



Jubilant Journeys: Experience the Wanderlust Serendipity of a Fifty-Year Journey Across 125 Countries

Connie Spenuzza, MEd

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With a novelist's storytelling craft, Connie Spenuzza recounts her passion for travel, covering 50 years of visits to 125 countries, in her engaging memoir, *Jubilant Journeys*.

Rather than chronological, the story is built around four themes: "Wanderlust Serendipity," "Wonders of the World," "Sacred Places," and "Splendors." The truly unifying theme, though, is the first: "wanderlust serendipity." This is Spenuzza's phrase for her open and magical approach of stepping into far-flung settings and seeing what synchronicities transpire.

Much of the memoir's charm is the family dynamic and humor displayed between Spenuzza, her husband, Peter, and their two sons, be it while tracing ancestral roots in Basque country, staying in a questionable hotel with invading spider monkeys in the Amazon, or unexpectedly experiencing the sacred in Montserrat, Catalonia. Spenuzza's more mystical approach (her sons call her the "stone whisperer") contrasted with her family's utterly rationalist views creates amusing moments.

The author's voice is erudite yet accessible, and her writing is solid, if sometimes overblown: "Gliding on a fifty-year enchanted caravan ride, we've been buoyed by gentle trade winds and looped from north to south, and all along we've chronicled our peregrinations on paper, film, and the rainbows in the mind."

Although the thematic organization generally works, readers may wish for a better sense of chronology. In several sections, Spenuzza jumps around in time; the boys are grown, and then, in the same page or section, they are pre-teen or adolescent, creating confusion. It's also disruptive when Spenuzza veers from her immersive stories about a specific locale to passages that name a host of the places she has visited, as if trying to shoehorn each of her travel destinations into the narrative.

Despite such issues, *Jubilant Journeys* is a lyrical account of travels with purpose: to expand beyond the ordinary, learn about the world, and connect with others across the globe. This "wanderlust serendipity" makes it a largely worthwhile journey.