helpful. Possibly the best non-fiction I've read in the last decade By Leslie Harback As a person who reads a bunch of history, it's ultimately the books that don't remain too serious about their subject matter, while still representing it in a factual way, that stand out. On this count, Simon Winder is at the top of

my non-fiction-author heap at the moment, having pulled off a book that's so expansive (covering much of the German speaking world, for around two millennia), so detailed in it way (by Winder's only description, the place we think of as 'Germany' was until about 150 years ago an agglomeration of hundreds of tiny principalities), and so unbelievably funny (on more than one occasion while reading in bed I laughed so hard that I woke up my wife, much to my regret...) that I flew through it almost too fast. It's a rare beast of a non-fiction, history-ish book that you wish, upon finishing it, that you had another 500 pages or so to go. Well, here it is! I'll bottom line it: if you have even the slightest interest in Germany or things German, or European history, grab this right now. You won't regret it. (Oh, and I should note: if you're looking for a dry listing of historical events, in order, by region, with outcomes of battles and population charts for cities of the Hanseatic League, look elsewhere. Perhaps you'd be better served by some manner of college level textbook?)

0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. A history of Germany as Monty Python would write it.

By Scott
This book is so difficult to review - I find myself chortling at his self-depreciation and enjoying the segways more than the point in history that he's describing. It's like he can't help himself and plunges down one rabbit hole after another. As a history book, I think that it ultimately fails. As a travel guide, it excels. I head to Munich here in a month and I fully intend to visit many of the towns and villages he writes about.

0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. A Brilliant Trip!

By jocelyn314
A Brilliant Trip! Thank you Mr Winder for a wonderful journey from the Romans through the middle ages until 1933. Your book exemplifies how many facets humans contain. It is savvy and fascinating and very funny. Your depth and perspective lent me such a refreshed look at Europe and for that I am grateful. I will review it again soon to list all the fun tips, places, and advice you so freely offer as a result of your canny curiosity and thorough research. What a find!

A UNIQUE EXPLORATION OF GERMAN CULTURE, FROM SAUSAGE ADVERTISEMENTS TO WAGNER

Sitting on a bench at a communal table in a restaurant in Regensburg, his plate loaded with disturbing amounts of bratwurst and sauerkraut made golden by candlelight shining through a massive glass of beer, Simon Winder was happily swinging his legs when a couple from Rottweil politely but awkwardly asked: So: why are you here?

This book is an attempt to answer that question. Why spend time wandering around a country that remains a sort of dead zone for many foreigners, surrounded as it is by a force field of historical, linguistic, climatic, and gastronomic barriers?

Winders book is propelled by a wish to reclaim the brilliant, chaotic, endlessly varied German civilization that the Nazis buried and ruined, and that, since 1945, so many Germans have worked to rebuild.

Germania is a very funny book on serious topics show we are misled by history, how we twist history, and how sometimes it is best to know no history at all. It is a book full of curiosities: odd food, castles, mad princes, fairy tales, and horse-mating videos. It is about the limits of language, the meaning of culture, and the pleasure of townscape.

From Booklist
Germany has a culture that both fascinates and puzzles Winder, a Londoner. This broad and often whimsical portrayal of German history and culture is an apparent effort to express and perhaps understand those dual sentiments. Winder traces German history from the dim, mythological pre-Roman past in northern forests to the Nazi seizure of power in 1933. Although he utilizes a chronological narrative, his account is loaded with enjoyable digressions on German food, the charm of medieval castles, and German composers. Some of his historical points are instructive, including the fact that, for most of history, Germany was defined by language rather than geographical or religious unity, which he sees as fundamental in understanding the ferocity of German nationalism in the twentieth century. This is an enjoyable, often amusing, often serious effort to understand a people who remain at the center of European civilization.

--Jay Freeman
Praise for Germania
Wonderful very witty and highly entertaining, splendidly and amusingly opinionated, marvellously colourful in its descriptions of unusual places and little known people, and full of enjoyable insights into German history and culture.

Ian Kershaw, author of Hitler: A Biography
Winder is perhaps the first to have succeeded in presenting Germany as no less fun than France or Italy and the Germans as a nation of eccentrics very like our own . . . He excels in a style that he self-deprecatingly calls anecdotal facetiousness but which manages to convey copious quantities of facts in the most enjoyable way possible.

Evening Standard
Its plain that Winders mind is fizzing with interesting ideas. He can write beautifully, embodying a whole world in a phrase . . . He finds new angles on familiar subjects . . . His excitement is beguiling and infectious; hes widely read, good-humoured and a wonderful asset in writing this book utterly lacking an axe to sharpen on the subject of the Second World War . . . There are many pleasures to be savoured in Germania . . . gems that make Winders clever, rambunctious work a book to treasure.

Miranda Seymour, Literary
This book is the chronicle of a passion. It is also an engrossing, informative and hilarious read. He has spun an enthralling weave of travelogue, anecdote and historical mock-epic. What is often most engaging about these encounters is the spectacle of Winder himself. It made me laugh so hard that I woke up my wife and had to give up reading the book in bed. If Bill Bryson had collaborated with W. G. Sebald to write a book about Germany, they might have wound up with something like this. Winders extravagant mixing of genres allows him to seek historical depth without sacrificing the pleasures of anecdote. There is a serious purpose behind all the playfulness.

Christopher Clark, The Sunday Times (London)
His rich and broadly chronological history of Germany and its peoples is minutely researched. Interspersed in the narrative, however, are the deliciously opinionated, often

hilarious and occasionally vituperative reminiscences of the authors many excursions to Germany and Austria. They make the book. The love-hate nature of his relationship with his subject brings out the best in his writing . . . It is the kind of knockabout humour that has British readers rolling while Germans smile politely but a little uncomprehendingly . . . A splendid offering. Hugh Mortimer, Financial Times

Simon Winder peppers his meaty tome with quirky digressions, anecdotes and memories, revealing intriguing insights about Germany, from its cuisine to its architecture, people and history. ABTA Magazine

Travelogue and historical narrative are merged in a gloriously free-wheeling narrative of the entire sweep of German history . . . This book is clearly not intended to be the last word on German history. But for any readers wanting a learned, entertaining and lucid introduction to a notoriously complex subject, it should certainly be their first. Seven Magazine, The Sunday Telegraph

This candid, cheerful and idiosyncratic approach to travelogue makes a refreshing change. Whether being stridently critical or puppyishly enthusiastic, Winder is a master of the well-turned phrase or the unexpected insight. The Times (London)

Best to follow Winder on his rambles as youd follow a favourite uncle who knows lots about lots of apparently random things . . . He is most engaging and sporadically wise . . . Winder's mind is a very agreeable place to go rambling. The Scotsman

Entertaining and informative... Delightful Philip Hensher, The Independent

A beautifully written and insightful book . . . It can only be hoped that it will be read by many and that it will be recognised for what it is: a witty, thought-provoking account of Germany's various histories, cultures and oddities. The Irish Times

Praise for The Man Who Saved Britain

Simon Winder gives us a rollicking tour through Bondland, [and] expertly captures the knowing blend of nostalgia, sophistication and plain absurdity that made the Bond books (and later the movies) such a hit in the 1950s and 60s . . . Entertaining and very funny. Michiko Kakutani, The New York Times

A book of eccentric brilliance that covers everything from Jamaica as lieu de mmoire to the sexual magnetism of General Nasser. Richard Vinen, The Times Literary Supplement

Almost ridiculously enjoyable. Christopher Taylor, New Statesman

[An] entertaining romp through the literary and cinematic heartland of James Bond country . . . [Winder] provides amusing diversions for the general reader and delights for the Bond enthusiast. Andrew Lycett, The Sunday Times (London)

Winder has an easy journalistic tone, a surprisingly objective take on his own obsession and an encyclopaedic knowledge of all things Bond and Ian Fleming-related . . . Witty and intelligent. Francesca Segal, Financial Times