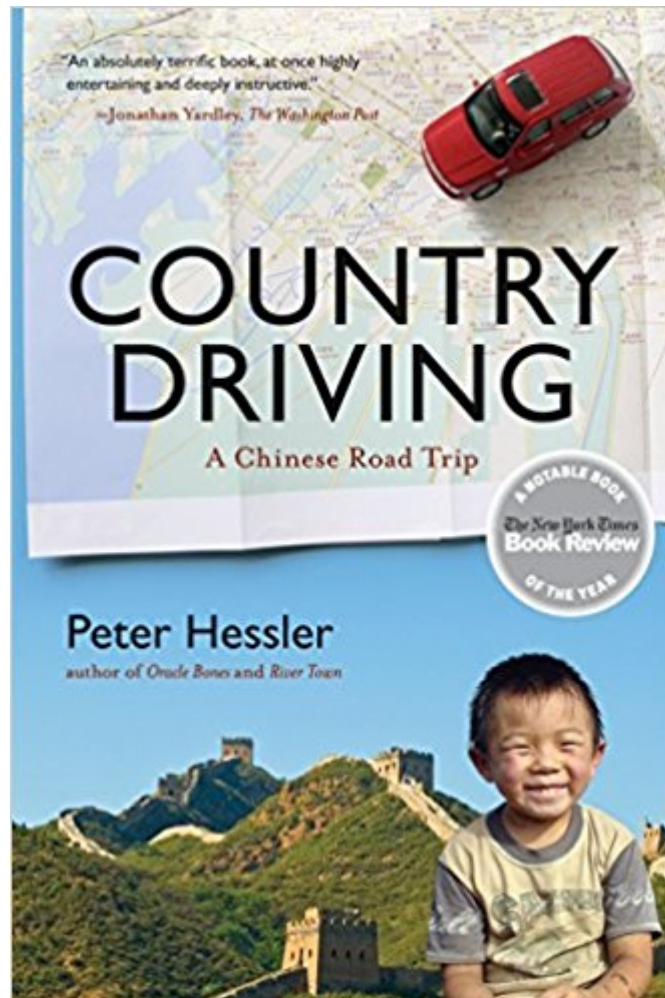


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Country Driving: A Chinese Road Trip



Synopsis

One of The Economist's Best Books of the Year From the bestselling author of Oracle Bones and River Town comes the final book in his award-winning trilogy on the human side of the economic revolution in China. Peter Hessler, whom the Wall Street Journal calls "one of the Western world's most thoughtful writers on modern China," deftly illuminates the vast, shifting landscape of a traditionally rural nation that, having once built walls against foreigners, is now building roads and factory towns that look to the outside world.

Book Information

Paperback: 448 pages

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Customer Reviews

Country Driving" consists of three narratives intended to convey how China is changing with the building of new roads. While the book accomplishes little in that regard, it does help readers understand Chinese culture, how that culture is developed at school, and the idiosyncrasies of life in China. The book begins with Hessler acquiring a Chinese driver's license in 2001 after living and touring in China for five years teaching English, serving as a free-lance reporter, and learning to read and speak Chinese. Obtaining a driver's license is no mean feat for Chinese citizens - requirements include a medical checkup, passing a written exam, and completing a driving course and extensive driving test. (These requirements are greatly lessened for those already licensed in other nations.) Unfortunately, the driving courses and regulations have little connection to safety - seat belts, turn signals, and children's car seats are not required, and despite having only one-fifth the number of vehicles for about the same geographic area as the U.S., China has twice the number of traffic fatalities. A lesser problem is that maps do not label most roads, lack a marked

scale or distances between towns, and the indicated roads sometimes turn into creek beds. Nonetheless, almost 1,000 new drivers register each day in Beijing alone. Hessler always rented the vehicles he used, probably because autos owned by foreigners have a distinctive license plate that would reveal when he was traveling outside his residence area - guaranteeing special police attention.

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